

Auckland Conversations:

Greening our city

Transcript

Frith Walker:

Good evening and welcome everybody. My name is Frith Walker and I will be facilitating the conversation this evening. I'm so grateful to be joining you all this evening. All be it from the comfort of our lounges, so thank you all for being here. Auckland Conversation provides an opportunity to inspire and stimulate your thinking about the challenges facing Auckland. Tonight we will be joined by a panel of informed and passionate experts who will raise the city sorry, the profile of the City Centre master plan and engage us in a discussion around the environmental, social, and health benefits that come from Greening, a city. First and foremost, my best air hostess impersonations.

So some Housekeeping notes this evening, this session is being recorded. All members of the audience will have their cameras and microphones disabled, but you can all ask questions via the Q and A chat function. Please note that due to time constraints, we may not get to all questions, but we will do our very best. If you want to direct your question to someone specific on the panel to respond, please add their name to your question. You're, of course, welcome to Tweet during the event using the hashtag AKL conversation we have for the sake of a wonderful conversation this evening.

Zero tolerance for profanity or cruel marks. We're here to have a useful and friendly discussion on the topic of Greening our city. So any comments and questions that are disrespectful, off topic or off topic. Sorry will be dismissed. Be kind out there, folks. We always try to ensure that Auckland Conversation events are inclusive and accessible. The session is being recorded and on demand viewing of the event and a full transcript will be available on the Auckland Conversations website in the next few days. Just acknowledging also, this is the first time Auckland Conversations has been fully, like, totally online, something we're all getting used to.

So fingers crossed I don't press the button the wrong button sorry, or freeze weirdly on you. Ladies and gentlemen, joining the discussion tonight are the following amazing speakers; Ngarimu Blair from Ngati Whatua, Councillor Richard Hills Chair of the Environment and Climate Change Committee, Howell Davies Principal Specialist Urban Ngahere for Auckland Council, Chloe Swarbrick M. P. Auckland Central, Iain White professor of Environmental Planning at the University of Waikato, and Dr. Natalie Allen Director of the Urban Advisory. What an amazing line up. But before we go any further, I'd like to introduce in Ngarimu Blair to formally open our evening together, Tena koe Ngarimu

Ngarimu Blair:

- Mihi -

Frith Walker:

Ladies and gentlemen, it's a really important and incredible conversation that we have tonight. And the panellists we were just talking before about how important this kind of thinking is during these weird times

that we're living in. So a reminder of the title of tonight's conversation, Greening Our City. How creating more green space in the city centre benefits everyone. As we said in the writeups Urbanization, a growing population and climate change call for new solutions to how we create a healthy and happy city centre. Greening a city is an important part of futureproofing our city and improving liveability.

The City Centre Master Plan is a vision to ensure that the heart of our city remains a vibrant, bountiful place for everyone and sets the strategic direction for our city centre over the next 20 years. It was first published in 2012 and recently refreshed following extensive engagement and consultation, which revealed overwhelming support for a: prosperous, liveable green, accessible and inclusive city Centre. Tonight's event is the second in a series of open conversations planned around some of the big topics that that plan addresses like: transport, climate change, connectedness, liveability, affordability and inclusivity, with the aim being to dig into that city centre master plan, remind ourselves of its vision and make sure we're making a future worthy of our mokopuna.

There is some awesome work underway. A prime example is the City Centre Master Plan - transformational move number six, Te hononga tauwhiro taiao, Victoria Street Linear Park, which by the way is out for consultation until Wednesday the 3 November so please do go online at Ak have your say to tell us what you think. Some wonderful words from one of the wonderful people behind that project Te hononga tauwhiro taiao, Victoria Street Linear Park is imagined as a green link, eventually connecting Victoria Park to Albert Park. At the moment we're delivering on the section between Albert Street and Kitchener Street in line with the CRL Aotea Station. Te ha, 'the breath' in Te Reo Maori is the essence of life itself, encompassing all the senses, and Noa is to be free within the journey to experience, journeying from the middle ridges that form through ways of breathing, create a pulse and rhythm of ha within the city centre into the lower part of the city, between Karangahapi and the Waitamata.

Through this movement the Ha is the hub or nucleus that brings into existence pockets of vitality and breathing life into the city coming alive. What an awesome city to be living in that we're talking about it like that, ladies and gentlemen, and far more work than that. A really important mention is that we need a clear strategic direction, but it's also important to translate that vision into delivery. So what are we doing as a city centre to deliver these outcomes? All right, ladies and gentlemen, let's get into it.

Let's conversate, the way this is going to work is it will be an introduction by each of our panellists, followed by a panel discussion where you the audience will have opportunity, as I said before, to ask questions using that Q and A chat. Tonight is about having a friendly, open discussion about greening our city centre, and to raise awareness of that city centre master plan. Reminding you that we have a limited amount of time to get through everything so it'd be really great if your questions are to the point.

And as we like to say that they should actually include a question that's always a good thing. And if you'd like again, if you'd like to speak to a specific member of the panel, please put their name in the chat. Dear panel, over to you for our first section of talking this evening. Please could we ask you to give a brief intro of yourself, how your background or role fits into the topic at hand? And also tell us succinctly we have more talk time coming. Why is Greening a city important? And what are some key features that make a

green city centre? So those two questions again handle them how you will. Why is Greening a city important? And what are some key features that make a green city centre? Dear Ngarimu, can we please start with you?

Ngarimu Blair:

My background is Ngati whatua as I stated in the Karakia, goes from the Maunganui Bluff down to Tamaki, my Maunganui ki Tamaki. I grew up on the South kaupara kind of in the middle of the tribe. I have links into the north kaupara as well from my great grandmother who named me and I've spent most of my working life, if not all of my working life down this end of the tribe with our Ngati whatua Orakei people. And I currently live in the Waitakere ranges between Karangahape and Parua.

Not to be confused with Parau and my role in the last 21 years has been working for Ngati Whatua Orakei the descendants of Tupatiti who established us here from the pa on One Tree Hill really to build relationships and work with good folks like yourselves listening in and on the panel to work how best we can bring back the key parts of our culture that we have lost over the last 181 years, not only our language, but importantly, we've lost a lot of our Ngahere, our biodiversity.

And along with the loss of our great trees, our birds, our insects, we have lost huge parts of our cultural knowledge our matauranga, our science, our songs, our karakia, our poems in relation to all of those things have gone with it all. So it's really important for us to be able to put back a smidgen of what we have lost in such a short time over the last 200 years. If for nothing else, our people can then reconnect with those plants, with those birds and those animals to be inspired by them again, to relate to them again and to actively look after them again and be Kaitiaki once again. So I'll leave it there. Tena koto.

Frith Walker:

Thank you so much, Councillor Richard Hills, can I hand to you? Thanks.

Councillor Richard Hills:

Kia Ora Ngarimu, thank you to Ngati Whatua Orakei for opening this evening and being the Kaitiaki and allowing us to use the city center the way we do today. And thank you for helping us reinvigorate what is there now and what is going to be there in the future. I'm the Chair of the Environment and Climate Change Committee and Councillor Pippa Coom is the deputy chair. We are responsible for the urban Ngahiri strategy to Te Tāruke-ā-Tāwhiri, which is our 'Aucklands Climate plan', which we built from the beginning with our Mana whenua kaitiaki forum, which Ngarimu is co chair, and we are trying our best to restore the mouri of Tamaki Makaurau and what should have been and we hope to see being brought back. And we are seeing that for me. For me greening our city is ensuring that every kid got the opportunity that I did when I was a kid growing up on the main streets of Glenfield and Beach Haven. We had trees everywhere. We had every walk to school, no matter what school I went to, I got a Bush track to go through. There was trees on every street. I was sheltered from the sun and it was enjoyable. There was birds the whole way. It wasn't until I grew up and realized that that tree canopy in Kaipatiki is not across the whole city. And so our drive is to ensure that we lift that urban ngahere, that tree canopy for every kid across every part of Tamaki Makaurau. The city center, which many people forget, also has a

lot of people living there. So it's not just about the visitors and there are thousands of kids that live in our city center, and they also deserve the urban ngahere that I got when I was a kid and that I still enjoy today.

