

# Auckland Council: A F Thomas Park Deliberative Forum

Panel recommendations report to Kaipātiki Local Board

*November 2025*

## Background:

Three sessions:

1. Workshop 1 – 08 November – Fairway Events Centre
2. Catch Up Session – 18 November - Online
3. Workshop 2 - - 22 November - Fairway Events Centre
4. Workshop 3 – 29 November – Kaipātiki Local Board Office

40 participants were randomly selected by People for Information, using a sortition method to represent the Northshore and Albany ward communities.

## The Remit

The remit was presented to the participants in the welcome pack and in Workshop 1:

***“What recreational and open space uses would you like to see the Local Board prioritise at A F Thomas Park now and into the future (in 10 years and 30 years’ time) so the park serves the needs of the community for generations to come. And how should council fund this?”***

## Forum Overview

Workshop 1 focussed on:

Introduction to the remit, discuss group agreement, presentations from relevant parties, funding options

40 participants attended

Speakers included: Paul, Tony & Carol, Sara, John and representatives on a community panel. But no representatives from the local iwi

The Catch up Session focussed on:

Reflections on session 1, what is happening next

38 participants attended

Workshop 2 focussed on:

Options explored about golf, presentations from impacted parties, brainstorm considerations, more we could do and change, ideas into recommendations

40 participants attended

Speakers included: various impacted parties: gymnastics, archery, basketball, Eventfinda stadium, Fairway conference centre, Takapuna Golf and bowls

Workshop 3 focussed on:

Reflections about where we are and key challenges ahead, reviewing & refining recommendations, draft report writing & presentation

40 participants attended

## Process Comments

Overall the process was very informative and inclusive. The group felt that Anna did a fantastic job in the facilitation of the deliberative panel, the team building exercises and group work was well designed and allowed the panel members to get to know one another. Despite opposing views, we were able to have a constructive group discussion and come out with overall supermajority decisions.

Initially when the discussion commenced, the majority of the participants were not aware of the overall park situation. The overload of information may have influenced how some participants felt about this discussion. Furthermore, there are a range of characters in this group and had to be considerate of this. Some may have had their own strong opinion on this matter, however were not confident enough in voicing it. Therefore, the voting system of standing up and sitting may have been slightly intimidating for some.

Time was tight to analyse the information received and critically evaluate it. More of our own time was needed.

The expert/impacted parties themselves sometimes provided conflicting information because they had different understandings.

## Panel Recommendations

### Recommendation 1

Title	Green spaces in AF Thomas Park
Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- At least an acre of open grass space with trees and flowers</li><li>- Picnic tables</li><li>- Prioritise native plants and flowers that attract bees and butterflies</li><li>- Can go in dry/wet detention area</li></ul>
Rationale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Benefits mental health, social connection, caters to the whole family and supports wild life</li></ul>
Timeframe	Less than 5 years
Funding options	General rate, commercial revenue (commercial enterprises in the park can fund the free areas), and grants and donations

## Recommendation 2

Title	Make AF Thomas Park accessible to everyone
Description	<p>Cater for mixed use &amp; capabilities (including neurodivergent and disabled) throughout the park. Including wetlands, dry detention area and mixed use spaces.</p> <p>This includes bikes, prams, walking/running, wheelchairs, walker aides and play areas etc.</p> <p>Mobility friendly design including wide, sealed pathways and ramps.</p> <p>Increased access to public transport, ie Mobility bridge to Smales Farm.</p> <p>Safety consideration: No e-vehicles except disability scooters</p>
Rationale	<p>When everyone can access AF Thomas Park areas it will benefit the whole community.</p> <p>No one left behind.</p> <p>Increasing connections to public transport widens opportunities for more public use.</p>
Timeframe	Immediate to <5 years
Funding options	General rates, council grant & development contributions.

### Recommendation 3

Title	Multiuse space with free & paid activities
Description	<p>A variety of free and paid activities to be available within AF Thomas Park.</p> <p>Free activities can include, but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Walkways/Cycling paths, which are accessible to all people.</li> <li>• Picnic &amp; BBQ Areas</li> <li>• Playground</li> <li>• Spaces for Youth</li> </ul> <p>Paid activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Golf, which the panel has agreed on a driving range in conjunction with reduced Golf Course (no specification on which format)</li> <li>• Archery</li> <li>• Bowls (no change in location)</li> </ul>
Rationale	<p>The majority of the participants have provided positive feedback regarding a multiuse recreational space. This space could be used by a larger population and cater to the recreational needs of the community.</p> <p>There is an emphasis on providing multiuse spaces from Auckland Council, the Auckland Open Space and Recreation Strategy. Which allows for a broad use of the public space catering to most if not all people.</p> <p>The goal is to increase the range of benefits, improve the quality of our open spaces, and provide diverse recreational opportunities.</p> <p>Protection of the environment while implementing these policies is key, while embodying and enabling the values of Te Kawarau a Maki which includes Kaitiakitanga, Rangatiratanga, Manaakitanga, and Tauritetanga.</p> <p>Prioritising connections and linkages across all types of open spaces is part of this policy.</p>
Timeframe	Planning within the next 5 years, and implementation within the next 5-10 years.
Funding options	Council grants (for free activities), commercial revenue, and Development contributions.

