



28 August 2016

## **Campaign launch speech – housing policy announcement**

Six weeks from today, Auckland city will have a new Mayor and the opportunity for a fresh start. Auckland is the city I was born, raised and educated in. It is the city I love.

It's a great place to live, with a stunning environment, strong and diverse communities and because of its size, there is plenty of choice and opportunities for learning, work and play.

Because of these things, Auckland is growing rapidly by more than 800 people a week – 42,000 a year. Within the next 30 years, Auckland's population could rise by as much as one million.

It's much better to be growing than stagnating and New Zealand needs a strong global city to attract and retain skills, talent and enterprise. With 50-60 percent of New Zealand's growth taking place in Auckland, the success of New Zealand depends on Auckland succeeding.

The downside is that Auckland's housing and transport infrastructure is not keeping up with population growth. The outcome is traffic congestion heading towards gridlock and unavailability and unaffordability of housing.

Traffic congestion is causing enormous frustration and costing Auckland and New Zealand as much as \$3 billion a year – wasted money from which we get no return.

Despite the Government's continuing denial, housing in Auckland has reached crisis point. In the latest poll, 84 percent of Aucklanders say there is a housing crisis and 31 percent - almost a third – say they have considered leaving this city because of its unaffordability. Some say the unaffordability of Auckland's housing is the Government's only effective regional development policy.

But this situation is not sustainable. It's damaging us here in Auckland and its harming New Zealand.

The solutions are multifaceted, and involves central government, the Council, the private sector and developers, iwi and NGOs. They involve land availability, infrastructure and finance, migration flows, macroeconomic settings, and regulatory issues.

There are ways to bring supply and demand in housing back into balance and Auckland's Mayor should be strongly advocating for those solutions and leading changes at Council.

As Mayor I will support the thrust of the Unitary Plan by allowing the city to move up and out so that land supply constraints do not contribute to pushing up land and housing prices. The answer is not endless sprawl, nor is it the destruction of heritage housing and leafy suburbs. We need more intensive housing with high-rise in the City centre and key City hubs, contributing to Auckland's

vibrancy, colour and excitement. Higher density housing should be developed along arterial transport hubs and routes.

I will set clear preconditions for going higher. They are good urban design, ample public and green open space and supporting transport infrastructure. Well-designed low rise apartments can produce a better aesthetic effect than packing in two storey houses side by side.

As Mayor, I will institute an immediate review to determine how the consenting process can be faster, cheaper and in line with best practice. Resource and building consents need to be timely and cost effective. Unnecessary delays in Council consents slow housing construction and cost the consumer more. We need best practice in this area.

We need to work with central government on tools to help local government meet the high costs of supplying infrastructure for new development. Infrastructure bonds are an option. The Government's Housing Infrastructure Fund is a step in the right direction but too limited to have a meaningful impact. With an unfunded capital deficit of \$17-\$20 billion in Auckland, a half share of the Infrastructure fund would meet only one fortieth of our 10 year needs. I will push for this fund to be significantly expanded.

We must develop disincentives to land-banking. This can be done by putting time limits – a 'use it or lose it' clause - on approvals and consents.

I will work with central government, developers, landowners, iwi and community housing agencies to develop solutions that give the building industry confidence and certainty to gear up for construction.

Auckland Council will get behind more affordable housing schemes, such as at Waimahia.

I will ensure Auckland Council will play a coordinating role, working with Government, NGOs and the private sector, to seek to eliminate chronic homelessness. The policy will be based on the principle of housing first. This first places a homeless person in housing and then provides wrap around services to address the cause of their homelessness. This model has been proven successful internationally and in New Zealand. In Hamilton, following a housing first model, 90 percent of people who were chronically homeless and were housed, remained in their homes a year later. It will reduce and seek to eliminate the growing number of homeless people sleeping rough in the CBD and around Auckland.

As Mayor, I will advocate for policy changes at central government which promote the interests of home buyer.