Frith Walker:

Amazing. Just a shout out to all the Beach Haven't kids out there. I just want to acknowledge that. Thank you, Councillor Hills. Howell Davies, keeper of our trees, can we go to you next please sir.

Howell Davies:

Thanks Frith Kia Ora Katoa, good afternoon everyone. My name is Howell Davies, I work in Auckland Council. I'm the principal specialist for the Urban Ngahere. My Department is Park, Sport and Recreation and I guess my role over the last 28 years I've been working in the tree business or tree industry in New Zealand has been about planting and being the kaitiaki of some of the trees that I now see people sitting under. I guess one of the key parts of my journey along has been around working with people like on the panel, looking up to what we can deliver for our communities into the future Greening of the city.

When you look at the city centre master plan, I think back to my involvement in that started back in Auckland City Council days back in probably around 2008, 2009. So I've been on quite a journey. I've enjoyed every second of it. To be honest, what really gets to be out of bed every day is to see the people I work with, the enjoyment that we provide for our communities. We build great communities. We provide connections to nature. I get out every winter, I plant trees.

I still climb trees. I'm an arborist by trade and yeah, as you will have experienced I can be growly on times unfortunately, when people aren't very nice to trees. And I guess that's just part of being somebody that really wants to promote the value of urban nature because we all have to appreciate and live with it. As Ngarimu has pointed out Aotearoa, has had one of the most I guess, fantastic botanical collections of trees that we unfortunately have come and decimated over time. And our role now is to try and promote values and benefits of how we need to recreate it and bring that urban ngahere back to Auckland and back to the North Island, and back to Aotearoa.

The more we can plant trees and preserve, the better it is for all of us, because it's connecting people to nature is good for everybody. It's good for everybody's health.

Frith walker:

Also put it on record that if Howells ever growled me, it was because I was doing something very silly and I deserved a growling so thank you Howell for keeping us aware of the treasure that we have out there and how we should be looking after them. Dear Chloe, can we go to you next please?

Chloe Swarbrick:

Absolutely, Kia Ora. Thank you for opening this space for us. So my name is Chloe Swarbrick, I am a former failed Mayoral candidate, but I now have the privilege of serving as your Auckland Central MP. So if we want to talk about greening the city center, we're one step of the way there. Just I guess to provide some background to the kaupapa that I bring to this very much actually is fundamentally in the charter of

my party. And I know, of course we all come from different backgrounds, but nonetheless, this is the kaupapa that I'm subscribed to fundamentally that is recognition at a base level. Fundamentally to Te Tiriti o Waitangi that is power sharing, land back, moana back control therein as well, and governance, kaitiaki. But at those four core principles, first and foremost, ecological wisdom, recognition of the fact that resources are finite, those that do regenerate need time and space and God forbids, and planning to regenerate. If you accept that as a premise, the next one follows logically, and that is social responsibility known derogatorily on the Internet of social justice. If you accept that those resources are somewhat finite, then we need to ensure that everybody has base level access to them in order to have a civil, let alone functioning society.

From that comes appropriate decision making, devolving decision making powers down to level where it actually affects people. To me, that's what real sustainability looks like. That's what local leadership looks like. It's also about removing some of the centralisation that we've seen over the past two decades in particular, and finally, nonviolence, which I think to see as a sustainability measure, is about recognizing not just the obvious don't like going to war, but from a systems level way of thinking about things. It's about saying if we can design systems that work as best as possible for everybody, we need to have a diversity of perspectives and opinions around the table from the get go so that we don't design systems that leave people out.

And here when I'm thinking about our city center in particular, that's why I'm really stoked with mahi that Auckland Council has been doing with particularly disability advisory groups around making sure that the city center and development therein is more and more accessible to everybody because sustainability has many facets, and I'm sure we'll come to unpack that. Kia Ora

Frith Walker:

Thank you so much, Chloe. There's a couple of quotes coming through about Te Reo Maori being able to speak to the place in a way that in a language of the place understands, so our ability to maybe listen to those voices that are beyond the human as well, sort of getting a bit deeper on it, which I know is what Ngarimu said to us so thank you. Just a reminder, if it's okay, can I ask you to use the Q and A function to ask your questions and not the chat function?

I am a notorious Luddite when it comes to technology. So please, if you can feed it through the Q and A, there's a brilliant team of people helping us make sure that your questions come through and we ask them in the right order if it's okay to send out that little request from your MC, who likes talking but doesn't like pressing buttons. Thanks very much again. Thank you Chloe, amazing korero. Dear Iain, whose name is spelled properly, I just like to acknowledge that this is an Iain with his name spelled properly. Thank you very much. Can we hand to you next, please?

Iain White:

Kia Ora Koto Katoa, thanks everyone, for basically tuning into the event 600 people is a lot of people, really appreciate you spending your evening with us. I'm a planner and social scientist and I've been researching issues connected to the natural and built environments for over 20 years now, which sounds

a lot and particularly how it links to climate change. I did my PhD on this sort of way back at the University of Manchester in the UK and ran a research center that specialized in this and did research on this for the UK government, the EU.

So this goes back quite a long time. The Green Agenda, I moved here about eight years ago, and while there are different policy settings, there's a lot of similarities, particularly regardless of the untapped potential and also why this is so hard to be honest, because things like property rights, which just transcend national boundaries. As an academic, my focus has generally been on knowledge production, so providing evidence of the benefits of urban greening and then insights into how it could be applied in practice. We send you hope is picked up by national governments and city institutions, and there are a huge number of benefits.

In some ways urban greening done well is probably one of the closest things we have to a silver bullet for urban public policy. It can do so much for you. It can cool cities, it can store and slow water to lessen flood risk, it can support biodiversity, it can improve access to and can improve mental health and so on. But beyond its direct contributions to climate policy, I just wanted to flag up something because of the announcement today around densification. I'm leaning research into the 20 Minutes city idea and we know we can make density more politically acceptable by instead of focusing on the numbers of dwellings or the development footprint, we focus on improving the quality of the surrounding environment too. It's all part of the same announcement, or it should be. And that's the message I like to stress today, but I'll stop that and I'll pass back to colleagues.

Frith Walker:

I think that's a message we'd probably like to keep bringing up this evening, if that's right with the panel, you dear to my heart personally, ladies and gentlemen, last but absolutely not least, Natalie Allen.

Dr Natalie Allen:

Kia ora koto, I'm a director of the Urban Advisory, and we're a team of urban strategists. We exist to bring decision makers, iwi hapu, stakeholders and communities together and throughout the whole urban development process to build homes, neighborhoods, towns and cities. We have great privilege of working across scales and across Aotearoa, and our focus is to deliver better outcomes for people and places. So our vision is really for a shared future where all places are good for all people, and greening the city is obviously a critical component of that. And I think and raised so eloquently the full range of ways that greening the city is important, and I think the fundamental one for me, and it's so simple and so complex at the same time, the evidence is overwhelming is that access to nature improves our wellbeing, quite simply that's our physical, mental, emotional and spiritual wellbeing. And we shouldn't need more of a reason than that to make it our focus. And then the key features of a green city center to me are fresh air.