## Recommendation 4

Title	Driving range with smaller golf course
Description	Keeping driving range, smaller golf course with buffer/safety zone to protect public
Rationale	<p>More than 80% of our forum group voted for driving range with reduced size course</p> <p>Need enough room left over for other groups and activities, including general public recreational use</p> <p>Walk/cycle path around perimeter of park, and within park, with buffer/safety zone</p> <p>Should consider what golf club and member prefer and want for the future when deciding course size (9 hole/12 hole par 3)</p>
Timeframe	Less than 5 years
Funding options	Commercial funding (Golf course pays)

## Recommendation 5

Title	Relocate and rebuild a bigger stadium.
Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- As the stadium is currently in the flood plain, it must be relocated to a safe part of the park.</li> <li>- It must be future-proofed by making it larger to accommodate new and existing activities (such as gymnastics and basketball).</li> <li>- The location must accommodate good access to public transport (i.e. Smales Farm), walking and cycling, disabled accessibility and on-site parking.</li> </ul> <p>Consider the following;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Impact on local traffic and community.</li> <li>- Use the soil/basalt to raise the land the new stadium is built on.</li> <li>- As gymnastics and basketball are continually growing, expand the space accommodated to them.</li> </ul>
Rationale	The stadium is important to the community, as there is a consistently high number of users weekly which generates a lot of income. The stadium cannot safely stay where it is as it is at high risk of future flooding.
Timeframe	Within 5 years.
Funding options	3rd party fully funded - funded by EventFinda Stadium.

## Minority Report (if needed)

This section includes recommendations that were not supported by the forum (ie did not achieve 80% support). However, a minority group (of at least 3 forum members) felt that it was important that these recommendations were noted despite not obtaining support.

This may indicate perceived gaps in the process or information presented, or a division in the views of the forum. They are included for the following reasons:

1. It can be valuable to understand dissenting views
2. The minority report recommendations can highlight the breadth, depth and diversity of the discussions during the forum
3. It supports a transparent process.

### Minority Recommendation 1

Title	Community Vegetable/Herb Garden
Description	<p><math>\frac{3}{4}</math> of an acre of land dedicated to a vegetable and herb garden where the community can cultivate and harvest plants. Including approx 6 mature fruit trees (eg. apple, plum, feijoa, lemon, mandarin). Perhaps a group of retired volunteers who enjoy gardening could tend to the gardening.</p>
Rationale	<p>Good for all ages, young and old. Encourage healthy eating. Older people can help to educate younger people on gardening and healthy eating. Housing intensification (many houses don't have enough room for a garden). Good for mental health and general wellbeing. Cost of living can make eating healthy difficult for families. Community hub where people can socialise and support each other. Good way to get vitamin D and exercise. School groups can help tend to the garden as well. Information should be available in the garden to education younger people.</p> <p>Funding: Donation by garden centres, gardening groups, people in the public.</p> <p>Security (to keep out pests and vandals) would be funded by council rates (secure fence around garden, locked after dark).</p>

## Minority Recommendation 2

Title	Relocating stadium to the existing Albany stadium (North Harbour Stadium)
Description	Since the stadium has a limited life span and is clear that it will need to be rebuilt due to being in a flood zone, it would make sense to utilise this opportunity to rebuild the stadium somewhere else. Albany Stadium doesn't flood
Rationale	The only available area within AF Thomas Park where a stadium could be rebuilt would be utilising a big area of the Park, since its limited due to the wetlands and dry area. The North Harbour Stadium is under utilised and can be upgraded to a multiuse stadium to include gymnastics and basketball, and could have a roof installed. It's an easier area to access, close to the motorway, public transport, and has a lot more parking spaces. Also, the council is considering demolishing North Harbour Stadium due to be under utilised. Why build a new stadium, when an existing one is not being used, close by (10 min from current location)?

## Minority Recommendation 3

Title	Driving Range Only
Description	No Golf Course
Rationale	Facility is already available and is most profitable part of the current golf operation so it would provide revenue to the council. It uses less land than the golf course. It is used by a more diverse range of people than the golf course. It provides its own safety via netting and doesn't require buffer zone. It meets the councils priorities more than golf due to cheaper cost, demographics that use it, and maximises space for open spaces in rest of the park. Overall the golf course is a large space for a small portion of the population.