



The use of Auckland Council facilities and open spaces in the city centre

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Executive summary

- The city centre is home to some of the most used parks and community facilities in the Auckland region, with a lot of visits originating from outside the local board (Waitematā).

Parks and open spaces

- Victoria Park, Albert Park and Aotea Square are the top three most visited open spaces in the city centre and among the most visited in Auckland (alongside Auckland Domain, Cornwall Park, Lloyd Elsmore Park).
- Most sites in the city centre get most of their visits from outside of the Waitematā local board. The exceptions are Te Taou Reserve Railway Gardens, Te Uringutu Reserve, Ernest Davis Lookout, Ngaoho Reserve and Anzac Avenue 110-112 where 50% or more visits are from Waitematā locals..
- Myers Park and Wakefield Reserve have the highest percentage of visits coming from high deprivation areas.
- The visits to most parks and civic spaces in the city centre come from across all of Auckland Region.
- All parks have good coverage of usage, i.e., there are no parts that are unused or underutilised.

Facilities

- Tepid Baths are a destination swimming pool attracting users from across the region.
- Central Library offers many services in addition to book lending, and the majority of visits are not linked to book lending.
- Ellen Melville and Pioneer Women Centre is well utilised as a venue for hire and the community kitchen on the ground level attracts a lot of visitors outside of the venue for hire function.

Understanding Human Mobility data (HMI)

Human Mobility (HMI) data counts mobile phones that enter the defined areas if the phones have geolocation enabled and one of the apps participating in the data collection installed. The hundreds of participating apps include the most popular map and social apps. The defined areas (polygons) include Auckland Council land and buildings. CCO and private properties are not included. The data does not track people’s movements outside of council land / buildings, and is fully anonymised. A recorded visit is not linked to a phone number or any demographic data about the device’s owner. To further improve privacy, the data was aggregated to months before it was provided to Auckland Council so it cannot be used for hourly or daily monitoring. Multiple visits of the same device to the same polygon in the same day are counted only once to avoid overcounting visits generated by devices that stay close to the boundary (due to the 2 metres margin of error of the location of the GPS signal). Roads that cut through or run over open spaces have been excluded from the defined areas (e.g., the motorway over Victoria Park).

The data includes the SA2 (Statistical Area 2, a Statistics NZ territorial unit) which is the usual night-time location of the device. We assume that this is where the owner of the device lives, which enables us to see the profile of visits by neighbourhood of origin. SA2s have a deprivation index calculated by the University of Otago which we use to calculate what percentage of visits comes from disadvantaged areas (deciles 8, 9 and 10 of the University of Otago classification).

The data underwent extensive testing for accuracy by comparisons of HMI data and visits recorded in other ways such as visits to the council’s corporate buildings where a swipe card is required. The provider of the data, FreshInfo, cleans the data to eliminate duplicates (when two devices always travel together) and other known issues. It is useful to note that the data will undercount small children who do not carry their own mobile devices. Conversely, HMI counts will include everyone on site, not just customers / visitors but also staff, contractors and other non-customers. This means that the numbers of users counted in other ways will usually differ from HMI, as illustrated by the Tepid Baths example below.

Tepid Baths visits Jan 2020-August 2023 (44 months)	
Pools and Leisure user data based on customer entries and transactions: 509,032 Includes only people going through the electronic gate	HMI data: 556,732 Includes customers but also staff, contractors, people entering the lobby without entering the pool or gym area (e.g., to make an inquiry, to use the public-facing swim shop and cafe or to pick up/drop off someone). Excludes people not carrying mobile devices (mostly children).

Similarly, for parks and open spaces, the data will register the presence of a device regardless of the purpose of their visit. For some parks, especially in the CBD, a lot of registered HMI visits will be people passing through the park on their way between transport and work, or between work and cafes/shops, rather than visiting the park as the intended destination.

HMI data is the only visits data we have for all parks and civic spaces in the Auckland Region. Because the way the data is collected is the same across the region, it can be used to compare parks’ visits proportionally, acknowledging that the absolute numbers are not perfectly accurate because some visitors will not carry mobile devices or use the geolocation apps.

Auckland Council currently has the data for Jan 2020-Aug 2023. The data was acquired for a specific purpose in the former Regional Services and Strategy Department. The supplier has more recent data which is available for purchase. As of January 2025, there are no immediate plans to purchase more data.

Scope: Auckland Council sites in the city centre

The sites in scope for this report include:

Facilities managed by the council	Tepid Baths (pool and gym)
	Central Library
	Pioneer Womens and Ellen Melville Hall (venue for hire)
Facilities owned by council and managed by community organisations as community leases or partnerships	Basement Theatre
	The Classic: Comedy Club
	Q Theatre
	Victoria Park Sports & Cultural Trust
	Sargeson Centre
	Campbell Free Kindergarten
	Myers Park Kindergarten
Civic spaces	Aotea square
	Mahuhu Ki Te Rangī (Quay Park)
Parks	Victoria Park Albert Park Myers Park Symonds Street Cemetery East Symonds Street Cemetery West Wakefield Reserve Constitution Hill Daldy Street Linear Park Silo Park Teal Park Emily Place Parliament Reserve Te Taou Reserve Railway Gardens Te Uringutu Reserve Ernest Davis Lookout Ngaoho Reserve Anzac Avenue 110 -112

Sites managed by CCOs (such as the Auckland Art Gallery) or private entities (Spark Arena) and are not included in the dataset.

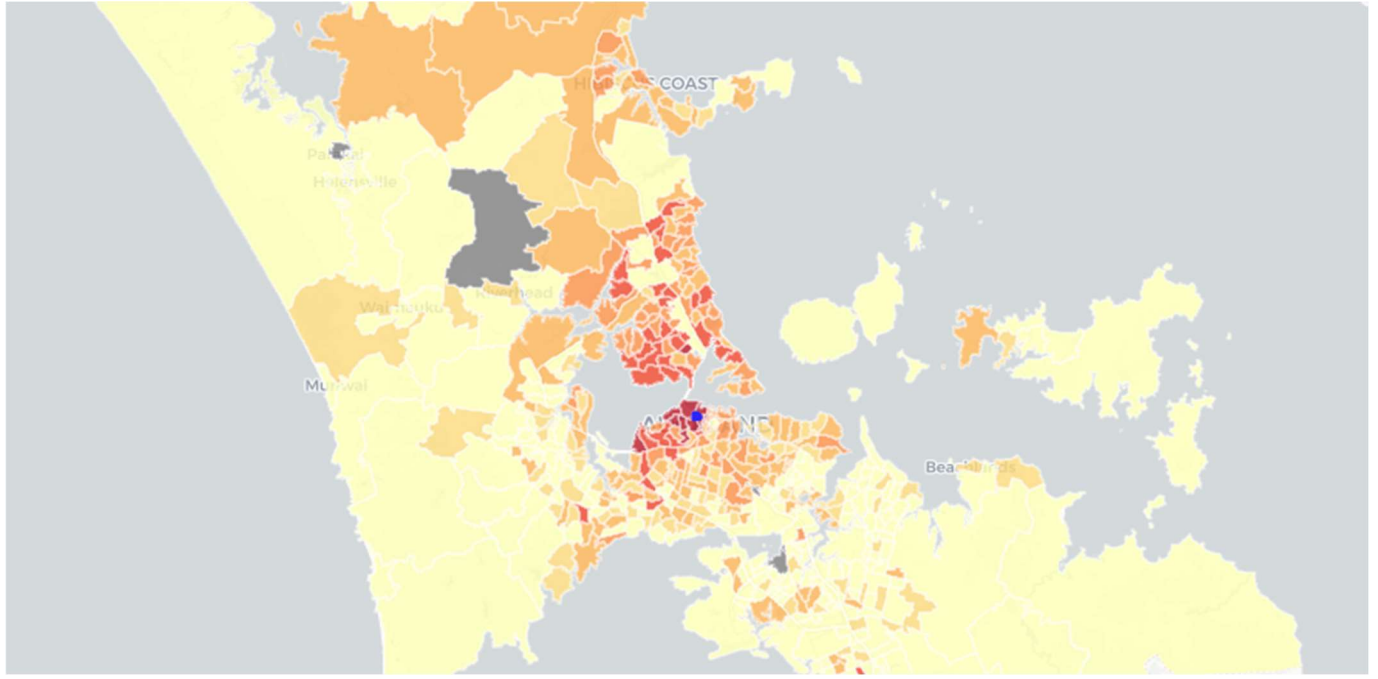
Part 1: Parks and civic spaces overview

Park or civic space	HMI visits (Jan 2020-Aug 2023)	% of visits originating from high deprivation areas	% of visits originating from Waitematā
Victoria Park	6,652,391	18%	22%
Albert Park	5,144,712	31%	24%
Aotea Square	3,085,504	33%	25%
Myers Park	1,904,929	51%	42%
Symonds Street Cemetery East	1,577,160	35%	28%
Symonds Street Cemetery West	854,553	35%	23%
Wakefield Reserve	1,419,019	46%	33%
Constitution Hill	1,274,749	26%	25%
Daldy Street Linear Park	1,085,791	20%	25%
Silo Park	1,097,761	24%	16%
Mahuhu Ki Te Rangi (Quay Park)	585,918	22%	27%
Teal Park	534,585	21%	11%
Emily Place	497,793	24%	39%
Parliament Reserve	359,462	19%	34%
Te Taou Reserve Railway Gardens	203,055	20%	51%
Te Uringutu Reserve	84,856	27%	51%
Ernest Davis Lookout	74,233	17%	55%
Ngaoho Reserve	77,657	27%	61%
Anzac Avenue 110 -112	70,743	18%	56%

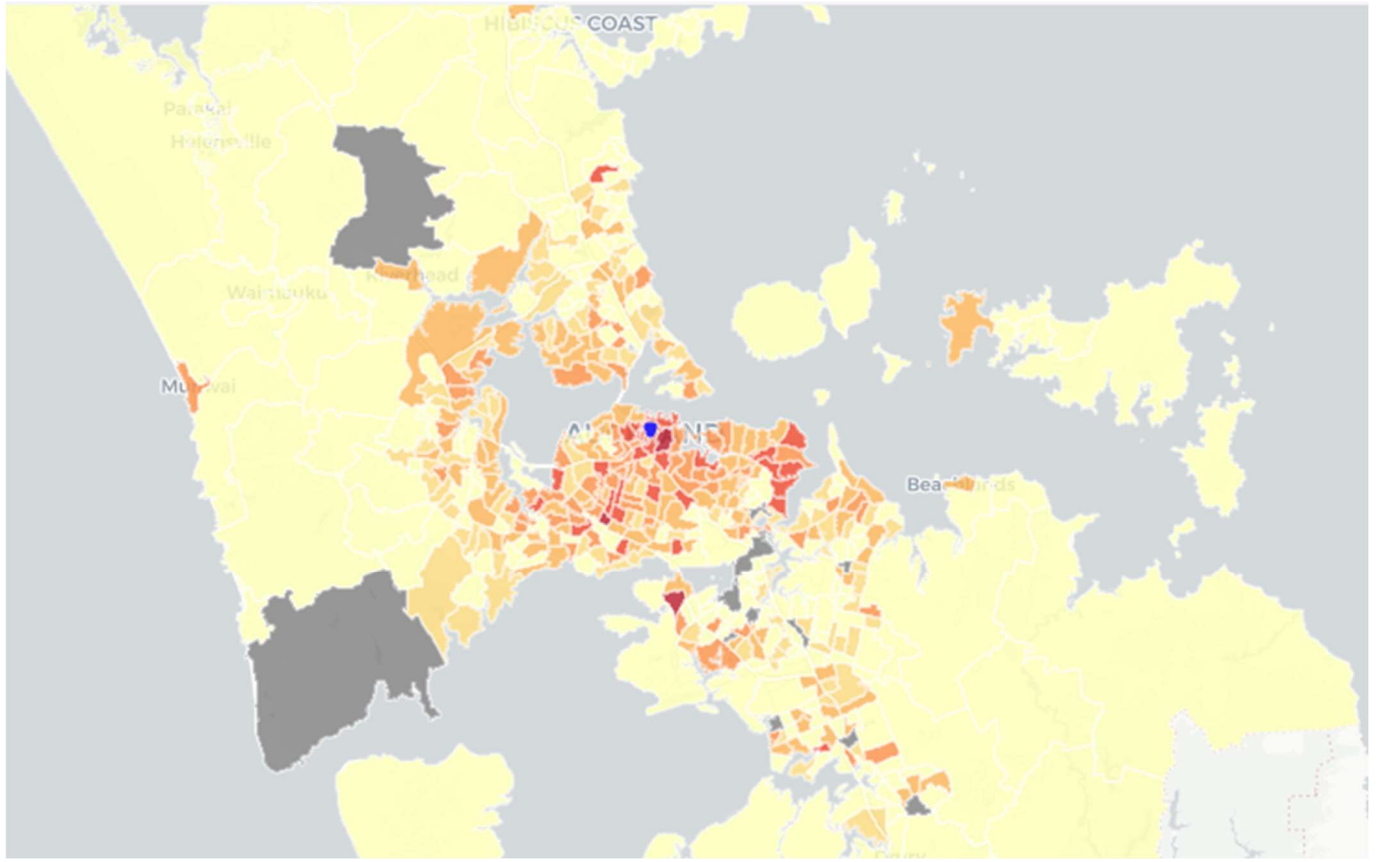
Visitor origin (Statistical areas 2)

Darker colour indicates a higher percentage of visits from that area. Lists with percentages of visits from each SA2 are available on request.