So you mentioned Ha before Frith and that's so important, it's that experiential moment. It's how we are all able to enjoy our surroundings. I think also, a green city center is layered; it's not just about the grand gestures of greenery and open spaces. It's about creating all those small, wonderful, human scaled

moments when you're just interacting with the people and the environment around you. It's biodiverse, and it's connected across all scales as well. And it enables us to be more connected as people and I'll save the rest for the questions.

Frith Walker:

That's amazing, Natalie. Thank you so much. What an incredible range of panellists covering such a broad range of expertise. And I just also like to acknowledge Councillor Pippa Coom, who's with us and will be bringing us home at the end and sending us on our way with thoughts to carry. So I know you'll be listening in Pippa, taking notes and we'll come to you at the end, so thank you for being with us as well. We're going to head into the conversation section of this Auckland conversations there everyone.

So panelists, are you ready? We're very organized. We're going to do this in a very wonderfully try not to talk over each other kind of way, but the idea here is now is to enter into it will have a chat about stuff. So panelists, I'm going to direct questions to you, each individually. But if there's anything you'd like to add to a fellow panelist answer, please raise your hand. And as I said before, I'll try not to be too much like a school teacher, but definitely try and get you all having a chat as much as we can on Zoom.

So, dear Ngarimu, if it's all right to start with you again, I'm actually going to combine a couple of questions because I know you've spoken to this in your own introduction. The topic of conversation tonight, as we know, is Greening the city in terms of how we can incorporate the natural environment and systems thinking into the city center. Can you talk to us about what that means and looks like from a Ngati Whatua Orakei perspective? And are there any examples in the city center that align with your thinking or maybe on the way to aligning that we're working on out there?

Ngarimu Blair:

Yup, greening the city - I'd probably call it browning the city. We want to make it maori again and Greens, a part of it. I was just going through John Logan Campbell's book pounamu again last night, and he's talking in there about approaching into Orakei Bay on his dinghy and pulling up and wanting a kai and within a few minutes they've got 15 kukupa, 15 wood pigeons for dinner and chucked in a pot. So I guess the simple goal for many maori, is we just want to eat decent pigeons in the city again, not those rats with wings so how do we go about achieving that? So that comes down to what we're planting in our parks. We need the puriri rather than the Oak tree. And what are we planning in the streets? What are we encouraging private properties to plant as well? So yeah, really, just thinking with our stomachs on this one is kind of helpful, but also thinking about what do birds need to eat to survive? I've been around a little bit now, I think we started scrapping with hells predecessors the city arborists about what was being planted in the city centre. And we've won a few battles, we learned off each other and we did some good stuff in Aotea centre that started out with the first plan - I can't remember what they were hell, but I think the trees were from Mexico, but we ended up with mostly natives, and I've seen tui up there coming out of the town hall, which is amazing. St. Pat Square, another one which started out as all exotics in the first scheme, which we changed. Wynyards, just taking it to another level as has key street, but probably a little piece of paradise for me, which looks a little bit maybe what it used to look like for my ancestors six

and seven generations ago when Hodgson arrived and Logan Campbell is a little bit left down in Simon Street Cemetery, under the Grafton Bridge at the headwaters of the Waiparuru stream.

A little piece of magic still, there a lot of exotic stuff as well, but there's a Kia Kia stand in there. I hope it's still there and been there for a couple of years and a 30, 40 meters stretch of the original stream. So that's what we should be aiming for to me and noting some good stuff that's happened in the last 20 years. Kia Ora.

Frith Walker:

Kia Ora Ngarimu and thank you for all your mahi in helping those things happen. I might actually throw to Howell next, just because the conversation seemed to hit your way, Howell. And a question here, which I think hopefully follow on from Ngarimu definitely but there's a lot of technical work that goes into ensuring trees not only survive but flourish in the urban environment. Can you give us a bit of an overview on this if you had any recent examples of where this has been done in the city center and maybe adding to that what happens when we plant species that are Indigenous. What happens when you're working with plants that are of a land? In your humble opinion good sir.

Howell Davies:

It's been a long journey, I guess Frith in that to talk about you know what do we need to provide for trees in the city center I guess in urban spaces, the biggest issues that we face is finding space for trees above ground space is relatively easy for us to see and manage. It's the below ground space that's really important, the actual physical connection to Papatuanuku. The trees need to connect to our land to actually grow well. I think we're starting to recognize that a lot more now with some of the designs in terms of the work I guess I've been involved with over the last, I guess 15 years really has been focused on trying to work with engineers and planners and everybody else to understand the issues that they have with us planting trees.

Because when I first started with City Park Services back in 1995, I was planting trees where we literally cut out a little hole in tar seal pavement and planted a tree. Now we dig very large trenches, we fill them with good quality soil, we provide a really good environment for the trees to grow in. And I think that's I guess one of the biggest challenges are faced over the time. As Ngarimu has talked about. If you look at Aotea center, we're dealing with a rooftop garden not many people realize that you have trees planted on top of what is the roof of the car park it's a four storey car park below. So managing how we can plant trees into that environment is very challenging. Some of it's been successful, and some of it is not, same as St Pats Square. I think for me over the last ten years Auckland Council has really focused on providing really high quality space, which I think was first rolled out with Queen Street, then the Wynyard quarter, which you've been involved with over a decade now and seeing how that's developed, I think we've challenged everybody else to give I guess, trees space, because at the end of the day, trees are probably the most important part of that urban fabric where we want people to connect to.

They actually provide that realism, I guess, of nature still there in the city, although we know it's sirens and lights and everything else, and that's really foreign to birds. But the one thing that birds really

recognize trees, and as Ngarimu says, we now start to see two see Tui in the city because we now have things like kowhai planted, which are a food source for them. Interestingly, I saw a wood pigeon sitting on one of those exotic trees on Merrill Drive last year, and that's just a resting place.

So it's a funny thing that trees, birds and animals don't really recognize the difference between exotic and native trees. But in my experience, the more that we've worked with Ngati Whatua Orakei and Mana Whenua and just listening to the kaitiaki of the land of what we should be planting, some of the spaces that we're now creating are really successful and putting us on an international stage. You look at Key Street, key street is a great example of what is a mini forest. We've created a mini New Zealand forest right on our doorstep and so when people come to New Zealand, when they finally allowed back on those thousands of people that turn up on their cruise ships and they get off the boat and they walk along Key Street and they will see what was as Ngarimu talked about, original species that were found in the original forest of Aotearoa and that's really challenging to do that in a space that's dominated by cars, vehicles, utilities, everybody wants the lights, everybody needs water, sewer. Finding the space to actually put a tree in amongst all of that plethora of utilities is really challenging.

And I guess through engineers, maybe it's me banging on their doors long enough to encourage them to provide space for trees, because as you now see the trees that we've got planted in Wynyard Quarter have, it's a very successful, prosperous, engaging area that brings people to Auckland. That's creating that as a group of people and there's a lot of hard mahi that gone into that, as you know, with all of the engineers and the contractors and everything else, that's not delivered overnight. There's years of work going into that. So I think we need to sort of recognize.

Frith Walker:

Thank you Howell. I don't want to sound glad, but we also care about oxygen, which is why we should care about trees. I think also encourage the audience if you haven't done study into what happens under the ground, we think that a tree is that big, but actually there's quite a lot if it's right to recommend the book in front of you Howell, 'finding the mother tree' is a very useful read, but understanding what trees need underneath the ground is not a bad bit of research to do.

