

Op-ed by Ngarimu Blair, deputy chair, Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei and a director of Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei  
Whai Rawa Ltd

Ko Maungakiekie te maunga  
Ko Waitematā te moana  
Ko Mahuhukiterangi te waka  
Ko Ngāti Whātua te iwi

Over the past few weeks and days there has been a huge amount of focus from the media and the public on the reclaimed land currently occupied by the Ports of Auckland. For Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei, this is no surprise. We have always considered the Waitematā to be our most precious taonga, and access to it should be of paramount importance for all the people living in Tāmaki Makaurau.

It was with our counsel that Auckland city began its life, when we gifted Governor Hobson the land abutting the Waitematā and an invitation to lay the foundations of the first whare that became the city we know today.

We have been ever faithful to the Treaty partnership despite the loss of our entire estate by the 1950s. In recent decades we approved public access to our Okahu Bay beach and the majestic headland park at Bastion Point above, and we have been generous partners to Spark Arena in our Quay Park precinct so it is accessible to all. We intend to continue playing a leading role in the future development of this city.

Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei, the ahi kaa iwi of this rohe and owner of the land adjacent to the Ports' land (Quay Park), have stayed out of public discussions about this whenua in recent months. While others have been talking, we have been working on a plan to develop Quay Park that revitalises our asset and also includes a vision for the port land adjacent. It will provide Aucklanders with greater access to our shared taonga.

As the ahi kaa iwi we have a bold vision for the Ports and the Eastern CBD that reimagines the potential of this area and of Tāmaki Makaurau.

We've asked ourselves, experts and whānau important questions: How can we improve access to the Waitematā? How can our native plants green our city to bring back our native birds and clean our air? How can we inject tikanga Māori into a culturally sterile environment?

We've asked these questions because we know if we don't, they might never be answered.

Today we are beginning a public discussion about an alternative vision for the future of Tāmaki Makaurau's waterfront. A vision where green spaces flow through from the CBD to the water's

edge. A vision where commercial, cultural, social and environmental considerations work together to create a waterfront the people of Tāmaki Makaurau can be proud of.

Auckland, this is something we can do. And we'll work with all interested parties to make it happen. Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei will lead any consortium to purchase the Ports land, benefitting our local and iwi economy rather than offshore investors.

We have initiated discussions with other iwi with large commercial portfolios such as Ngai Tahu, Waikato-Tainui and Tuaropaki. Who better to lead the vision to develop one of Aotearoa's special assets than tangata whenua?

Te Tōangaroa, the historical name for this area we are all talking about, means "the dragging of the waka". It takes many people to drag a waka to shore, working together in careful unison, and pulling in the same direction. For us to secure the future this city deserves, we need to pull together.