

Advocating for the Future of Golf in Auckland

Golf has a significant and positive impact on Auckland. This impact is realised through social, environmental, economic and community outcomes for the city and its people.

Our vision is to be an integral part of Auckland's future, enriching Auckland through golf. To achieve this, we must be an innovative leader in sport, delivering increasingly greater outcomes for Auckland and its communities. As a growing sport we're working hard to add this value to Auckland and its people.

As the leadership body for the sport, New Zealand Golf is concerned about the publicity and messaging regarding Auckland Council managed and owned golf facilities and golf in general within Auckland.

There is an imbalance in the messaging that may have detrimental consequences not only for golf, but for the people of Auckland. Of particular concern is the publicity regarding the financial value of the facilities being presented in isolation. The discussion does not provide a fair representation of the true value of golf or golf facilities to Auckland.

To balance this discussion and add greater clarity to the messaging, we present the following facts and research.

Golf is a growing sport and is contributing towards the vision of being the world's most active city.

1. Golf is the largest club-based sport in the country with an estimated 500,000 participants.
2. Over 94,000 Aucklanders play golf each year and it is expected that over 130,000 Aucklanders could be playing golf annually by 2030. Accordingly, there is a risk that the number of golf clubs that currently operate across Auckland will not be able to meet the demand within the next 20 years (2033).
3. Over 1,000,000 competitive rounds of golf are played in Auckland annually which do not include a large number of events, charity days, corporate days or practice rounds.
4. Since 2013, golf club membership within Auckland has grown 1% to 24,321. For context, golf's adult club membership is larger than rugby, netball and football's adult membership combined.
5. New Zealand Golf started to register casual golfers/non-members in 2014 and this has grown per annum significantly with 38,005 Aucklanders formally registering.
6. The existing network of golf facilities provide a wide variety of pricing for membership and green fees which makes golf accessible to a diverse range of participants in age, ethnicity, gender and income levels.
7. Active New Zealand Survey undertaken by Sport New Zealand (2017) highlights golf as one of the most popular sport and recreation activities for adults with approximately 116,423 (11%) Aucklanders participating in the last 12 months. For context, participation for mountain biking (9%), tennis (8%), football (8%), netball (4%), cricket (4%) hockey (2%) and rugby (2%).
 - Golf is one of the most popular sport and recreation activities for males and females. For context
 - 19% of males have played golf in the last 12 months
 - Male participation across other sports, football (10%), tennis (9%), cricket (7%) and rugby (4%)
 - 5% of females have played golf in the last 12 months
 - Female participation across other sports, netball (8%), tennis (7%), football (4%), cricket (2%) and rugby (1%).

- Golf attracts participants from many different ethnic backgrounds to be active. For context
 - Golf - Chinese (7%), Indian (8%), Samoan (12%), Maori (11%), NZ European (12%)
 - Tennis - Chinese (7%), Indian (6%) Samoan (4%), Maori (7%), NZ European (9%)
 - Football - Chinese (5%), Indian (11%), Samoan (5%), Maori (5%), NZ European (7%)
 - Rugby - Chinese (0%), Indian (1%), Samoan (7%), Maori (5%), NZ European (2%).
- Golf is popular across North Harbour (12%), Auckland Central (11%), Waitakere (10%) and Counties Manukau (10%). Removal of golf's footprint will have an impact on accessibility and participation and exacerbate gaps within the facility network.
- Young peoples (5-17 years) participation in golf across New Zealand is the equivalent to other sport and recreation activities such as Rugby League, Fishing or Water Polo/Flipper Ball.