Ladies and gentlemen, I'm going to stay on the theme of what council's up to if it's right to hand to you Councillor Richard Hills. And would you be okay to tell us about some of the work that is being done in the city centre that shows the council's level of commitment to achieving some of the outcomes of those strategic plans that we're putting out there?

Councillor Richard Hills:

Yeah, absolutely. I think just a list more generally, the recent big changes, I guess in 2018, the natural environment targeted rate across the whole city, but also the city center enabled hundreds of millions of dollars through Aucklanders, offering basically the submitters well over three to two thirds of the submitters said they wanted to pay more for improving our biodiversity across Tamaki Makaurau and that includes tree planting and everything else. But also this year, we approved the ten year budget and we

secured significant budget for more trees, including 11,000 more mature street trees, 200 ha of forests in our regional parks, 200,000 seedlings in our nurseries.

But also all of our projects now there's a far bigger focus on native trees, forests as Howell was saying, Council help improve these things, the public help support these things and lobbyists. But it's the people like Howell who do the mahi the people that, Hal took Councilor Coom and I up to the black bridge nurseries where I've seen trees that have been sitting there for years and years and years ready to go into our projects. So I've seen the puriri that have just been recently planted in Westmere Road, we stood next to him there and all the planting that was the 200 mature native trees that have been planted in Te wananga and Key Street, and that was Howells team, but also Ngati Whatua Orakei nurseries.

I was there on the day that all that understory was planted and as both Ngarima and Howell have said, they're the original plants that were there before, when it was coastline, and that was so special, speaking to those from Ngati Whatua Orakei who were planting it and bringing back those Indigenous species. But also, I think when you talk from a climate perspective, yes, trees produce carbon but I think one of the biggest things about things like Key Street and Te wananga that was also about making that space. So removing four lanes of traffic and providing space for trees, trees aren't going to fix climate change.

Yes, if we planted half a trillion, I think it is it will reduce carbon emissions by about 25%, but we can do our part, obviously water quality and air quality, but it is if you are transforming spaces and removing concrete and removing cars and removing things and giving it over back to nature. And in this case, Key Street, Te wananga, Wynyard quarter as Howell says by the viaduct events centre there, those Groves of pohutukawa have hundreds of tui in them. I wait for my bus now on Key Street and there are tui and piwakawaka in those trees already.

I mean, pre lockdown and those trees have only been there a short time, so already the birds and animals are coming back. So I know it's not perfect, but I think we are really ramping up in all cases extra budgets, but I know that healthy waters, your team Frith at Panuku, all the new Greening of our streams and getting rid of the pipes and putting in under story in those native plants like right across Tamaki Makaurau. But the Victoria Linear Park is going to be I don't think people realize it but I think it could be better than the design.

The design is amazing, but people are already saying there's too much concrete and probably four or five years ago, people were saying, how do you rip up all that concrete? So I think that the public is moving ahead of us, which is fantastic. But I think we're going to have forests all the way through our city center. And if we're doing this now, imagine what people are going to be demanding and elected members working in partnership finally, from the beginning with Mana Whenua are going to achieve in the next five to ten years.

There was almost no trees in the wynyard quarter twelve years ago and it's like a forest down there between all the buildings. So yeah, there's a lot more to come, but I'm pretty proud of what the city is doing and all the workers across it.

Frith Walker:

Yes, Kia ora Richard, it's a team sport one might offer. It's pretty exciting to be a part of that change and exciting to see where it might end up. When somebody says plant trees that you won't get to sit under. So ability to think long range and crediting people like your good self on thinking like that. I wonder if we can stay at the why are we having this conversation level which Richard just touched on and go to you, natalie. Are you able to Dr Natalie Allen to explain to us the concept of designing for well being and what parts are trees, plants, parks and green spaces play in this easy.

Dr Natalie Allen:

Easy Frith! Well I guess first of all, well being is really multifaceted. So we need to consider the impacts of the world around us on our health, our emotional, spiritual and cultural well being as well as our impact on the world around us. So I really connect with the Te Whare Tapa wha model that also includes whenua, the land and routes as part of our overall wellbeing and how we understand it. I think also there are other ways that you can kind of look at it in terms of wellbeing being, being about our subjective perceptions of how we're being affected and how we're affecting the world around us.

Social connection, safety and security, as Chloe mentioned, is a critical part of well being, community wealth is actually a really key part of wellbeing as well our education skills, ability to have leisure and recreation opportunities, the access and mobility we have to move around and connect with one another. All these kind of different aspects come together and critically cultural identity underpins so much of that as well. And then we've kind of got the usual understanding of health as well being, the physical impact on us. And I think it's so often we fall into the trap of trying to oversimplify it, but we really need to live with that complexity and acknowledge that it is so multifaceted and it needs to function across scales. I guess the part that trees, plants, parks, green spaces, etc play in this is because it's really about creating those spaces, those environments for all those well beings to come together.

Because we exist in the world around us, and we like the tactility of it. We want to be able to engage. And I think that trees, plants, etcetera enable us to do that. There's some fantastic research actually that's been done and shout out to Gayle Souter Brown from AUT, who's looked at the impact of sensory gardens on how students were able to sort of stay on top of their lives and that extends to all of us. That sensory experience around us is critical, and I guess I could cover it later.

But I just also want to flag that edible landscapes are also critical in this process. And so when we think of wellbeing in our health, it's not just that they create spaces where we can breathe fresh air, etcetera. But they also give us the opportunity to have access to food. And we know that across our city, that is an issue for many people.

Frith Walker:

Awesome. Thank you, Natalie. Chloe?

Chloe Swarbrick:

Yeah. I apologize. I just wanted to but in there, not but in but to add that what Natalie just said, but we know and we have an evidence base from He Ara Oranga, the mental health and Addiction inquiry that the government Commission which actually was kind of groundbreaking in the very first time the government commissioned research on mental health which wasn't triggered by a really traumatic event, but also looked at the social and environmental factors that determine mental ill health. And what it found is reflective of the majority of contemporary research out there that all of us, of course, have biological predispositions towards greater or lesser manifestation of mental ill health.

But it is largely our environment and our context that can help to turn those things up or down a notch. So particularly it's that access to those outdoor spaces as Councillor Hills was saying before we've got a number of people living in the city center that's been particularly profoundly felt during the covid lockdowns, as I've been advocating for testing stations and vaccination sites that people can walk to because we also have the lowest rates of car ownership here, 40,000 people live in the apartments and townhouses in the city center, and I'm one of them and this is our backyard.

So having access to a space that actually is a backyard, particularly as we contemplate being MPSUD changes going through Parliament tonight. These are really important, critical conversations that we have to be having about how we also enable adjust, transition, something which doesn't set us up for potential gentrification of these spaces and push people who can't afford to be in these spaces further and further out. I don't want to see a future where we have enclosed gardens, New York or London for the old money. I want to see public spaces that are available and accessible to everybody and that are informed by transitional move number one and the CCMP, which is maori outcomes.

Frith Walker:

Amazing, I think because we've just totally practiced this and we're awesome. I think you actually just managed to ask the question I was going to ask you about the impact you believe green spaces and urban environments will have on mental health and the wellbeing of our communities. So I might follow on from that with you, Chloe, and say as MP for central can you give us some examples of developments and innovations that you're proud to see coming to life? or that give you hope?