I will advocate for Government to do more to tackle speculation. Property speculation is a problem when supply and demand of housing are not in balance and housing price rises are extreme. Balancing supply and demand for housing is the best way to stop speculation. Interim measures are however needed to reduce rampant speculation. This could include further increasing deposits required by investors to borrow from the banks, extending the bright line test requiring tax to be paid on capital gains from two years to five years and eliminating negative gearing.

We will add our pressure on Government to require foreign investors to build new units rather than buying existing ones.

We will call on Government to ease record migration levels to allow infrastructure development to catch up with growth in population. This can be achieved by slowing the issuing of temporary work visas currently running at over 209,000 a year or by lifting the threshold for permanent residency. Immigration is good for New Zealand – it brings skills and energy – but it needs to be at a rate transport and housing infrastructure can cope with.

We will work with Government to address constraints in the supply of material and skills and explore alternative building methods to ensure that the numbers of houses and apartments needed can be built.

Government has had a traditional role in kick-starting the private sector building affordable homes and providing social houses for those who need them. As part of the Mayor's role to advocate on behalf of the city, I will highlight its needs and press for government to be an active participant in solving the crisis by expanding both affordable and social housing.

Housing provision is in crisis but there are solutions. We need Auckland Council and central government not to indulge in a blame game but to work together to put those solutions in place. Urgent and bold action is needed to stop the housing crisis worsening and restore the affordability and availability of housing.

Alongside the two major issues of housing and transport, whoever is elected the new Mayor in October faces the challenge of rebuilding trust between the people of Auckland and the council. A vital element in earning back the trust of Aucklanders will be improving its democracy and transparency, where people feel confident that their elected representatives are in the driver's seat, responding to their needs as constituents and communities.

We need to get both the elected arm of Council – the Governing Body – and the administrative arm – the bureaucracy – working more openly, more efficiently and effectively. Currently, at last count, there are 16 committees of Council. We only have 20 councillors. This is unwieldy and inefficient – and wasteful. Officers channel papers and decisions to a few committees at their own discretion. Others serve little purpose. The Council committee structure will be streamlined. I would like to see council with fewer committees doing more work, giving more detailed and deliberate consideration to matters before they are sent up to the Governing Body for consideration.

If I am elected mayor, as the only person on the Council and within the Council apparatus with a mandate from across the region, I will be working closely with the other elected members to drive the agenda and the decisions. Auckland Council will be a democratic organisation. We will communicate and engage with communities.

Democracy will also be strengthened through better engagement between the Mayor as the leader of the city and the 21 Local Boards. I will meet regularly with Local Boards Chairs, and get around the region and meeting the boards and their communities in their home patch. We need to find better ways to give life to co-governance.

Strengthening democracy, enhancing accountability, greater transparency, doing more with less through better efficiency and effectiveness. These will be the hallmarks of my mayoralty.

I do not pretend to have all the answers. No one does. Should the people of Auckland place their trust in me to lead this city – to build a better Auckland – over the coming three years, then I believe that I have the judgment, the energy, the integrity and the experience to keep my promise to them.

I am running as an independent. Everyone knows my political background and my values have not changed. The solutions to the massive challenges this city faces, however, are not ideological. Auckland is a small global city, not a large provincial town, with the potential to become a great international city. The interests of the people of this city must come first. And I will be their fiercest advocate.

My leadership will deliver a council that remembers that it is a transparent, democratic public institution – accountable and responsible to the people of Auckland.

We have to get this right because for New Zealand to succeed, Auckland must succeed. We need Auckland to be a place where talent and enterprise can thrive. The place where the best and brightest of our young people choose to live rather than crossing the Tasman to live in Melbourne or Sydney.

We must be an inclusive city. Where diversity brings richness not division. We must not become a place where people live in gated communities with poverty and homelessness on their doorstep. We want Auckland to become a city where people can earn an income they can actually live on. A place where every Aucklander can reach their full potential.

I am working for a better Auckland.

A city that preserves what is good and adapts to meet the challenges of the future.

A place we are proud to call home

I am asking for your support so we can do this together.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Phil Goff". The signature is stylized with a large, looping "G" and a flourish at the end.

Phil Goff  
For a Better Auckland