

**Briefing Paper: Council Reserves Network**  
**Reporting Officer: Robin Rawson, Parks and Reserves Planner**  
**Date: March 2024**

**Ngā whāinga | Purpose**

On 8 February 2024, the Council asked for further information on the status of the Council reserves network, and Kahika / Mayor Tepania requested a briefing paper on how many reserves Council has, what their classifications are, how many have reserve management plans and how many can be sold.

**Horopaki | Context**

Open space is held by Council generally as reserves under the Reserves Act 1977, with some land held as parks, which are defined under the Local Government Act 2002 as 'land acquired or used principally for community, recreational, environmental, cultural, or spiritual purposes'.

Reserves are required to have a classification that reflects their purpose, and common classifications include Recreation Reserve, Historic Reserve, Local Purpose (Esplanade) Reserve, and Local Purpose (Drainage) Reserve. The Reserves Act requires that all Council reserves except local purpose reserves have reserve management plans. These can be prepared as plans that cover many sites, for example all the neighbourhood reserves in a district.

When land is vested with Council it will be vested with a provisional classification, however this will need a subsequent classification decision by Council to affirm this, or to change the classification where this does not reflect the primary purpose. It is common for land that has a primary drainage function to be vested as a recreation reserve as part of a subdivision, and these reserves will be classified as Local Purpose (drainage) reserves. An example of this is shown in Figure 1 below.

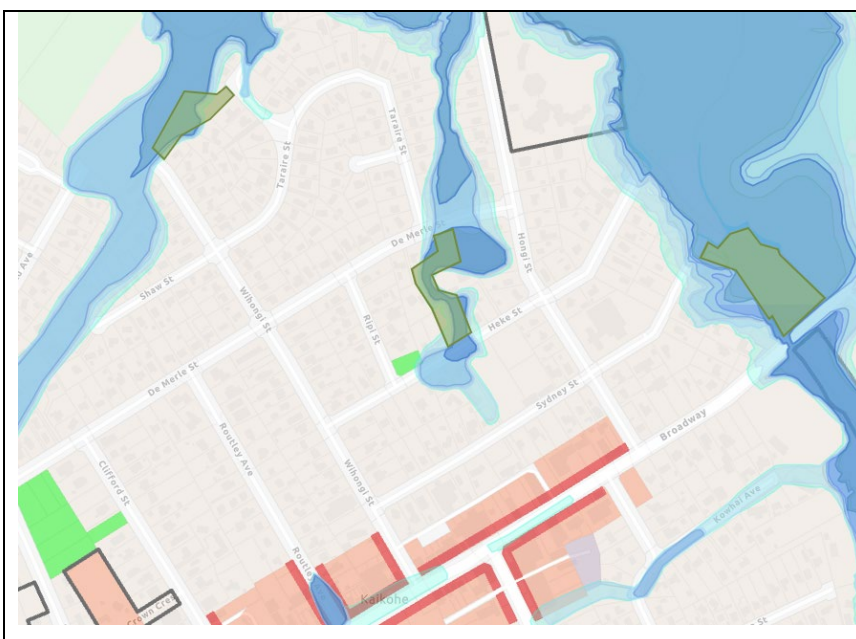


Figure 1

Three reserves in the north-east of Kaikohe have been vested as recreation reserves (shown in olive green at left) however when flood maps are overlain it is obvious that the primary purpose of these areas is to contain overland flow paths. These areas are unsuitable for development as neighbourhood parks. It is expected that when these reserves are classified to their primary purpose they will be classified as Local Purpose (drainage) reserves.

Most Councils also categorise open space according to its function under the Recreation Aotearoa parks category framework<sup>1</sup>. These categories are similar to Reserves Act classifications however they provide greater focus on the activities that communities use the land for, and this can be more helpful in guiding the development and management requirements of these activities. Categories include: Sports and Recreation, Neighbourhood, Nature and Civic Parks. These categories are generally adapted to the community requirements and resources of each Council and affirmed in an Open Space or other Strategy.

In 2023 a reserves audit project organised by the previous Parks Planner provided a list of properties that included the following;

- Reserves under the Reserves Act;
- Land held as domains; and
- Unformed roads adjoining the coast and rivers.

When this list was complete, it was apparent that large numbers of reserves showed as not having any owners or having incorrect owners. When survey plans were checked it was determined that most of these reserves should show ownership by Council. On enquiry, Toitu te Whenua – Land Information New Zealand, (LINZ) advised that before Landonline was introduced in 2000 that titles had to be requested for vested reserves or they were not generated which meant that ownership was either not recorded or attributed to the ownership of the title from which the land was derived (the 'residue title'). LINZ also advised that title can be issued if application is made that includes appropriate paperwork including 'succession' statements from the Council it was vested in, for example Kaitaia Borough Council. Council staff have checked deposited plans and have completed a list of just over 400 vested reserves to send to LINZ so that titles can be generated. Ownership will then be visible through Council mapping systems after the next scheduled LINZ data update. There are another 69 sites where plans were not easily available that will require further research to confirm ownership.