Chloe Swarbrick

Yeah I'm really actually making to the point that Ngarimu was making before about 'browning the city' and what Natalie was saying around the likes of our soil, there's some really cool opportunities with particularly community gardens and the opportunity that that provides for actually reinvigorating our soil, which has been so depleted by some of the actions that largely actually colonial practice have imposed on this whenua. So there's been some really awesome proposals and some amazing pricing from people like Sarah Kennedy, from The Love of Bees made a shout out actually to Waitamata local board as well, who have invested quite a substantial amount in doing the background work on what it takes for Council to approve kind of spaces and places for these community gardens that might potentially actually require legislative change because of the deeds of transfer for the land.

So there's a cool local bill potentially to progress through Parliament so everyone keep an eye out for that and then also progressing some mahi over the past few years, particularly off the back of learning more and more about what was playing out at Canal Road for tree protection. So in the Environment Select Committee when we were doing RMA reforms about two, three years ago, now I put up an amendment at the Environment Select Committee, I didn't get that through, so I'll leave you all to read the politics there.

Eugenie Sage also actually has members bailing the ballot at the moment that would reinstate that too. I think around the CCMP and around Queen Street in particular and the kind of stitch across the parks that we've been speaking to. There's some really amazing opportunities that I'm really stoked to support. But I also think thinking about a really unique space right next to the Hauraki golf is really also quite phenomenal opportunity for us. And that is another thing which is reflected on the CCMP. And there's been an amazing example of what can happen when mana whenua are properly meaningfully engaged and Council works and does the mahi and invests, so more of that please.

Frith Walker:

Awesome work. Thank you, Chloe. I've got a very selfish question about apartment dwellers, but I might hold that if we have time. Iain to you good sir. You recently said in an article in 'The Listener' that one idea is to think of nature strategically as green infrastructure. Can you tell us what that means? And can you see how and where this approach could be applied and should be applied to Auckland's City Center?

Iain White:

Thanks Frith. Well, green infrastructure or GI academics came up with about 20 years ago partly out of frustration that the contribution nature brings wasn't recognized. So the idea is we've got Gray infrastructure, which we know about the pipes and roads, and we know those perform functions and we accept that uncritically. We've also got green infrastructure, trees, parks, community gardens, the green strips by highways even and they perform functions too. So the idea was by adopting the terminology of traditional infrastructure, its benefits could become more easily accepted by engineers and politicians and so on.

There's a few extra nuances which were it helps you look at it from a strategically planned network perspective by the infrastructure terminology just automatically makes you think about scale and connectivity. And also another thing that it's about is around multifunctionality. So a lot of our Gray infrastructure is they don't serve multiple purposes, car park does a car park. But if you think about the value we have in urban land, we need it to be multifunctional. We need it to do health, climate adaptation, habitat, recreation and so places which are more multifunctionality should be more valuable. That's one of the ideas.

I think Green research is a little like vaccination rates in the fact that every little helps, but you want to target it really to get the biggest advantages. We did some research looking at the impacts of climate change and trying to look at the densification agenda and look at the to try and quantify and get a beggar on how much green infrastructure could make a difference and take the load of our pipes. In order to give that financial calculus, we want to tell even a small amount of green infrastructure. 5% or 10% of green in

green in matrix green will have a significant influence by reducing the load on your pipes so it can actually save money. And we can quantify that. And then we added another layer of information, which is around the characteristics of neighbourhoods. We know that poor areas have less parks, for example. So by targeting investment in green obstruction areas where we know there are green deserts where we have underserved population, we can actually use our scarce public resources pretty well.

And the last thing we did was we looked at who owns the land. So basically one of the problems with this entire agenda is that private property rights mean you can't do what you want when you want to do a network. But just by looking at publicly owned land Council land, we worked out it was completely feasible to have this effect on surface run off. So one of the threats and I'll just finish off by saying a couple of wider points around, I think one of the real threats and opportunities is synergies with the rapid densification agenda we're having right now and if we don't take proactive steps, the green space we have now will be the most we will ever have. Developments going to gradually road what we have. We've got creep in urbanization, and we need to focus on the quality of life associated with that. Community gardens has come up a few times, which are a brilliant example of social connectivity as well as food miles and food security health. So we need to look at the spaces between development footprints, which we don't do very well. But if you think about it from an infrastructure perspective, it makes sense.

I just want to end up by saying that every park or green space anyone listened to this has ever enjoyed was a result of a battle of a public space that might have happened long before you were even born. Those green spaces you enjoy today are a gift from past activists, planners and politicians. And that's what I want us to think about today is how can we given our development pressures? How can we leave a beneficial legacy to who comes behind us, too?

Frith Walker:

Amazing. Ian. Thank you. What I'd like to do now, if it's all right with the panellists jump between our prepared questions and what we can see coming through in the Q and A so lovely people putting questions in the Q and A thank you. I'm going to jump around and hopefully get to a brilliant range if possible. If it's all right, I'm going to start with a question I can see from Margaret Stanley.

But it follows on from something Iain asked, and it's pretty central to our conversation around the CBD. How can private businesses and landowners in the city centre to be supported and incentivized to plant native species to increase biodiversity and cultural benefits. Does anyone on the panel want to have a crack at that one as a starter? They need to, we'd like them to.

Chloe Swarbrick:

I can give a really oh, no. Iain, go for it.

Iain White:

I'll be very quick then, I think it's not the most productive Avenue to follow. I think you have your planning wheels, which can protect stuff, but really, a lot of the nature that we see in gardens isn't native, there's a colonial legacy. But if you look at who owns land in urban areas, you can really make a lot of ground with

regard to using the state or even having planning policies, which, if we're going to have much more denser urban footprints, we need to leave her an investment in greening attached to that direct investment.

Frith Walker:

Chloe, did you want to get in there too?

Chloe Swarbrick:

I was just going to try out a bit of a grenade for one to respond to, which is one of our golf courses also a point, actually, about affordable housing and the links to which will go to subsidize with people calling rent and rates certain kinds of activities in our city.

I just wanted to go to the point that had been made by Iain about where we can most productively use our resources in there and I think councils lands that it currently has access to. But also I think providing greater education for people by virtue of exposure to these trees. These ngahere in public spaces is also incredibly beneficial. Inviting the public to engage in things like hands on tree planting is also massively beneficial. I was over in the UK back when we were allowed to internationally travel with it being ten years subsequent to them passing their equivalent of the Zero Carbon Act, the Climate Change 2008 act, and they had their equivalent of the Ministry of the Environment, working with the Ministry of Education on how they could better improve well being outcomes for school kids, but also for the general populace, as well as greater buy into the climate action that the government was hoping to achieve by getting people out in nature and engaging hands on in these activities. And I guess that is kind of the purpose behind initiatives like the green Infrastructure Fund as well.

Frith Walker:

Thank you, Chloe. Natalie.

Dr Natalie Allen:

I just wanted to add that I think the real opportunity here and Chloe already gave a shout out to the Fantastic Group for the love of bees, there's a real opportunity to support these grassroots organizations more, and they can be best supported by also partnering them with a lot of these businesses who oftentimes are actually trying to seek out opportunities. And it's really a case of council being the connector between these different groups to be the catalysts for opportunities, because I think in that sense, and by supporting those grassroots groups, you're sort of on funding businesses in that way.

And I think that's an opportunity that we can push a lot more as we see more development happening in the city. And just in case I don't get the chance to mention it later, we have huge opportunities at the moment, the land around the CRL stations. Dear, I mentioned whatever may happen with our Port to see these kinds of grassroots organizations becoming our brilliant engagement place making tools so that we can actually decide together what we want those spaces to look like and engaging businesses in that process will be critical to the success as well.

Frith Walker:

Amazing Natalie. Thank you, Iain did you want to add in there?