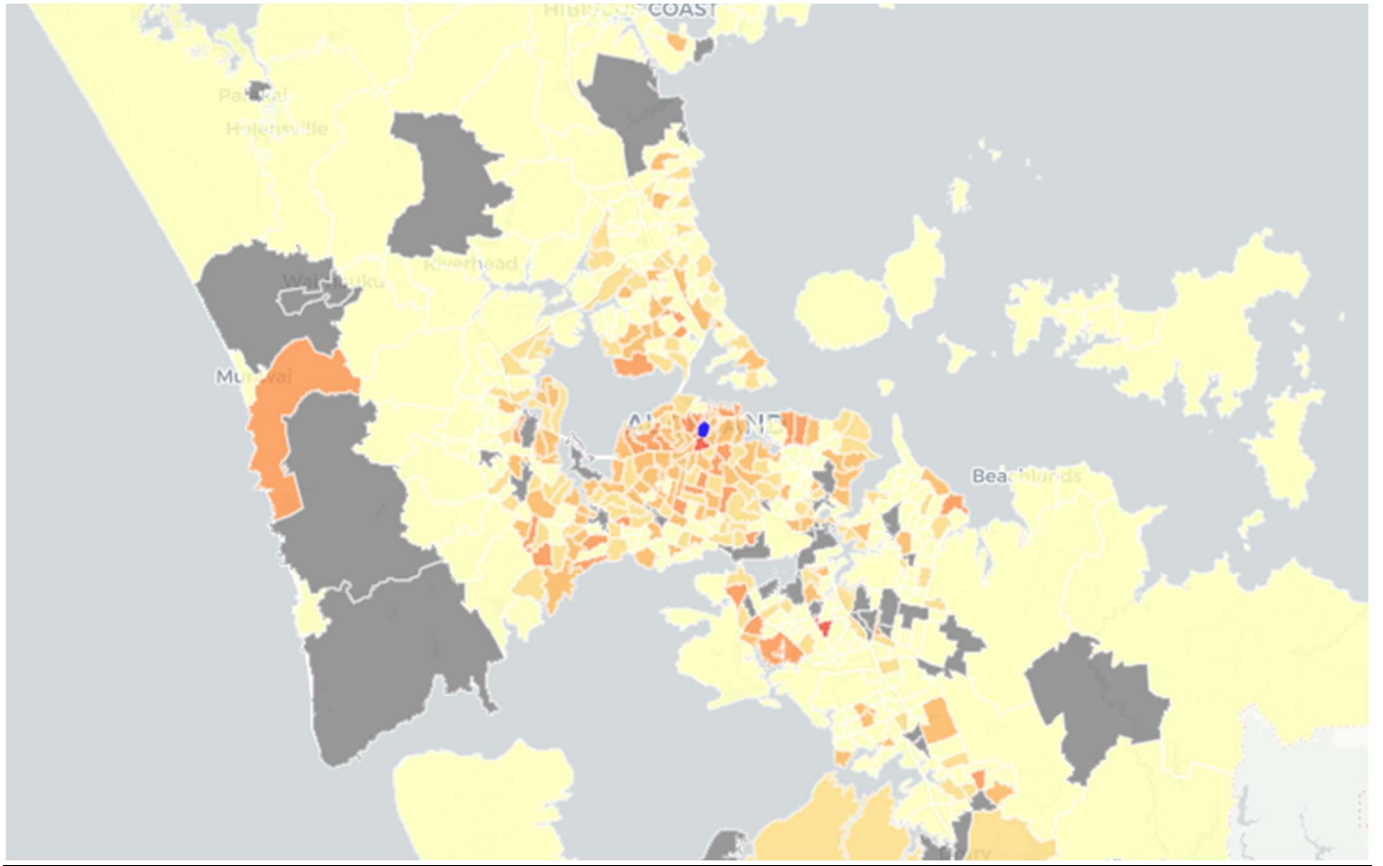
Victoria Park



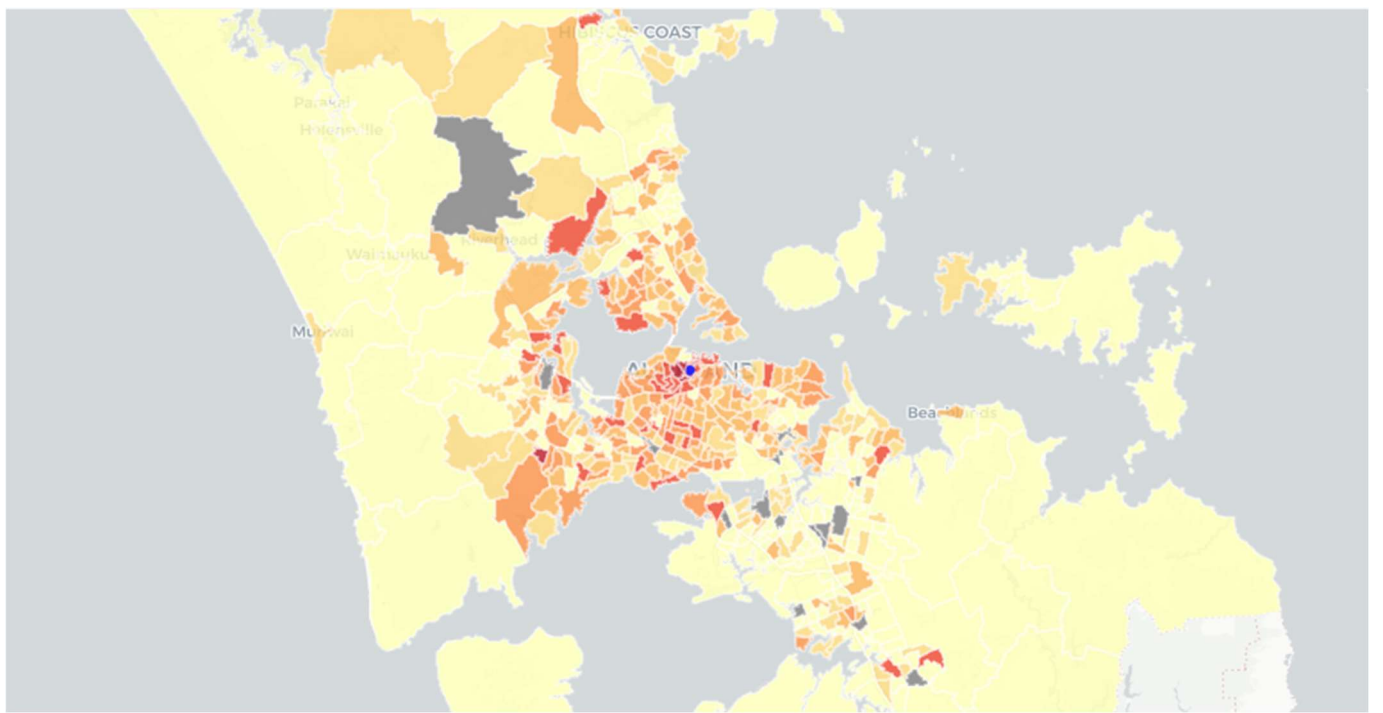
Albert Park



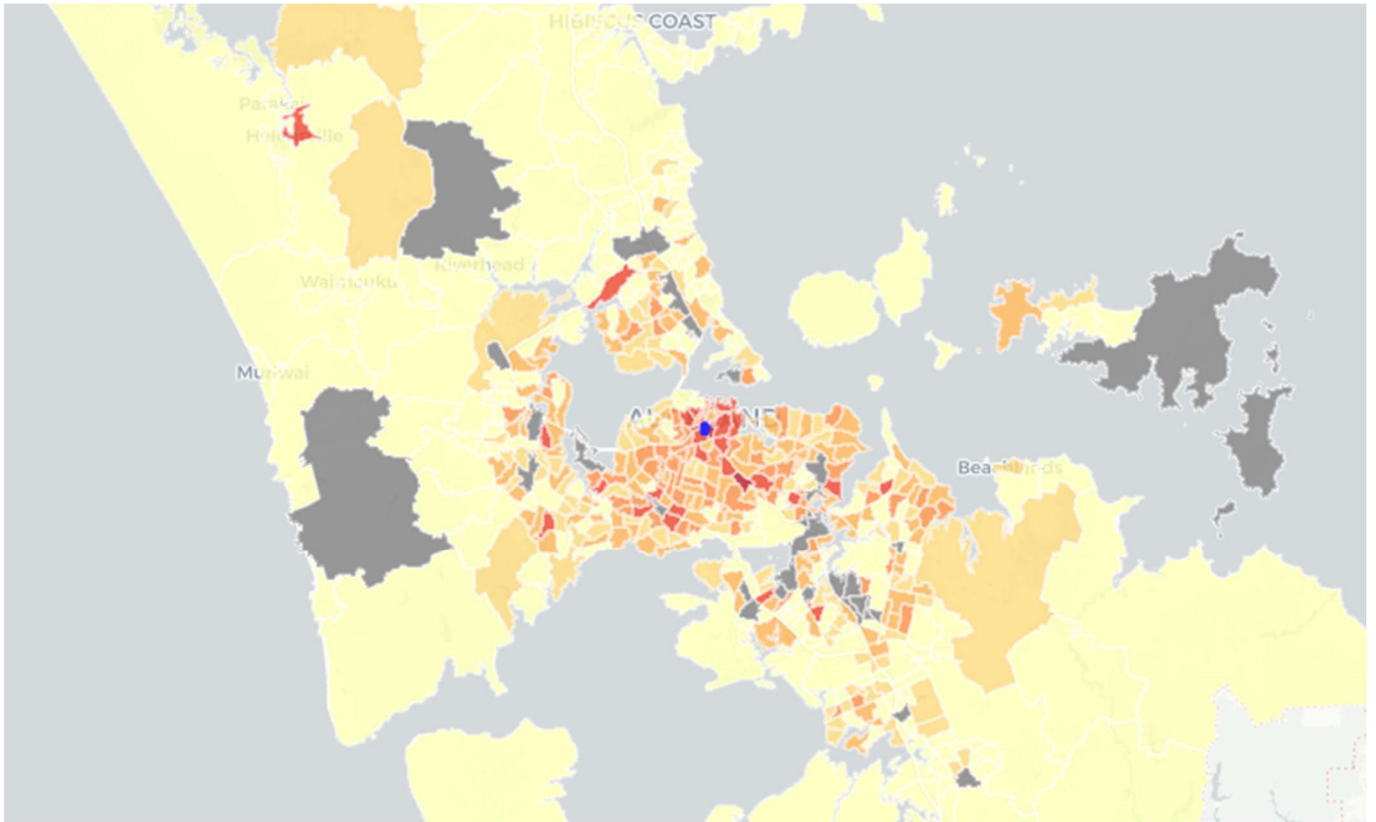
Myers Park



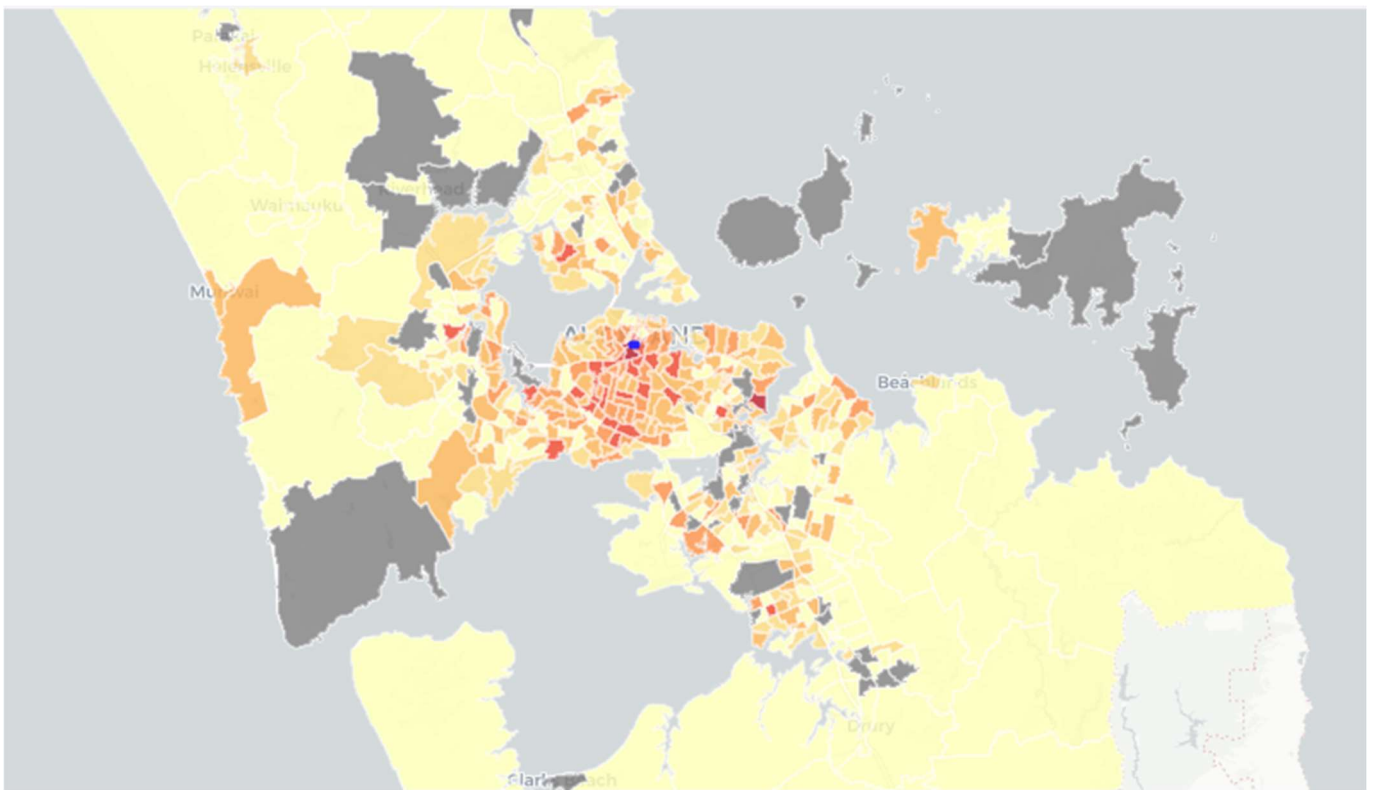
Aotea Square



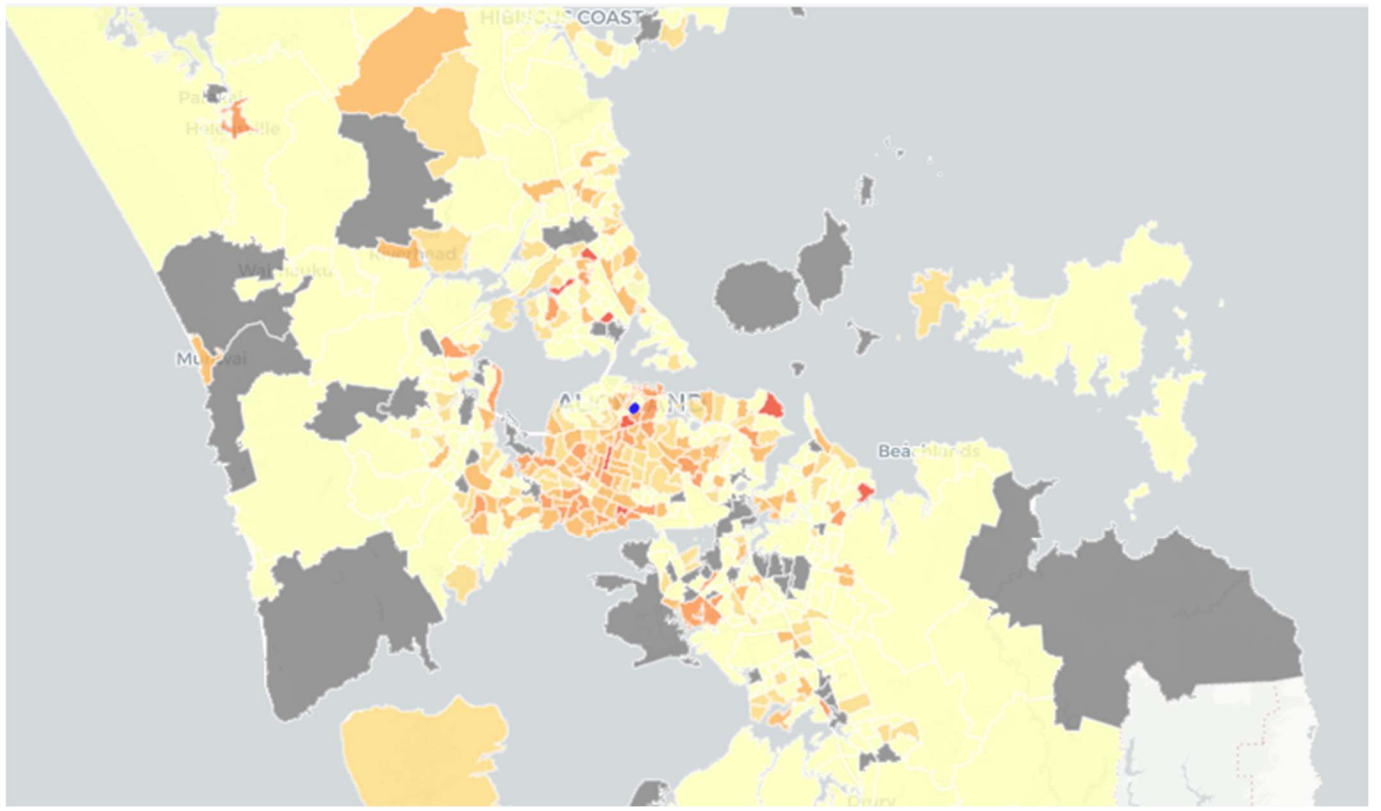
Symonds Street Cemetery East



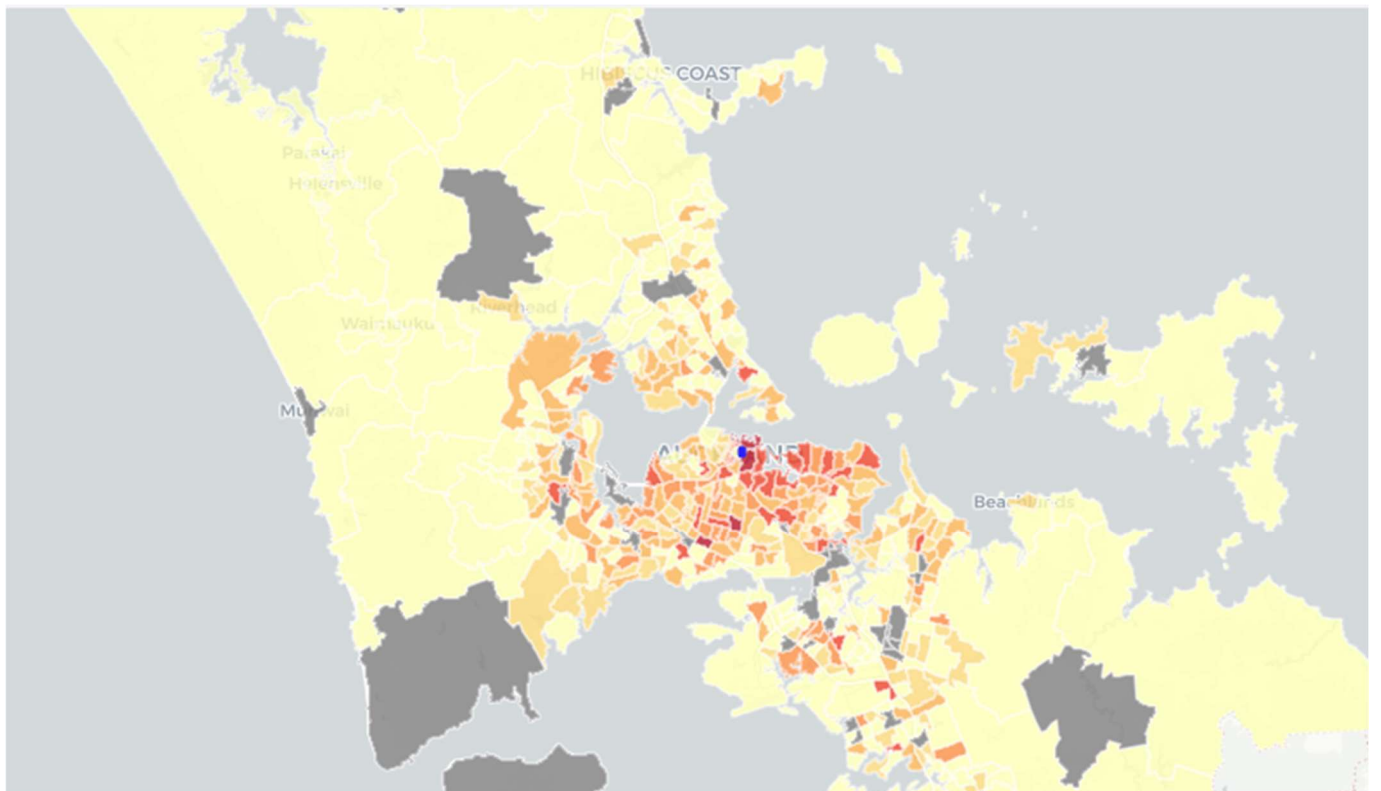
Symonds Street Cemetery West