The audit data has been mapped for use by staff in conjunction with other reserves and asset management data to improve the reliability of our records.

Audit data for recreation and scenic reserves was reviewed by Archaeologists with recommendations on where reserves may be better held as historic reserves, and the likelihood of archaeological features on reserves. Archaeological comments will also be mapped.

## Ngā kōrerorero | Discussion

---

### Number of reserves owned by Council

The reserves audit and subsequent research shows that Council has the following open space:

- 9 Cemetery reserves;
- 6 Historic reserves (which under-represents sites where the primary function is historic);
- 12 scenic reserves;
- 253 recreation reserves including 93 recreation reserves in the titles list to go to LINZ; and
- Large numbers of esplanade reserves.

Council has the following land that is not considered to be open space:

- Spite strips – narrow pieces of land created to prevent driveway formation on main roads;
- Land acquired for road where road vesting has not taken place e.g. Kerikeri bypass;
- Accessways; and
- Utility reserves including waterworks, sewerage, quarry etc.

---

<sup>1</sup> [https://issuu.com/newzealandrecreationassociation/docs/nzra\\_parks\\_category\\_framework\\_-fina](https://issuu.com/newzealandrecreationassociation/docs/nzra_parks_category_framework_-fina)

Some areas of open space are held as parks rather than reserves, including Kerikeri Sports Complex and Te Puāwaitanga. The primary function of a reserve may be for recreation, it may also have an important utility function and vice versa.

### **Classification of reserves**

Classification requires the determination of the primary purpose of each area of land. As noted above, Council owns a large number of reserves that have not yet been classified to reflect their primary purpose.

### **Reserve Management Plans**

Council has reserve management plans for 10 reserves. Although there are management documents on the website for 14 sites, two plans are for sites that are not owned by Council (Bledisloe Domain and Lakes Manuwai and Waingaro), one is not a reserve (Kerikeri Sports Ground) and one is a draft management plan (Taupo Bay reserves) The documents can be found here: <https://www.fndc.govt.nz/Our-facilities/Parks-playgrounds-and-reserves/Reserve-management-plans>

Work is currently underway to prepare a reserve management plan for Rawene Reserve and to review the reserve management plan for Simson Park. Work will start on a reserve management plan for Rangitoto Reserve when a cultural values report has been completed.

When confirmation has been received from LINZ on reserve ownership, initial work will start on a reserve management plan for neighbourhood parks, however this will also require confirmation of the reserves framework by elected members, and this will be considered as part of the Open Space Strategy.

### **Open Space Strategy**

A workshop is being held with elected members in early April about the Open Space Strategy being developed including possible functional categories for parks.

### **Opportunities for divestment**

Where land has been derived from the Crown it cannot be sold and must instead be returned to the Crown, and where land has been gifted there may be conditions that preclude selling.

Before selling or otherwise divesting of reserves or parks, Council is required to consult with communities under either Section 24 of the Reserves Act 1977 or Section 138 of the Local Government Act 2002. It is necessary to have a good understanding of whether the land has any existing value to the community before consulting on divestment. The Open Spaces Strategy is expected to guide retention and divestment decisions when finalised.

Parks Planner Comment was provided on a list of sites being considered for divestment and preliminary support provided for sixteen sites in relation to parks planning matters. Of these, seven or eight may have sufficient value that there would be a net worth to Council on sale. Low-cost properties may give a minimal or negative return on selling once staff time including research is taken into account, and it may be appropriate to transfer ownership of some properties without payment, for example a reserve that is associated with an urupa.

## E whai ake nei | Next Steps

Parks Planning and other Council departments are currently working on the following tasks:

Task	Who	When	Notes
Send list of reserves that do not record Council ownership to LINZ	Parks and Reserves Planner	March-April 2024	Timeframes for LINZ processing unknown.
Open Spaces strategy	Senior Policy Adviser assisted by Parks and Reserves Planner	Ongoing – early consultation 2024	2023-2025
Mapping	Spatial Information Analyst	Audit data has been mapped, mapping will be amended when new titles issued	Timeframes for LINZ processing unknown.
Research on further anomalies (preliminary list of 69 properties)	Parks and Reserves planner and Property Legalisation	Work yet to be scheduled.	
Reclassification		Work yet to be scheduled	These are likely to be done in conjunction with the Neighbourhood Parks Reserve Management Plan.