Golf contributes significantly to the health and wellbeing of Aucklanders for all ages

- Children introduced to golf at an early age enjoy learning and playing the game with parents and develop the motivation, confidence and skills to be active and play a sport for the rest of their lives.
- An 18-hole round of golf can involve walking up to nine kilometres and around 12,000 steps, exceeding the commonly recommended daily amount of steps for health. Golf's physical health benefits include the treatment and prevention of more than 40 major chronic diseases. For example, research undertaken by SBP and Street Ryan for Golf Victoria found the physical health benefits contribute \$33 million per year to the State of Victoria due to the prevention of ischemic heart disease, type 2 diabetes, stroke, colorectal cancer and breast cancer.
- 92% of the burden of disease that results from being physically inactive is borne by people aged 15 years and above. Therefore, it is imperative that people are encouraged to be active into and throughout adulthood. This highlights golf's uniqueness as a sport popular across the lifespan with minimal drop off in participation as shown by data below from Active New Zealand Survey (2017).

	18-24	25-34	35-49	50-64	65-74	75+
Golf	13%	11%	12%	12%	11%	8%
Tennis	14%	9%	10%	7%	3%	2%
Football	17%	9%	8%	2%	0%	0%
Rugby	8%	4%	2%	0%	0%	0%
Netball	14%	10%	5%	1%	0%	0%

- Diseases which are preventable through physical inactivity have a significant negative impact on the health of New Zealanders aged 55+ years of age – therefore golf participation plays a significant, preventative role in the later stages of life.
- A landmark Swedish study of over 300,000 golfers found regular golfers live an average of five years longer than non-golfers, regardless of age, gender or socio-economic status.
- Playing golf helps reduce the risk of anxiety, depression, and dementia while improving confidence and boost self-esteem, all of which contribute to mental well-being.

Golf enhances social capital and community resilience

14. Unique strengths of golf's social contribution include:
 - a. Genuine lifelong contribution to the prevention of disease which reduces the healthcare burden on society.
 - b. Maintenance of strong social capital from youth to well-beyond retirement age.
 - c. Being more than a sport as golf clubs can be significant local businesses, strengthening the surrounding economy and act as the social hub of the community for many diverse groups.
 - d. Regular and enduring social interaction as many participants play weekly which is an opportunity to expand social networks and spend quality time with friends and family.
 - e. Being a significant contributor to philanthropy and host of charitable events for many causes that are mostly unrelated to golf to benefit local community groups and social enterprises such as Movember Foundation, Melanoma New Zealand, Halberg Disability Sports Foundation and many more.
 - f. The game has a culture based on respect for others and brings New Zealanders from all walks of life together.
 - g. Golf courses preserve diminishing green space within Auckland and provide an escape to nature as urbanisation and intensification continues to increase.
 - h. Golf provides opportunities for thousands of Aucklanders to make a difference in their community through volunteering.

Golf plays a large and important role in the environmental landscape of Auckland

15. More than half of Auckland Council owned or managed golf courses back on to green space and act as green buffers to reserves and areas of native bush protecting them from soil erosion, extreme temperature fluctuations, dust and noise pollution and ground water contamination.
16. Golf courses provide a valuable storm water function. For example, Takapuna Golf Course collects surface water and run-off from neighbouring streets and properties. Damage to neighbouring and business properties is effectively mitigated in the event of a major weather occurrence such as a 10-year flood.
17. There is a growing awareness within the community of the need to preserve our green infrastructure, while simultaneously protecting sensitive habitats and species, golf courses can function as important tools for environmental conservation and enhancement.
18. There is good evidence of a positive relationship between levels of neighbourhood greenspace and mental health and well-being. Individuals have less mental distress, less anxiety and depression, greater well-being and healthier cortisol profiles when living in urban areas with more greenspace compared with less greenspace. Large differences in disease prevalence are reported when comparing residents of very green and less green settings, even after controlling for socioeconomic status – a finding demonstrated across various ages and cultures.

The golf sector contributes significantly to the economy and provides employment opportunities for many Aucklanders

19. Golf contributes \$54 million in regional GDP per annum, a conservative estimate.
20. Golf provides 749 full time equivalent jobs for Aucklanders. These roles include greenkeepers, mechanics, club managers, golf professional services and hospitality staff.
21. Beyond direct golf-related employment, the sector also provides opportunities for other service industries. For instance, golf facility construction has a very positive impact on Auckland. Three new courses, Windross Farm, Tara Iti, Wainui are estimated to have generated \$253 million in output, \$102 million in GDP and 1,175 FTE jobs for the construction industry. Further, new course development at Royal Auckland and Tara Iti will increase expenditure well and above these estimates.
22. Maintenance of land – Auckland Council have reported that the maintenance of one hectare of open space land costs \$20,000 per annum. With the exception of one, all Council owned and managed golf facilities maintain and develop their own land, this support is valued to Auckland at over \$10 million.