Iain White:

Yeah, I just wanted to link and just grow quickly with the grassroots organizations with another question that comes through with leftover spaces. We have a term for this in planning, slope - space left over after planning, which are just little bits on the corner that you can't get a dwelling on you'd landscape a bit. But there's movements particularly in the UK called Gorilla Gardening. So this doesn't have to be a formal thing by policy on this day is that they just planted veggies down a strip under cover of darkness.

And it started a movement of these spaces agreeing, but they're just monocultural deserts, it's just a little bit of grass. We don't necessarily want them to be to perform its function anymore. The community wants something different and they just planted veggies all down. If you Google Gorilla Garden, it's just a really cool set of grassroots people doing what they want and spaces which are left over after planet.

Frith Walker:

Amazing, Natalie. I'm just checking is that a new hand up?

Dr Natalie Allen:

I just wanted to quickly add to that. In Auckland City, we have a whole lot of 'bonus floor areas' they're called Professor Dory Reeves has actually done a lot of work in the space in terms of identifying them, they're places that are meant to be public, even though they're part of kind of commercial premises. And so raising the profile of those spaces as part of that whole joining the dots between business and grassroots groups, I think is part of that whole opportunity that I was speaking to. So thanks for triggering that thought Iain.

Frith Walker:

And what I'll do is follow on from the questions but going to a question from the audience and opening it up to the rest of the panel as well. We're in a biodiversity crisis and climate emergency. How will central and local government ensure that people living in more dense housing have access to space to grow their own food, contribute to soil, house, feeding the greater ecosystem? We're already sort of in this topic, but who else would like to pick that up, Richard?

Councillor Richards Hills:

Yeah sure. We are purchasing about \$50 million worth of parks and reserves each year so that helps a bit. The other thing on Berms, Councillor Pippa Coom has been fighting this fight for 10 to 11 years or longer, that the use of berms should be an obvious thing, apart from maybe two or three rules like blocking sight lines and damaging infrastructure and being okay about it if it has to be dug up, the rest I feel like should be pretty much up to the people near those Berms or that tend to those berms or have to mow those anyway.

So Pippa and I are going to try again to try and loosen up that so that people would have the opportunity to plant on those pieces of land. There are community groups already doing great urban farming of things within the city centre and surrounds. I mean, I personally don't know if there is something standing in the way of people doing that, but myself and Pippa would follow up in a heartbeat of how we can help people have access to berms or gardens. There's plenty of green spaces around the city that could be better utilized.

And if people are having issues with that, we'll follow it up. But I mean, there's nothing that right now that I think would preclude us doing that from a building or resource consent. I'm not sure that we could require apartments to be built with gardens or veggie gardens or be that prescriptive, but I think a lot of people are moving that way as well, because it's actually becoming a marketable thing for whanau and for people to go to those or purchase those apartments or rent those apartments. But access to soil and being able to not only be around natives but also be able to grow your own food. So yeah, any ideas are welcome and Pippa and I would gladly follow those up.

Frith Walker:

And thinking about this sort of in a bit of other solutions out there. Natalie, back to you, and then over to Chloe, but as you were saying before and also, do you want to follow on from that?

Dr Natalie Allen:

Sure. I feel like I've already said enough, but I think what's really interesting is that we've just seen this huge trend over time of different community groups mobilizing, everything from kind of your sort of has been around for a long time, like Oakley Creek to the Sunny nook community group with life and reserve is just one example. And there's the Papakura Stream restoration. And I think what would be really fantastic from an innovation point of view is to actually network those groups together as part of this whole process, because while I totally understand that tonight is about the inner city and that's critical our whole city is a system and so actually understanding sort of the potential impact of all these groups when we think of it in that way is where I think we'll get a real shift.

And because obviously Council has a really significant role, but it's about the whole team of Aucklanders is going to be required to actually get this to work and to turn things around for the city.

Frith Walker:

Yeah, absolutely.

Chloe Swarbrick:

My two cent on this is, as far as kind of emergencies go and I say this is a person who fought for two years in Parliament for the declaration of the climate emergency. I don't leave the politics to the politicians. It's real easy to come through as a rhetoric. But as we've all seen politically so called economically difficult to do the follow through. But we've also seen in the context of covid 19 that all of the things that were told for so long were politically or economically or whatever else impossible were always a matter of political willpower.

So I'd say I've got in the background here, going up Queen Street, the school strike from a year or two ago now, and that was mass mobilization of a bunch of it on the rangitahi, but nonetheless, that one off action is unfortunately, while a huge, amazing effort not going to be the thing that is going to require that same effort through the nine to twelve months that it takes for policy to pass through Parliament into legislation, let alone for a budget. So I think all eyes actually need to be on the budget in May next year in Parliament to see if it lives up to the challenge of what is particularly going to be something informed by the emissions reductions plans and the nationally determined contribution to being announced in the not too distant future.

But I also just wanted to ask this question actually to Ngarimu, because I understand that there's been some mahi on mara kai out at the marae, I think that there are amazing lessons that we can learn about that kaupapa and that mahi about how we can get more of that happening across Tamaki Makaurau.

Ngarimu Blair:

Just thinking historically, we had some epic gardens in Tamaki. I'm just thinking of our great ancestors, who she would market gardens that went from Maungakiakia north side all the way to Ellerslie, which is 2 km huge gardens.

So once we were gardeners. Our generation has very much lost their skills that our great grandparents had, they were living by the maramataka, my great grandparents generation, less so the grandparents and definitely not my parents or my generation - so it's a lost skill in art that we have been trying to bring back. I've had a couple of gos at community gardens Mara kai with spectacular failures. 100 people turn up on day one, a month later there's five people and three months later it's weeds. So I've had a few gos, but we have learned a lot and we do now have a pretty epic garden up at Porewa, which is up Keepa Road in Orakei, developed by Rob Small, who came into our iwi from a parks background actually, and did his thesis on Marama taka and Mara kai.

That one's really pumping at the moment. It's probably only operating it looks like at about 33%, but a heap of kai is coming out of there, we've had plenty of kumara come out of there and it's just beginning to really engage whanau in the village, we have Tuesdays you can go and pick up free veggies. I guess the next part is then to teach everyone how to make kale taste nice. So we'll need to add those sorts of lessons, but yeah, that is definitely something to come and visit and look at and learn from and advise us on as well, because we're still learning.

I guess it's more places like that that we need right across our city, so that people can connect with and we have a lot of housing New Zealand Kangaroo homes very near to the garden as well, so that's one of the aims is to bring people and attract them in and they can lighten the load on their household bills by grabbing some Kai and helping out in the garden.

Frith Walker:

Awesome Kia ora Ngarimu. Iain, we might come to you next with that greenwall question, but is it right to just go to Howell, who's had his hand up very politely for a long time now?

Howell Davies:

Thanks Frith just really on the back of what Natalie was saying around us as Auckland Council working with local community groups, I think we've learnt a lot over the last decade around how do we engage with our communities, especially in the parks Department. I guess our main goal is to try and connect with the people that want to volunteer and provide, I guess love and care to our parks, and we're just a facilitator and enable a big shout out to our regional park staff and our volunteer coordinators in the local parks that work with communities.

We deliver hundreds of thousands of hours of work across the region in the network of 4000 odd parks. In terms of that sort of growing locally like Ngarimu in my time I have seen community gardens come and go. It really needs, I guess a little bit of that sort of structure put around it and all for gorilla gardening Iain, it's a challenging space to get into. But from a Council perspective, we're the landowner. We're more than happy to work with communities, to see what we can do to grow food within parks. But we also need the communities to work with us to help us support what we're trying to do in terms of planting, looking after, etcetera. So I guess it's a two way agreement in some ways.

