



After the best part of a year working together, it felt like a victory to be heard

The Racecourse: A Big Step, But Just the Beginning

In February, a packed community presentation at Auckland Council's Policy & Planning Committee voiced deep concerns about the future of Avondale Racecourse. Representatives from I Love Avondale, Whau Pasifika, the Maritime Union, and the Avondale Business Association addressed the largest audience the committee has seen—55 passionate locals demanding transparency and a say in the racecourse's future.

The Concern

Plans to sell the racecourse land for intensive housing development have largely been made behind closed doors. There's growing fear that this process is ignoring community needs, bypassing public consultation, and prioritizing corporate interests. The committee members, seemingly

uninformed about the issue, were given a vital wake-up call. With major decisions looming, the Avondale community is determined to ensure its voice is heard.

The Background

The Racing Industry Act 2020 was introduced to revitalise New Zealand's struggling horse racing industry by freeing up racecourse land for redevelopment. However, this effectively enables a land grab—Avondale Jockey Club (AJC) is being forced to surrender its land, despite its historical and community significance.

Avondale Racecourse is slated to be handed over to New Zealand Thoroughbred Racing (NZTR) by June 2026, and at least one major developer, Fletcher Building, is eagerly eyeing the site for intensive

housing. The legislation requires community consultation, yet none has occurred. This is unacceptable.

What We Want

The Avondale Racecourse isn't just a piece of land—it's a vital community hub. We demand a seat at the table to discuss its future and ensure that any development aligns with Avondale's needs. Here's why it matters:

Green Space Crisis

Avondale is critically short on green space. If all green areas were accessible, we'd have 2.78 hectares per 1,000 people—still below ideal levels. The current reality? Just 1.5 hectares per 1,000, making Avondale one of Auckland's most underserved areas. Losing racecourse land would worsen this crisis.

Historical & Community Significance

Avondale has grown around the racecourse since its first race in 1890. It has hosted wartime training camps, cultural festivals, and major sporting events. The racecourse is not just a relic; it's a living, breathing part of Avondale's identity.

Cultural & Ecological Importance

The racecourse sits along the Whau River and the historic Te Tōanga Waka portage route, once a key waterway for Māori. It also provides crucial habitat for migratory birds like the Godwits/Kuaka. Any development must respect these historical and ecological treasures.

The Avondale Sunday Market

The market draws 20,000 shoppers weekly, providing affordable fresh food and economic opportunities for third-generation stallholders. It's more than a market—it's a community lifeline that would be lost if the land is sold.

Sports & Recreation

Avondale's sports fields serve thousands of athletes from rugby, cricket, and soccer clubs. Auckland Council has leased these fields since the 1950s, currently paying \$333,000 annually. Any loss of these grounds would be a blow to local sports and recreation.

A Potential Swimming Pool

West Auckland is in dire need of a new public swimming pool. The Council's existing strategy, "Unlock Avondale," aligns with a 2020 offer from AJC to donate land for this purpose. Losing the racecourse would shut the door on this much-needed community asset.

The Fight Ahead

The Avondale Business Association and other community groups will continue to advocate fiercely. Our

goal is not to block development but to ensure that any changes benefit Avondale's residents, businesses, and future generations.

Despite the requirement for community consultation, Council staff talk as if a sale to Fletcher Building is a done deal.

NZTR is reportedly planning a land take over in June, just months away. So, we must be ready to rally.

It's rare to see such unity among residents, workers, and business owners, but this cause transcends individual interests. Avondale is not just another site for high-density housing—it's a community that deserves respect, planning, and investment.

We call on Auckland Council to convene a working group that includes climate experts, flood engineers, Mana Whenua, AJC, NZTR, developers, and—most importantly—the Avondale community. This decision is too significant to be made behind closed doors.

Has the biggest race at Avondale Racecourse already been fixed? Are we facing land grabs, backroom deals, and a community being shut out? Not if we have anything to say about it. The time to act is now. Be ready for the call!



55 Avondale representatives, stood for the talks in a moving show of solidarity.



It's all about community: presenters Ina Patisolo, Whau the People; Jaclyn Bonnici, I Love Avondale; Cynthia Crosse, Avondale Business Association with Whau Local Board chair, Kay Thomas.



Marlon Drake from lobby group Te Ohu Whakawhānaunga; with Carl Findlay, National Secretary, Maritime Union of New Zealand



The event was well-covered by reporters including Jaclyn Bonnici speaking on Wallace Chapman, The Panel on Radio New Zealand and below, Ina Patisolo speaking to Fala Haulangi, PMN Tuvalu.