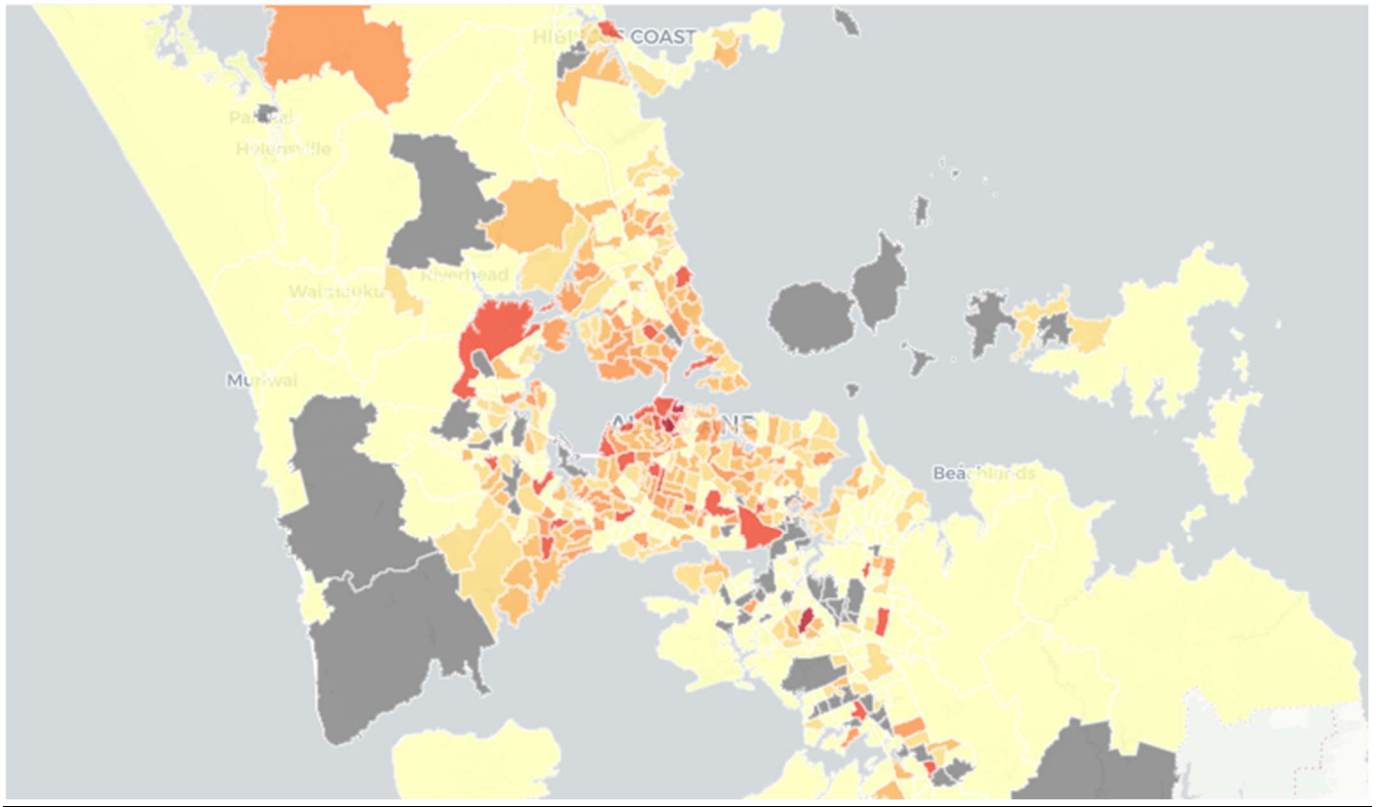
Wakefield Reserve



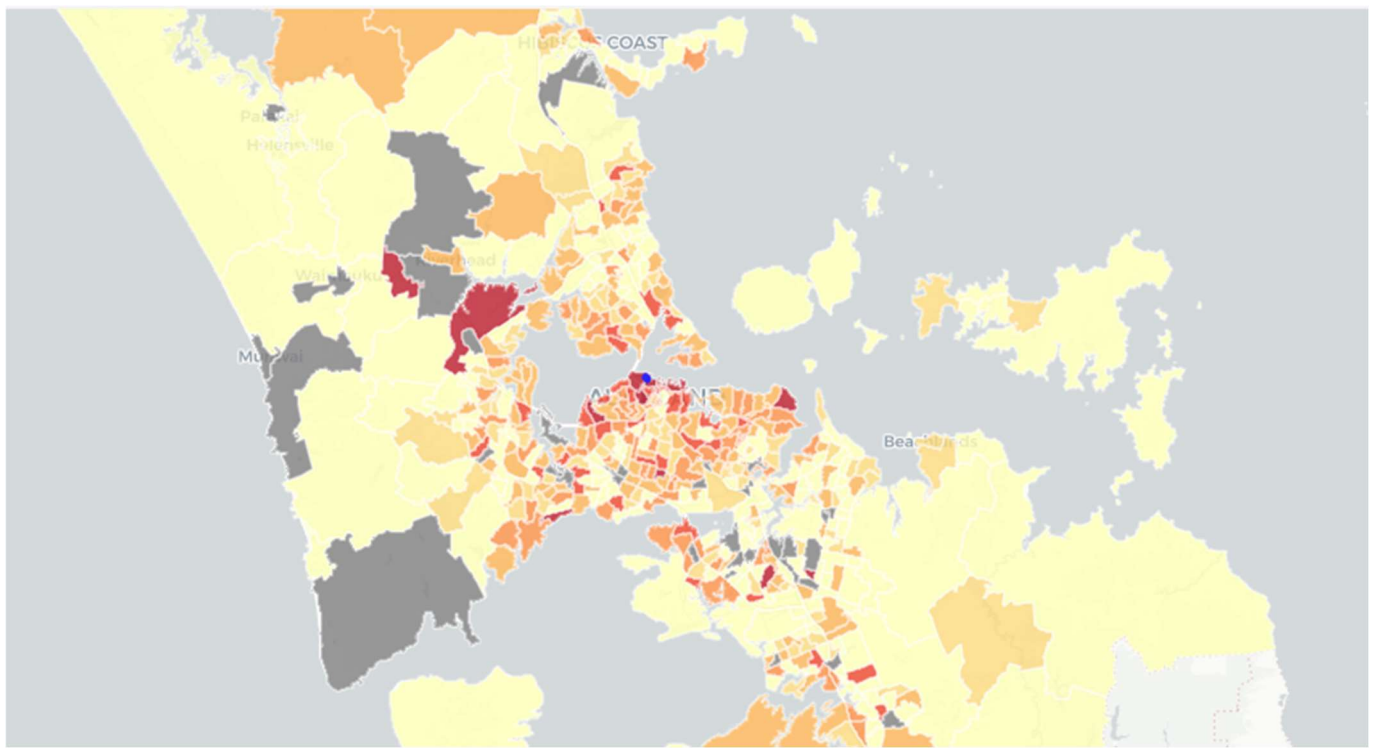
Constitution Hill



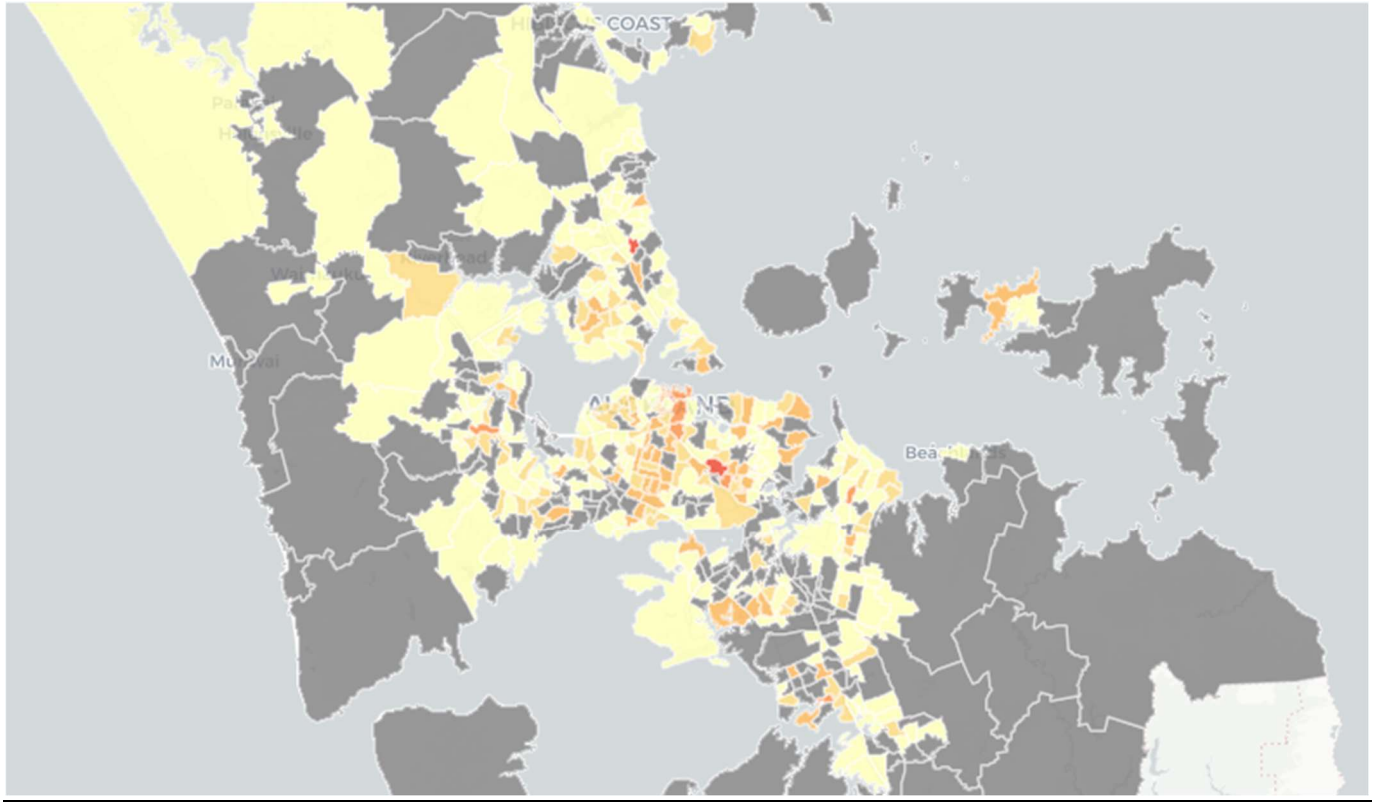
Daldy Street Linear Park



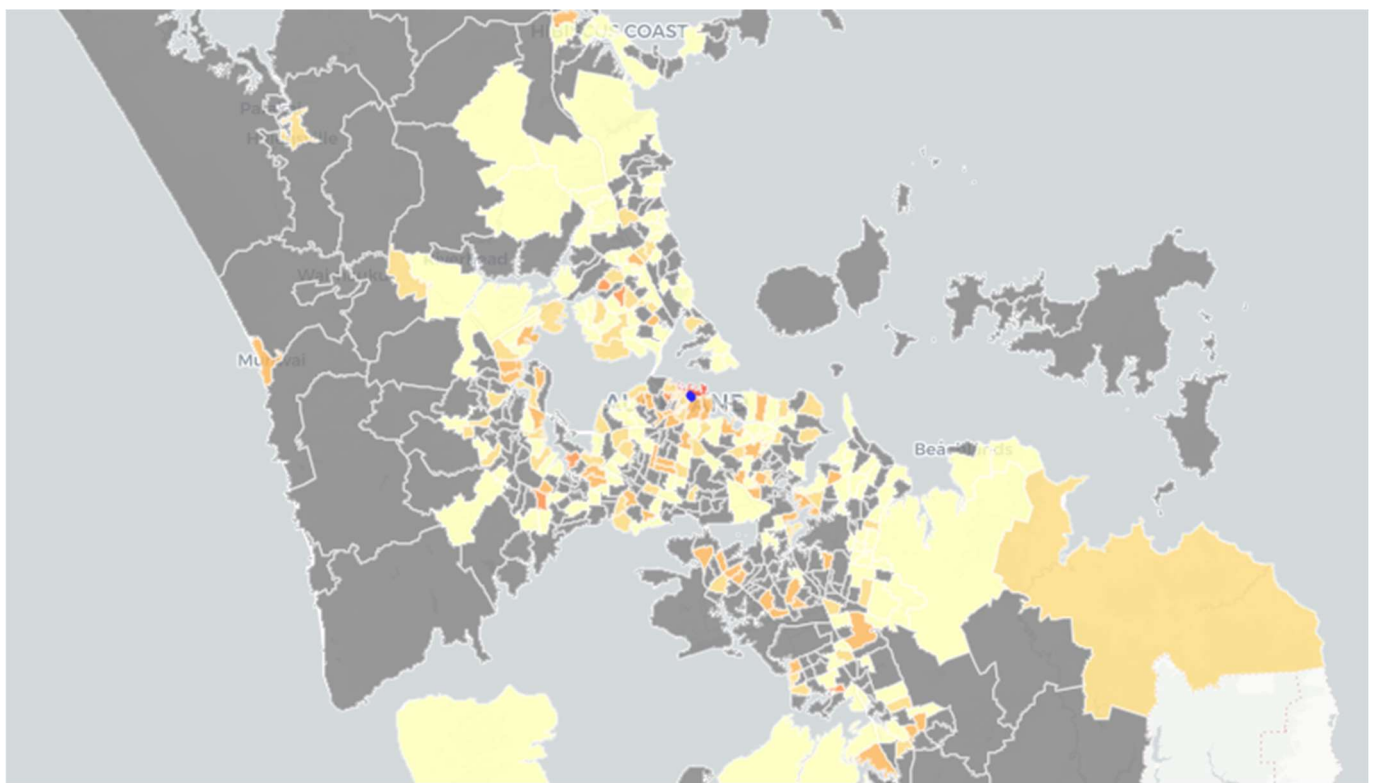
Silo Park



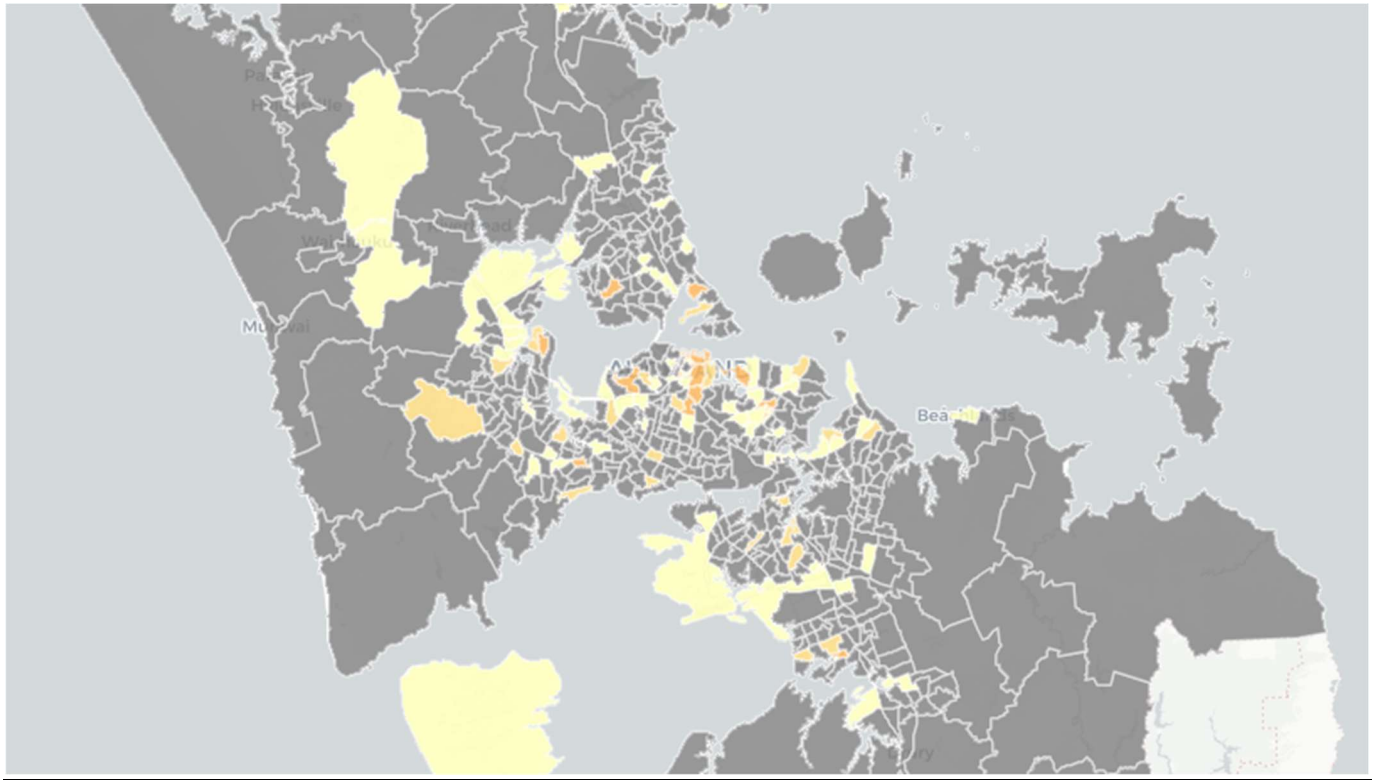
Parliament Reserve



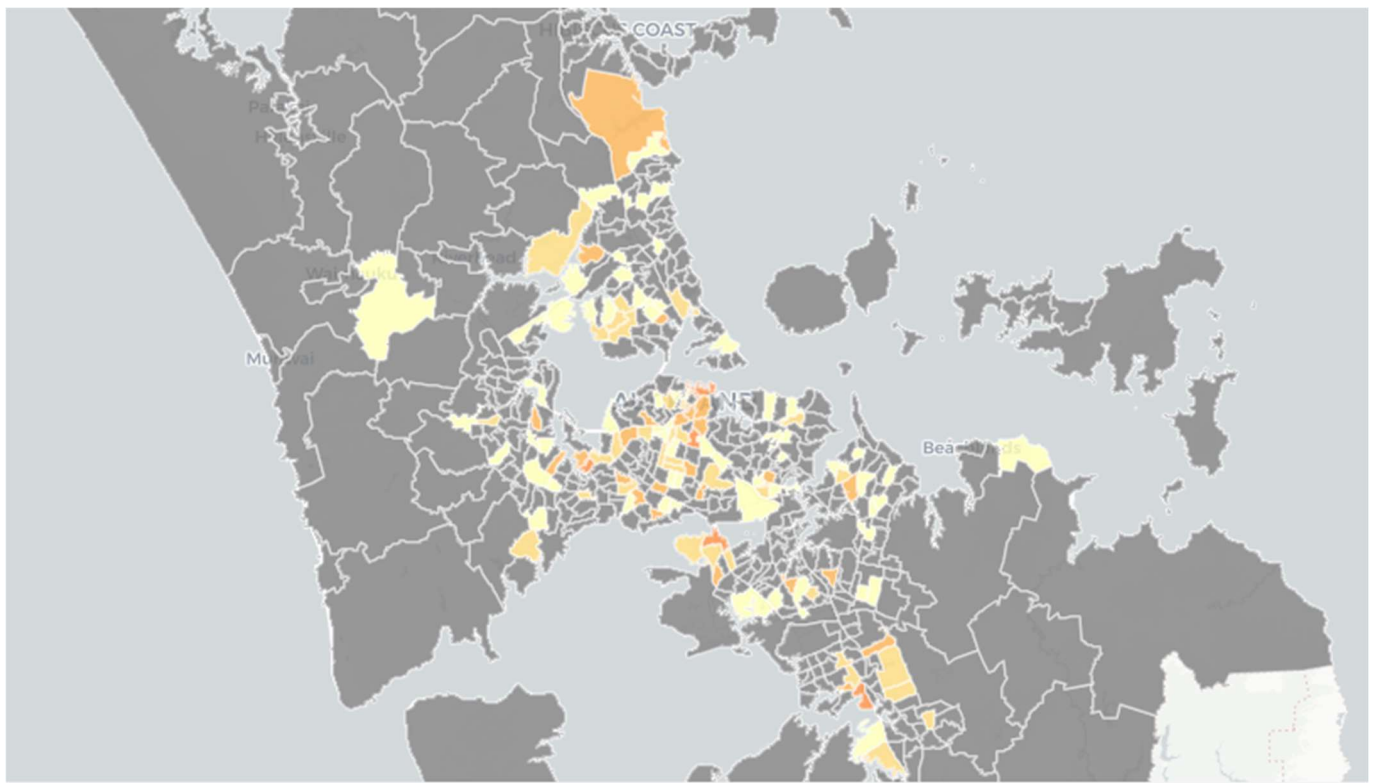
Te Taou Reserve Railway Gardens