We are certainly there to try and facilitate the public and their accessibility to parks and work with the various spaces that we have. Unfortunately, sometimes we're constrained, as you know some of our parks, unfortunately, have been previously landfills, so growing food on them is not particularly appropriate in some cases the same with planting veggie gardens next to the road corridor. We still have diesel buses that put out a lot of particulates. So there are things to think about in terms of growing in your local road corridor, street environments.

But I guess for us as a parks Department, we want to work with the public to help Ngarimu's example around what they're doing at Porewa, I'd encourage everybody to go and have a look it's fantastic operation. It brings the life and spirit to the place. You can see the people that working there are really getting something out of it.

Frith Walker:

Amazing. There's a lovely question in the chat, which I might come back to you around how people can get involved. But Iain, can we address the greenwall question, please? Greenwall starting to join green roofs is something that developers are doing and councils are allowing.

Iain White:

Greenwalls are really cool, actually. I mean, literally, they are cooling and that's my one joke. Enjoy it. If you've ever been near one they are really nice things to look at and they do change the atmosphere and they do cool it. It's difficult because the problem we have is that the research suggests that it's not a policy

problem as such, because it's a developer architecture desire. Really, they're worried about ongoing maintenance, if it looks a bit crap, if things die and they're worried whether they know how to do it.

And we did some research in the UK on where were the green moves and to cross reference the green moves with the policy framework. So you'd imagine places with better, stronger policy would have more green moves. But there wasn't any correlation at all. One of the places that had it turned out, it was just a guy like Howell. He works at the Council developers doing something and you chat to them and they'd put it in and you sort of derisk it a little bit by showing them how to do it.

So it was around Champions within the Council that really pushed it and within the architecture sector as well as the development sector. So it's limited to mandate this. Germany did it with some of their green roofs coverage, but the green roofs are just not as effective because they're so high up, their cooling effect is so far removed from where you are is that it doesn't translate as well as green walls.

Frith Walker:

Thank you. It's one of those things that's moved to conversation on, but maybe there's more conversations to go on from there. Ladies and gentlemen, I'm really conscious of sending you all home on time. So what we're going to start doing now is getting into our final few questions. So please, panelists, there's something that you haven't been able to say that you want to say, jump in there and raise your hand. I'm going to go for this question that just comes through.

How can we better enable leftover spaces? What did you say? And slopes ie public open space that is not used for sports is just part of grass in our city, not just the city centre, to plant it with native trees more urgently, noting that Council has limited resources to do that themselves. It probably also relates to the micro question how can we make I think you said this, Iain, the small gestures that actually carry a lot in this conversation feelings from the panel. How can we do this?

Councillor Richard Hills:

I think once again it's about that ground up, what Iain was saying and Ngarimu was saying as well around you need community around something. Council can't just enable something and hope it works. So I think we've got funds that we passed last year this year, sorry that people can apply for community groups and to partner with us. Our urban ngahere strategy now almost every local board is rolling out their own urban ngahere strategy and it is about those little bits and those little areas and places. You can have mini biodiversity, mini forests basically.

There's so many good ideas in Northcote. It feels like it's been forever over a decade, right Frith. The Northcote Greenway just years of what we thought, and it was largely ideas from kids from school students, and it felt like an impossible idea. Now we're redeveloping that space with panuku and the Greenway is going to be backed onto all the schools. So the ownership there, the Kaitiaki is the schools. Mana whenua have been working with the Kaipatiki project kind of everyone getting around together. So you have the ownership. So there will be food, forests and gardens. But there will be a whole lot of native greenery there. But it's also an infrastructure project to prevent flooding and to improve water quality. But those ideas can only come from community and they can only come if everyone works together. Council

is not great at just pointing things out and hoping that they work. They really need the ground up work. And I've seen when I was on the local board a small group of people volunteers like begging us to do stuff in our parks and reserves.

Now, with a little bit of support from Council over time it's grown, pest free Kaipatiki is there now. I think there's something like 87 halos across Kaipatiki with hundreds of volunteers and that's just neighbors doing. There might be one thing a year, one plant or one rat trap or one whatever it is and people work on their strengths. And I think if you have ideas, take them to your local board, take them to your community groups all over the city, talk to your local Iwi and there's something for everyone or create an idea yourself.

But I guess if you're waiting for council to figure out what to do with those little bits, it probably will take a while and it'll be bureaucratic. So we really need people to step up and ask us for help or just don't ask for help and just do it and then apologize later, but I didn't say that.

Frith Walker:

Didn't hear you didn't record you saying that just as a shout out if anybody who was in the untouched world, awataha stream project it was over a decade ago, is listening to this call. Your work counted. I just want I know you're all grown ups now, but your work counted just to pass that on. Howell my friend, you have your hand up?

Howell Davies:

Thanks Frith, really just following on from what Richard said in terms of how do people make use of these spaces within our parks network is go and talk to your local board and talk to our local volunteer coordinators. You'll find a lot of information through Auckland council's website. If you go to our Parks Facebook page, you'll find we're able to connect. We will be able to connect you to a local volunteer group that can help with, as Richard said, trapping or tree planting or weed control. So really, it's about we can help enable, but the communities also need to reach out to us and then we can work with them and help provide them with the tools because I think that's where our best successes are going to be going forward with is to actually provide the tools to the local communities to help them look after the parks in the way that they would like to see a parks looked after.

We can provide those base services, but yeah, the extra little bit. That's where we look on our communities to try and help us. The local boards are definitely a place to start. As Richard said, 16 of the local boards now are involved in the local board Ngahere program and they provided funding and we've helped them develop specialized individual planting plans or planting opportunities for each of their local board areas. And in those documents, there's opportunities for the public to have feedback. Call our call center and they can put people in touch with how to best get connected with our volunteer groups, etc that we have out there. So yeah, certainly we want to help, we just need people to put the hand up.

Frith Walker:

Amazing. Can I just acknowledge the person who's identified themselves as a young student. Good on you for being here and good only for your passion. What he just said, get in there.

Councillor Richard Hills:

Just on that Frith a lot of just on the Council resource and the promise around the urban ngahere. I saw a question earlier, a lot of that will go to the areas of need. Everyone will get a little bit with the ten year budget budget that we put forward, but it will be going to those local boards who have 6%. 9% urban street canopy. And those are where those big trees are going to go and those are where the focus has to go. Because I have 35% urban tree cover in my local board area, I am going to get a little bit more, but we need to focus on those areas which are so poorly served. And it's unfair that kids are still growing up with no trees.

Frith Walker:

Thank you. Thank you. Councillor Hills, I'm going to squeeze two more questions and to the whole panel, agree that green spaces create places for all wellbeing is to come together. What we're missing with this discussion is the connectivity between these spaces. We can't design spaces that are inaccessible eg places that are not wheelchair or pushchair friendly. Does anyone want to take a good answering that one for me, Natalie?

Dr Natalie Allen:

Fantastic point. And just to kind of give an overseas example, I'm sometimes reluctant to do that because I think we can actually do better than overseas. And we have Teo Maori so we definitely should be doing better in terms of green spaces and that connection to our environment. But one amazing place where I've had the pleasure of going is Fryburg in Germany with a neighbourhood called the Vauban. And what's so fantastic about the area is that accessibility is actually baked into the design of that place. And here I often kind of feel like Gray guides you, whereas there you genuinely feel that green guides you. So all the kind of access to mobility is really framed around this network of green spaces, and it's visual they have a light rail corridors that are planted in grass. When you sort of cross the road, you're actually crossing that. What feels like a green space and from a distance especially visually, looks like one. But they also have all the kind of significant wraparound social service. So it's not just about planting trees, it's about all the programs. And there's a whole kind of economic development component to this around how they set up their businesses to make them accessible. And again, I just think that that's a really great example without going into too much more detail that we can learn from. And again, it's that whole systems approach to solving the problem.