Golf tourism is on the rise and major events contribute to Auckland being viewed as a destination for domestic and international visitors

23. Auckland is gaining traction as a highly desirable golf destination because of the diversity of courses and their spectacular natural settings. Visitor expenditure occurs at golf courses but also on accommodation, dining, shopping, travel and other forms of entertainment.
24. New Zealand Tourism reported golf visitors are up a record 31% annually, with 16% increase in average spend per visitor. It is estimated that over 61,000 international visitors played golf in New Zealand last year contributing around \$329 million to the economy.
25. Research undertaken by Martin Jenkins reported international visitors to Auckland golf courses contributed \$8 million in expenditure and domestic visitors from outside Auckland contributed a further \$2.8 million in expenditure.
26. New Zealand Women's Open LPGA event held at Windross Farm Course in 2017 was broadcast to over 150 countries and over 250 million homes worldwide. This media exposure provides a platform for Auckland to advertise to the world and a local opportunity to inspire New Zealand's future generation of golfers.
27. The 2017 World Masters Games played host to nearly 700 golf participants from around the globe, delivering an estimated 7,200 visitor nights, spending an estimated \$1.3 million and generating \$1 million in regional GDP.

Auckland Council

28. The information detailed above articulates some of the merit of golf and golf facilities to Auckland.
29. New Zealand Golf recognise that Auckland is a rapidly growing and highly dynamic city and that because of this there are competing priorities for land use.
30. We embrace the need for our facilities to diversify their offering, provide greater accessibility and continue to connect and add value to their communities. There is the opportunity to achieve this with greater investment from Auckland Council.
31. Golf has a strong partnership with Auckland Council and are working hard to grow this partnership. As part of our partnership New Zealand Golf have:
 - a. Supported Auckland Council research used to articulate some of the benefits of golf facilities to Auckland.
 - b. Engaged an Auckland Council Senior Policy Manager in a working group that developed the Golf Sector Plan for Auckland (This plan articulates how golf will grow its positive impact to Auckland through social, environmental, economic and community outcomes).
 - c. Continued to engage with and support various departments in Council, Councilors, Local Boards and other partners to advocate for positive outcomes for Auckland through golf.

New Zealand Golf's Advocacy Position

32. Considering the benefits of golf and golf facilities, the value added to Auckland communities and the requirement for an increase in golf facilities to meet future demand, New Zealand Golf are advocating for the following:
- a. A continued partnership with Auckland Council where investment from both Council and the golf sector is used to realise the potential of Council owned or managed golf facilities to diversify their offering, provide greater accessibility and increased value to their communities.
 - b. Golf is acknowledged as a growing sport that requires more facilities to meet future demand. Any reduction in the golfing footprint puts the value golf can deliver to Auckland at risk.
 - c. We are strongly opposed to the sale or part sale of Council owned or managed golf facilities that diminish the value that golf can add to Auckland.
 - d. Any decision regarding the future of Council owned and managed golf facilities considers, in full, the impact to the wider golf network and the ramifications beyond financial gain.
 - e. Any decision regarding the sale of land, or the reduction in golfing footprint for current facilities needs to take in to account all the above information and employ extensive consultation with the golf community.
33. We believe golfers, golf facilities, the partners and advocates for golf and those people who are passionate about the future of Auckland can take an active role in ensuring the information above is as visible as possible.
34. We look forward to continuing our work with all of our stakeholders to ensure that the sport of golf is, and always will be, a game for life, accessible and enriching the lives of Aucklanders.

*please refer – Golf Sector Plan for Auckland.