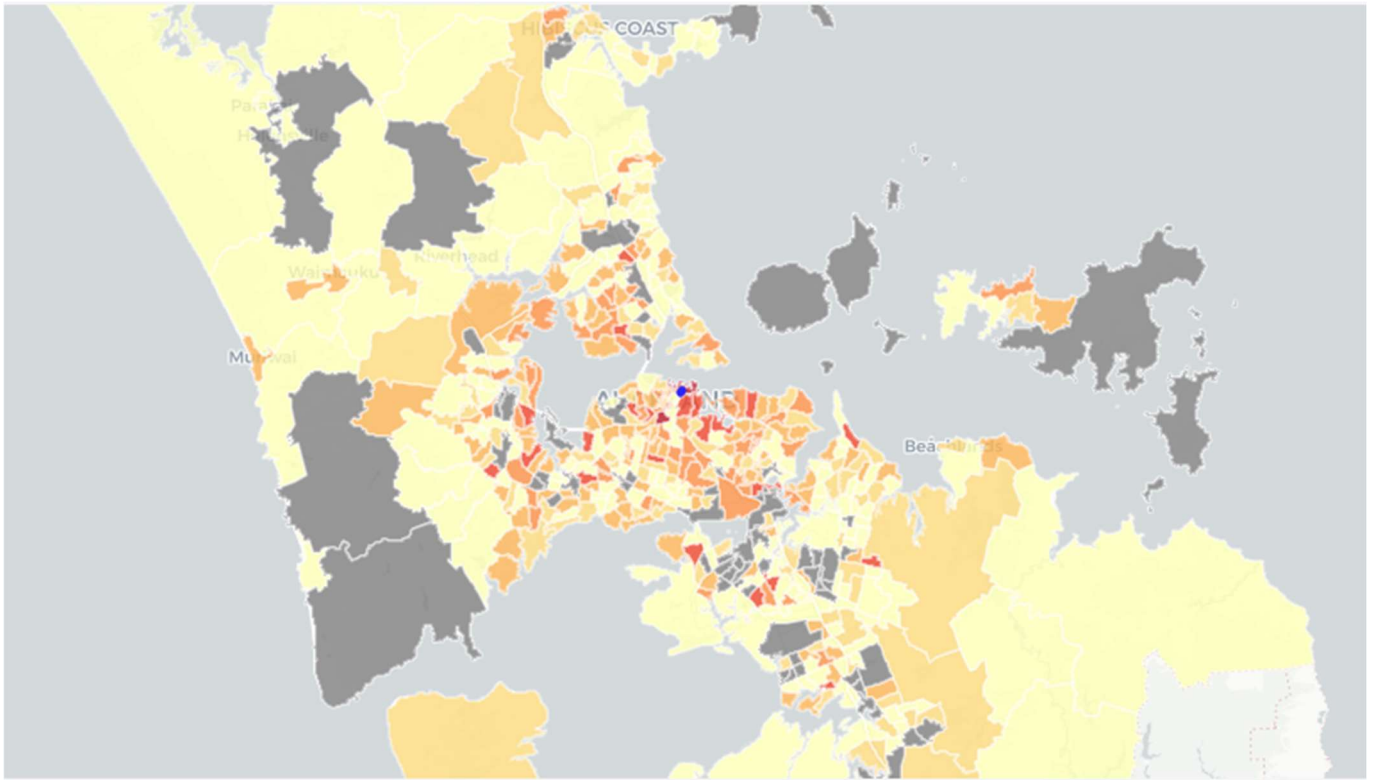
Te Uringutu Reserve



Ernest Davis Lookout



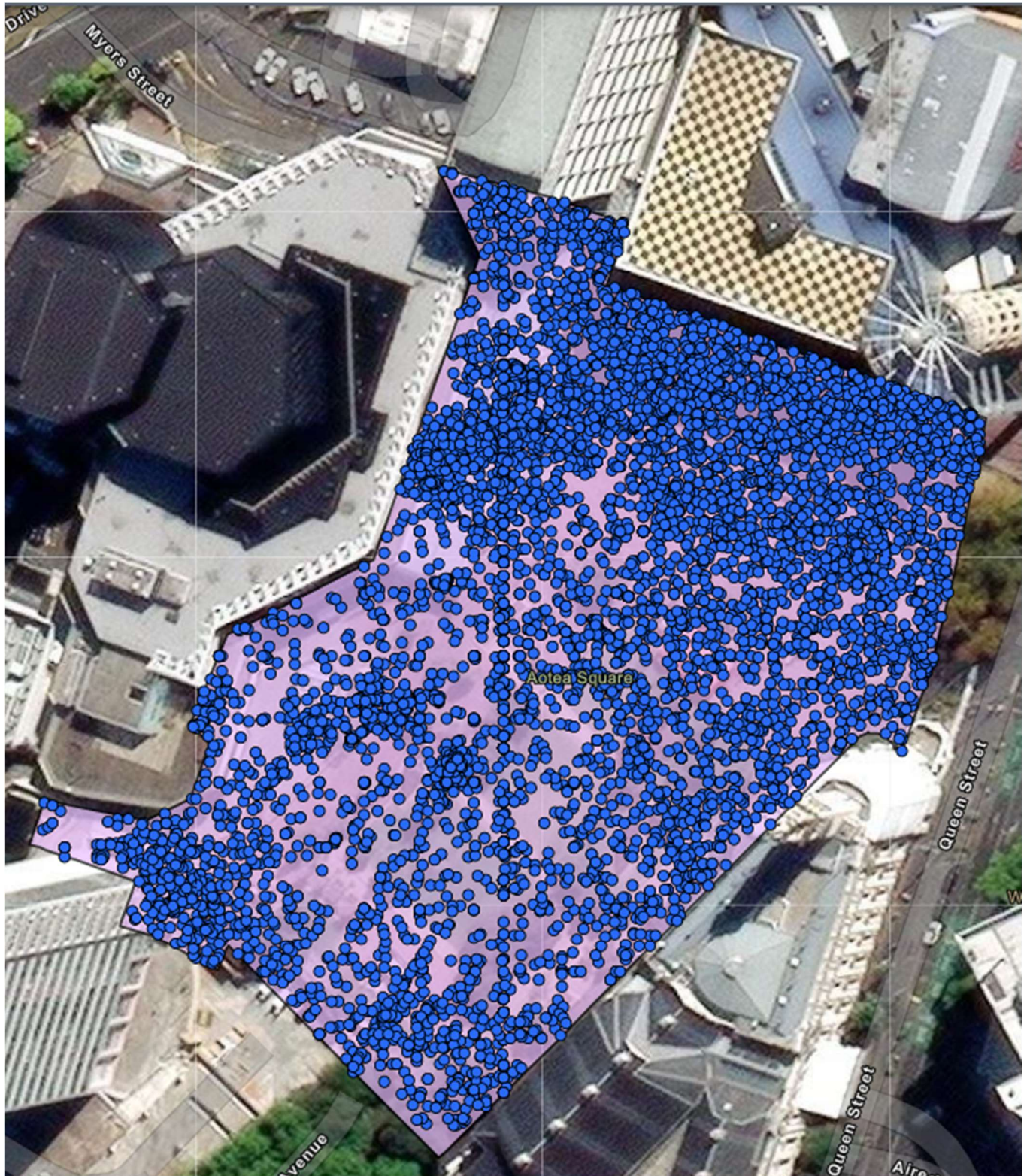
Mahuhu Ki Te Rangi (Quay Park)



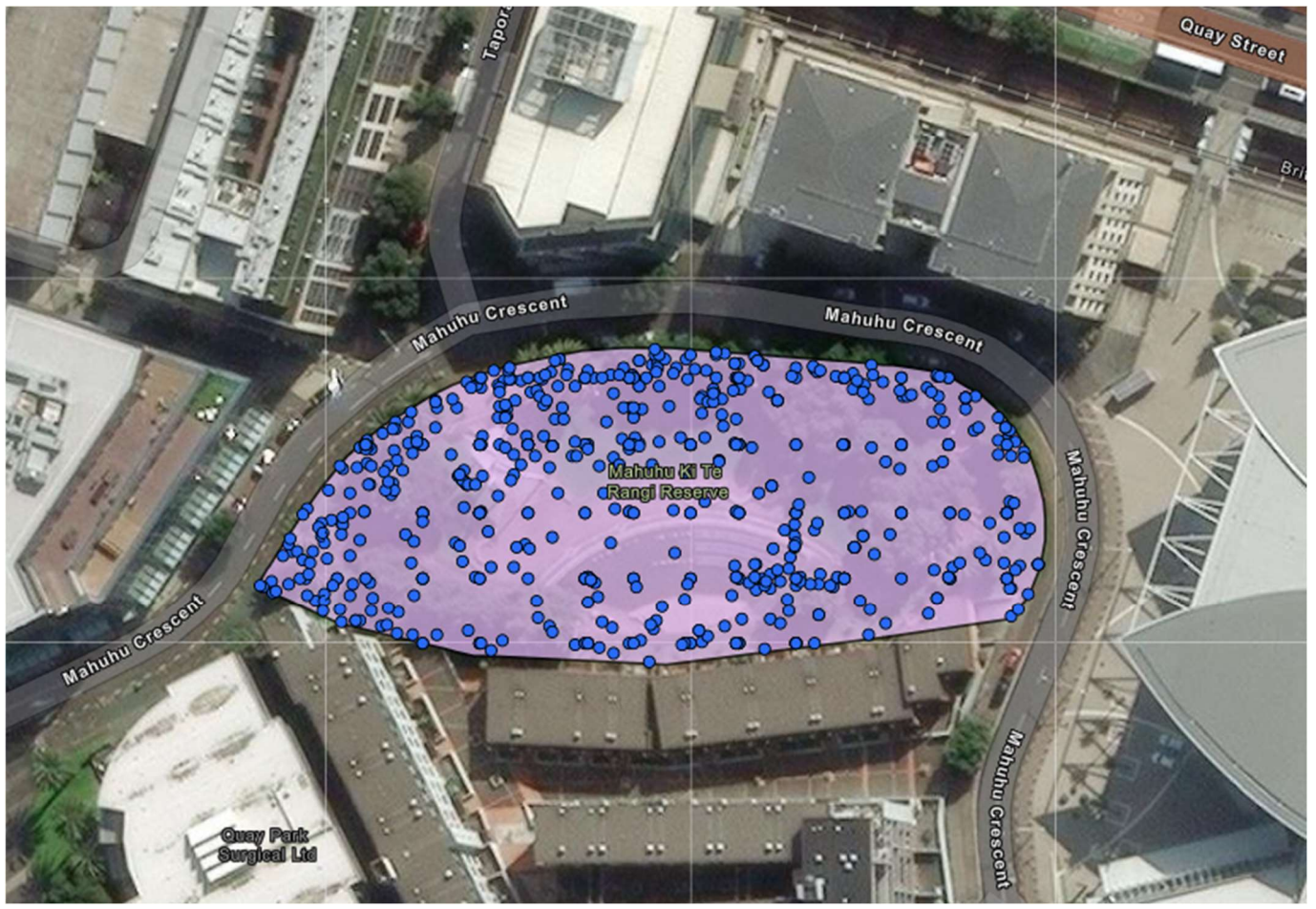
Distribution of GPS signals in parks

In the maps below, each blue dot represents aggregated GPS signals (pings) accumulated across the whole monitoring period (44 months) indicating which areas are most used. Phones typically ping the cell phone tower every 10-15 minutes. Higher density of signals indicates more people passing through that area or people staying longer in the area. An exception is a straight line of single dots in some images. Such line is the result of phones generating an extra signal when crossing a boundary between two cell phone towers.