Frith Walker:

Beautiful Natalie. Thank you, Chloe.

Chloe Swarbrick:

I mean one of the core tenets again to respond to the City Centre master plan, which is a beautiful, wonderful document first from 2012 and refreshed in 2020 with its own website is access for everyone.

And while that totally is talking about the design of Auckland City Centre, it also very much has at its core accessibility and streams for people. To give you an example of something that has been a really interesting space to kind of have this fight. It's actually been the playground on Parliament's Lawn. So when I was first elected at the end of 2017, there was a lot of moves to make Parliament more family friendly. And the speaker announced that we would be having a playground on Parliament Lawn. I wrote to him at that point in time, pointing out that unless it was a playground available for and accessible for all children, then it probably didn't fit particularly well with the Kaupapa that he was trying to promote and put forward a number of design and accessibility principles, which should be, I think, core tenant to everything that at the very least, the public sector is funding, and at that point in time I didn't hear anything back and a few months later, plans were solidified, and I was later told that the heritage standards around Parliament's building and the character protections or whatever else was being extrapolated ultimately meant that the playground had to be designed at 150K odds that it ended up being developed to look the way that it's being a slide and some steps that kids could play on, which again, is not something accessible to kids in wheelchairs or with other disabilities. So, I think so often we end up prioritizing something like aesthetics when it should be the case that form follows function. And it should be the case that we should be putting people at the centre of everything that we're designing and people of all walks of life, including those that are so frequently excluded from being at the decision-making table. And there's some really great universal accessibility standards that we can impose on the way that we do things here, I guess just finally talking about how we can make that more accessible to everybody, particularly to apartment dwellers and to the new homes that we're hoping will come on stream as a result of things like being MPSUD changes, that all comes down to creating some universal standards because the products will then fit that mould. So there's some great opportunities with potentially building and construction requirements.

Frith Walker:

Amazing. Thank you, Chloe. Ngarimu, if I can go to you for the last question. If we were to adopt more of this approach, is there a particular area in the city centre that you feel we should be turning our collective focus to physical or otherwise?

Ngarimu Blair:

We need to take back our Port and replant that. That would help it's about 80 ha that's a good start. Unfortunately, there's little political appetite for that right now or anytime soon. But yeah, I think there's been a few questions tonight around connectivity. That is probably something I know these corridors talked about and how are we working on that, but it's probably how do we connect everybody up from the apartment dweller, from the developer, from the young student who wants to find out where they can help out somewhere. And then how do we connect up the street trees with the patches of little bits of recovering Bush connected to them the bigger patch that might be in the domain that then connects with Whenua rangatira Bastion point then to Keepa bush and so on and so on and tell that story, tell that narrative. So it kind of makes sense to someone who might be a first homeowner who's just bought an apartment or a terraced house on the edge of the city and they can, figure out how they might be able to do their little bit, that they might plant a kowhai if I've got a bit of space that might do just a little bit for them.

So, yeah, probably not one thing, other than getting our Port back is how might we tell that narrative and connect all of that up a bit better so everyone can know their role in what little thing or big thing that they could do to contribute.

Frith Walker:

Thank you so much, Ngarimu. It has been a very great privilege to be with you all in this conversation. So thank you so much panellists, for bringing what you've brought a really important conversation for our city and sorry, what just sprang to the top of my head is that we need to think like the trees, we need to remember we're all connected and be together in this journey. So thank you for your wise words and for your help in steering this fine city that we live in.

Frith Walker:

So, ladies and gentlemen, that's it from me. It is now my extreme pleasure. I'm famous for fangirling her and messing up her introduction. So now I won't do that. Councillor Pippa Coom, can we please hand to you to send us all home?

Councillor Pippa Coom:

Kia Ora Frith, you took my line. I was going to say I'm your fangirl and the fangirl of all the panellists. It is my privilege to be able to give the vote of thanks this evening for this Auckland conversation, totally online. Thank you to start with all of those of you who joined us this evening. I think we topped out at about 160 participants, which is pretty amazing really that we can all come together in this time of lockdown, just as we're about to enter into our 10th week. I hope everybody is keeping well and safe in your bubbles and you've been out to enjoy checking in with us this evening.

There's been a lot of takeaways from the conversation and I appreciate we haven't got through all of the questions. I'm very grateful and Tena koe Ngarimu, that you kicked us off this evening and really grounded us in terms of starting point has got to be around as you called it 'Browning the city' but moving ahead in terms of partnership. And I first met Ngarimu, I think over a decade now when he was telling Auckland the old Auckland City Council that the wrong kind of trees were being planted on Park Road, and he was absolutely right because those trees are now exactly just causing a whole lot of issues and if we'd just gone ahead with his wise words at the time we wouldn't have gotten to such a pickle. But there's so much that we can be appreciative of around our city and the Greening that has taken place. And it's been great to have Howell with us. He reminded me this picture I've got behind me of the trees on Key Street, I think Hal has hugged every single one of these ngahere, he is a tree hugger in chief and has just made an immense contribution to the city.

I've learnt new things this evening. Thank you, Iain, for enlightening me about slopes I think I've got that right and also just Natalie you've really reminded us too just about how Greening the city is so important for all of our wellbeing, and we have focused this evening on the city centre. But of course, all of this needs to happen right across Tamaki Makaurau and me and Councillor Richard, who's great. He's been

on the panel as a fearless leader of the Climate and Environment Change Committee. There is just amazing work happening right across the city and many of you are here on this call tonight.

It's awesome. All of the grassroots work that is going on. We haven't had the chance to acknowledge all of you, but I do really appreciate all of your work that's out there. There was some other kind of things that came through and the questions that we weren't able to touch on, but I do want to just acknowledge and thank for all of those questions particularly around, what are we doing about tree protection around?, We could be doing more with planting at schools, questions around the building act and hopefully we can find a way of kind of pulling some of those things together.

Iain has just put a comment in that, space is left over after planning - slopes. There's heaps of more to do and I can send some of the frustration coming through to in the comments and questions that, as I think that was said that we have to be proactive now because we've got to absolutely grasp all of this extra space that we've got the green spaces that we possibly can work with now, because if we don't take this chance now, they might be gone forever.

And that's particularly top of mind as the city grows and intensifies and we have to meet all of the challenges ahead of us, particularly climate change. So I do want to bang on 07:00. Frith isn't giving me a little eye roll there, but let me just make sure I've done all of my thank you's. M.C Frith, as always love your M.Cing. My panellists Ngarimu, Richard, Natalie, Iain and Howell thank you so much. Oh my goodness, I've forgotten, how could I ever forget to get Chloe. your photo wasn't showing on my bar. Chloe who is just doing fantastic work, is the MP for Auckland Central and giving us the bigger picture. So I want to thank you all. I'd like to thank Ashley and the Auckland Conversations team for bringing us together as an online event and most of all to everybody who's been able to join us online this evening. Keep an eye on the Auckland Conversations website for the next event that will be coming up. Hopefully it will be in person. But if this format has worked, we'll make sure that it goes ahead online and a final call to action is please give feedback on Ta Ha Noa, Victoria Street Linear Park that consultation is out until the 6 November and you can find the details on the Auckland Council website.

Noho ora mai, Kia ora koto, thank you so much for joining us this evening.

Take care and we hope to be back with you soon within the next edition of Auckland Conversations. Nga mihi, Kia Ora.