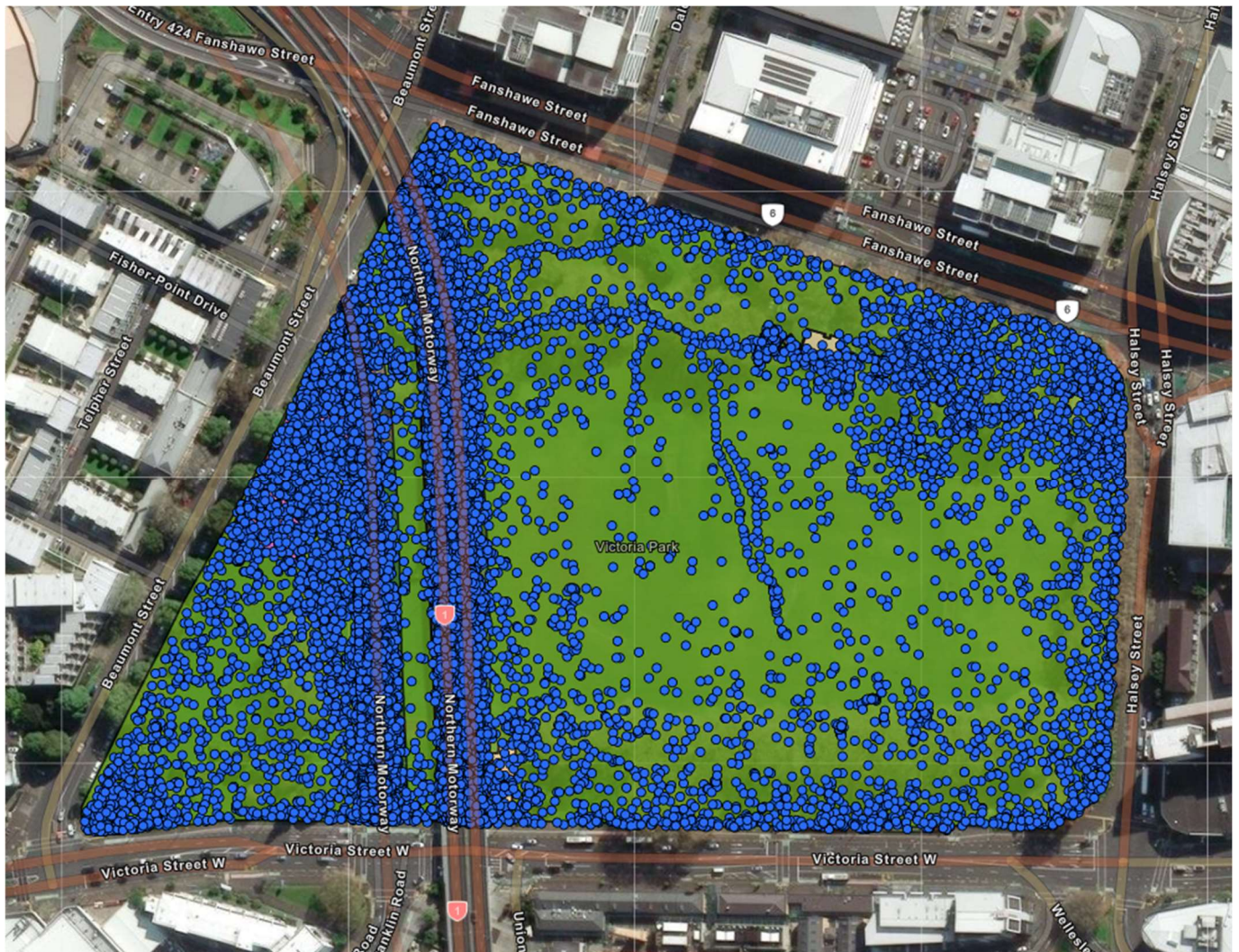
Aotea Square



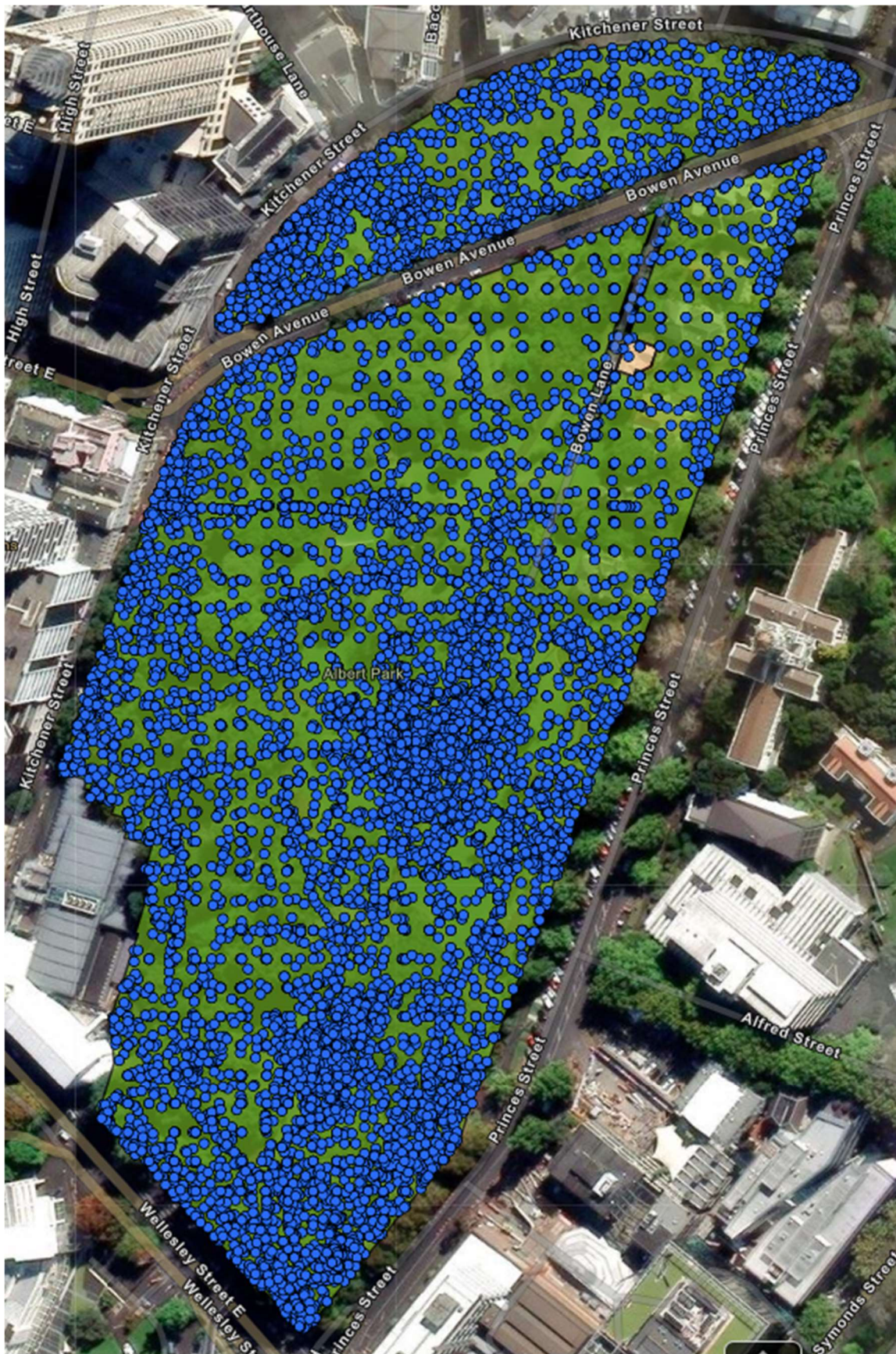
Mahuhu Ki Te Rangi (Quay Park)



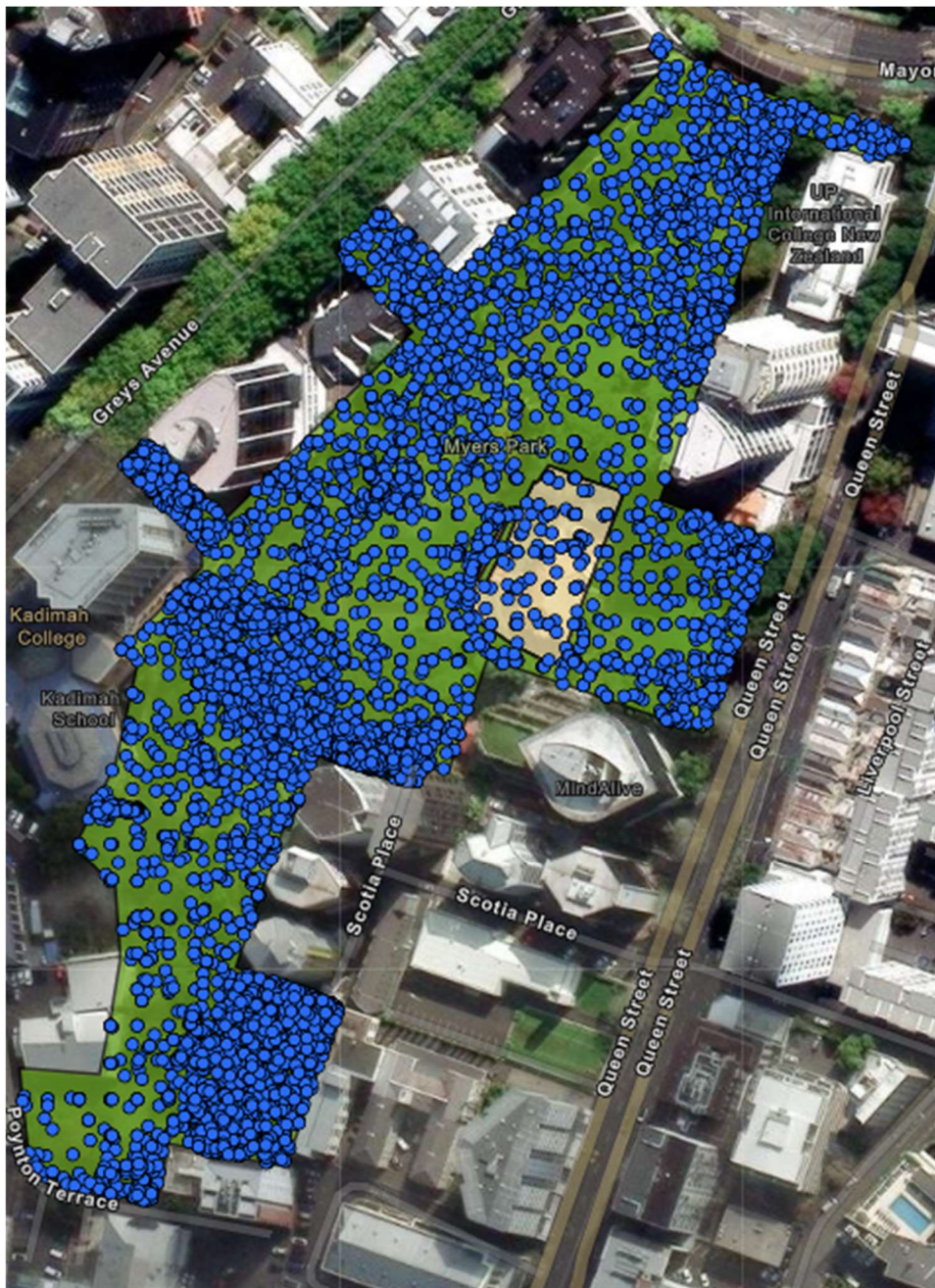
Victoria Park



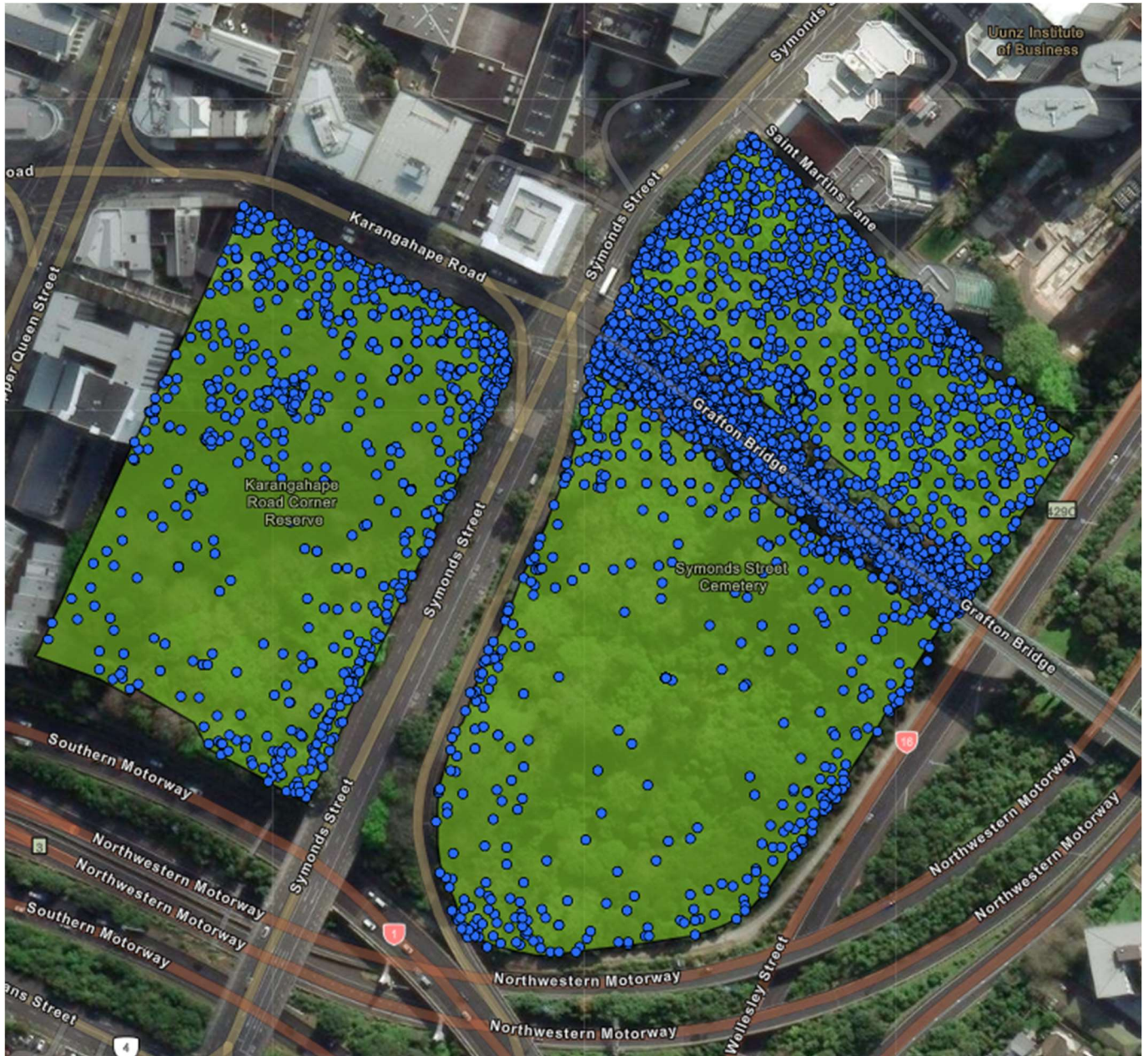
Albert Park



Myers Park



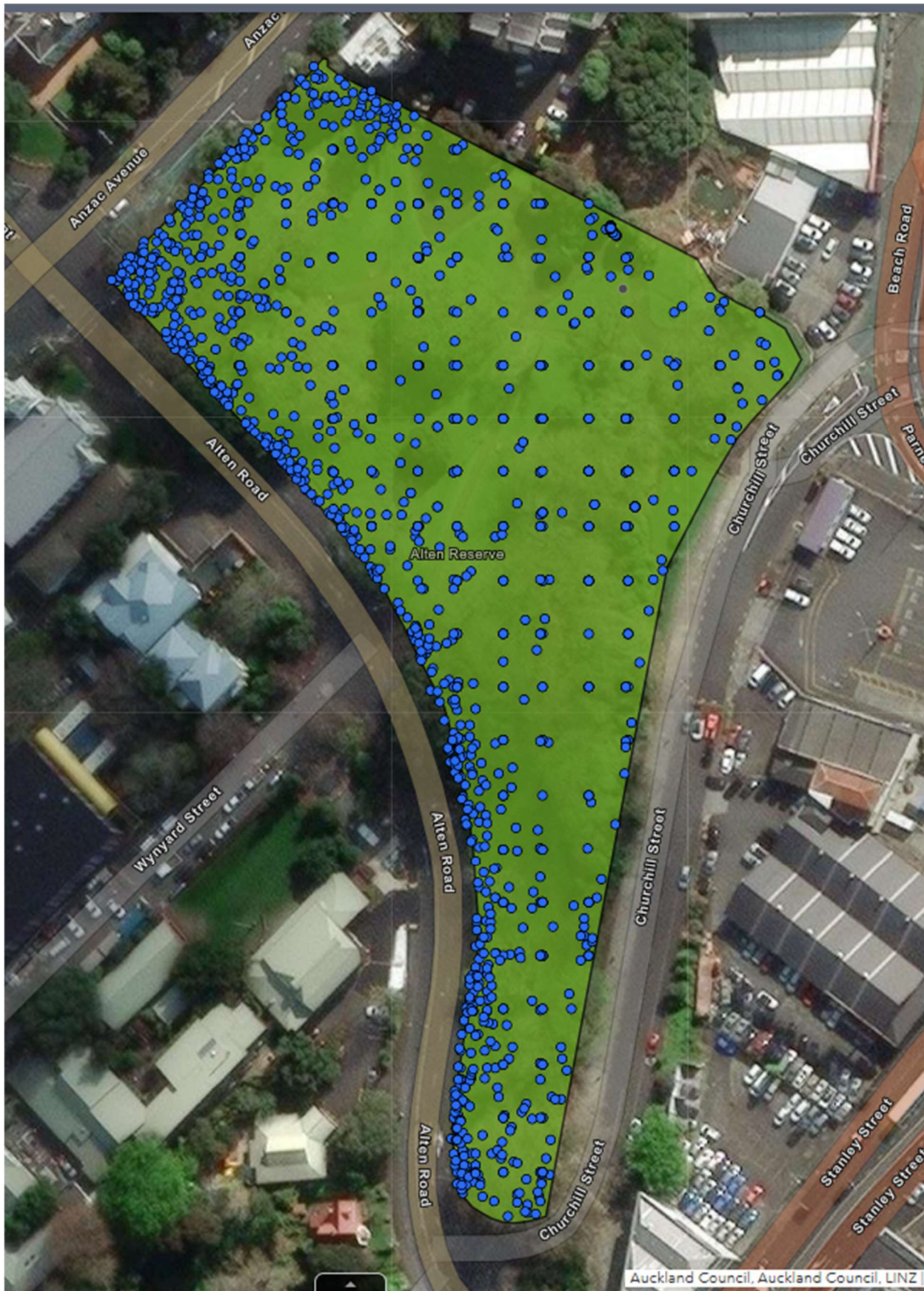
Symonds Street Cemetery



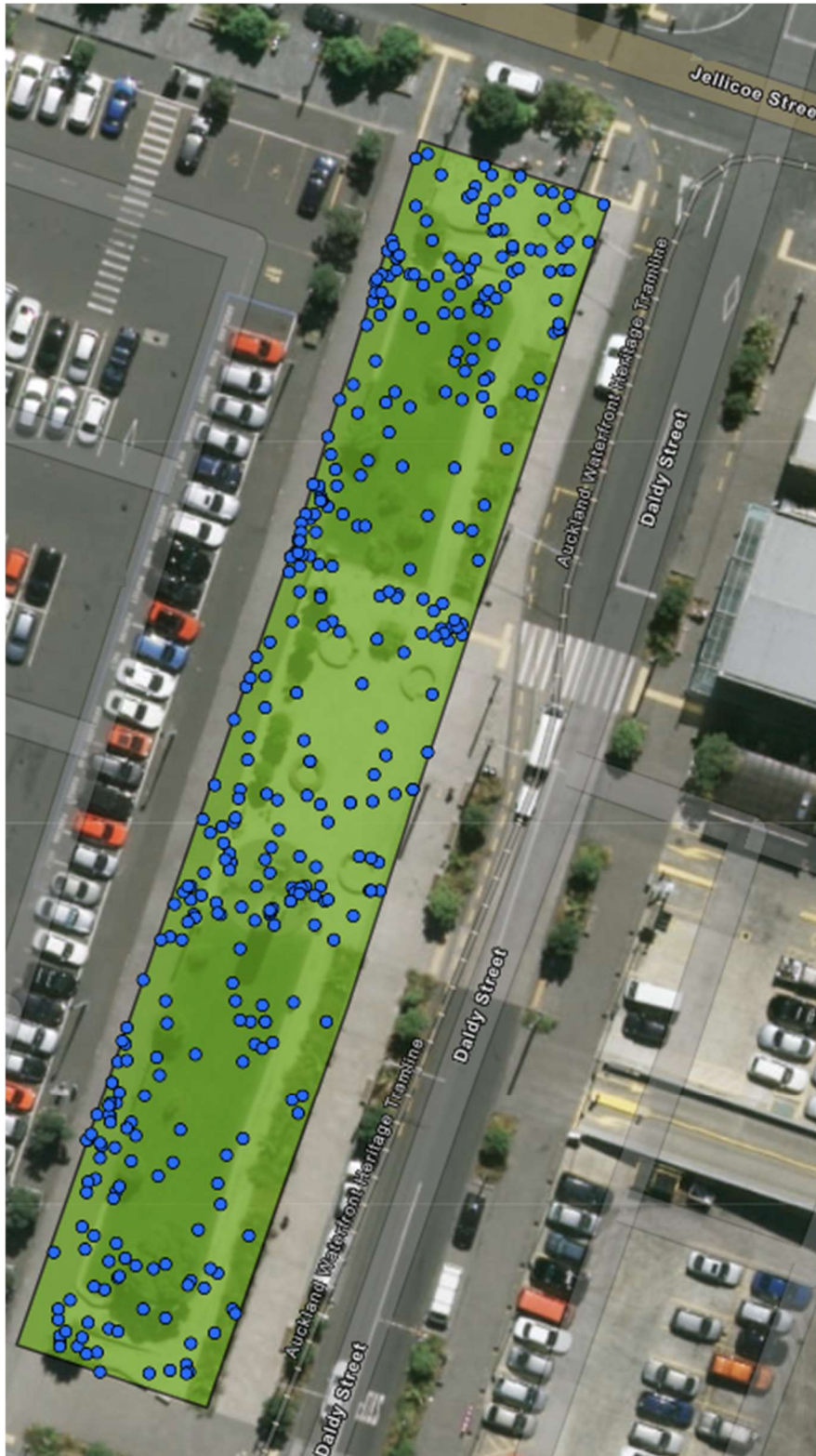
Wakefield Reserve



Constitution Hill

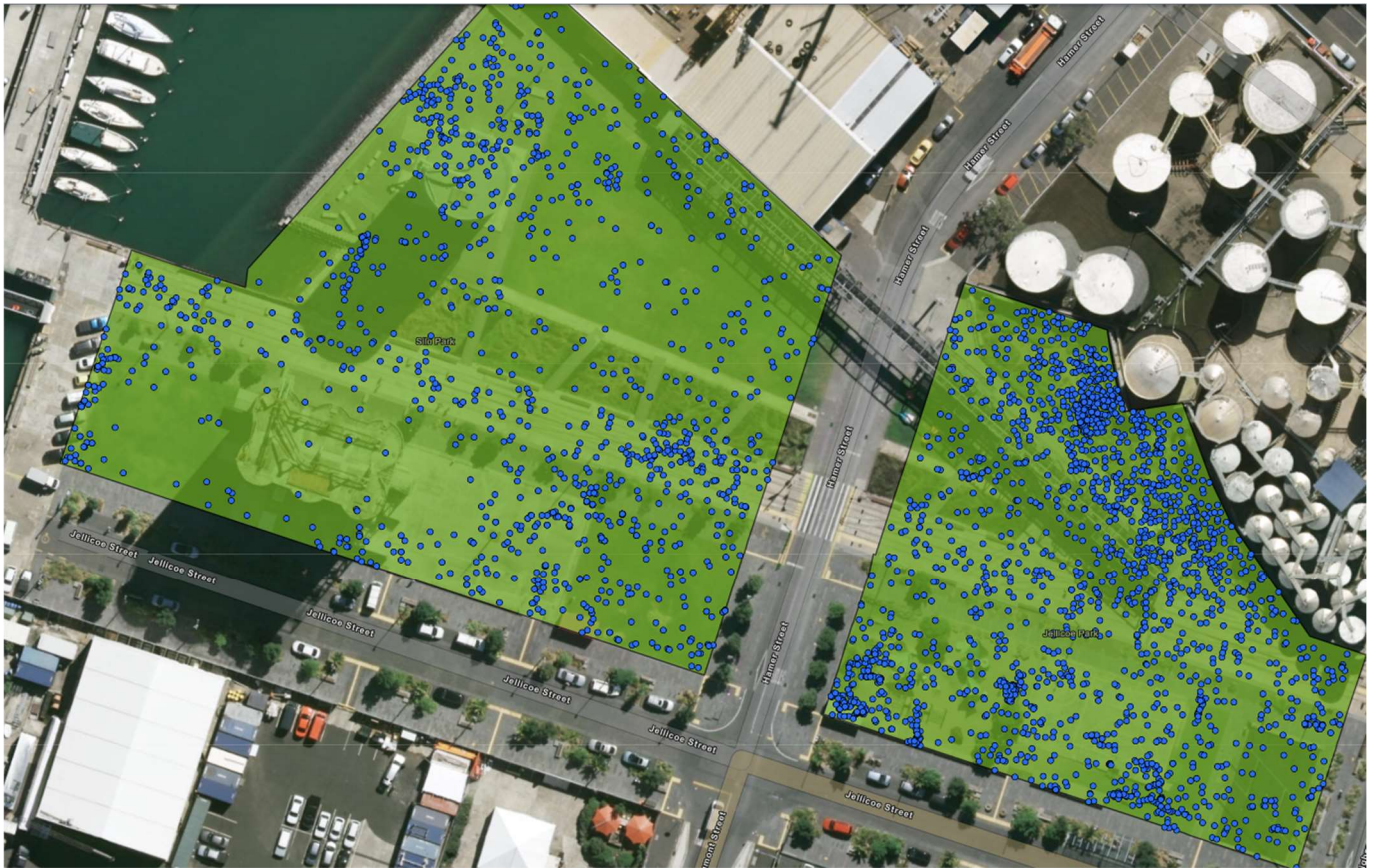


Daldy Street Linear Park

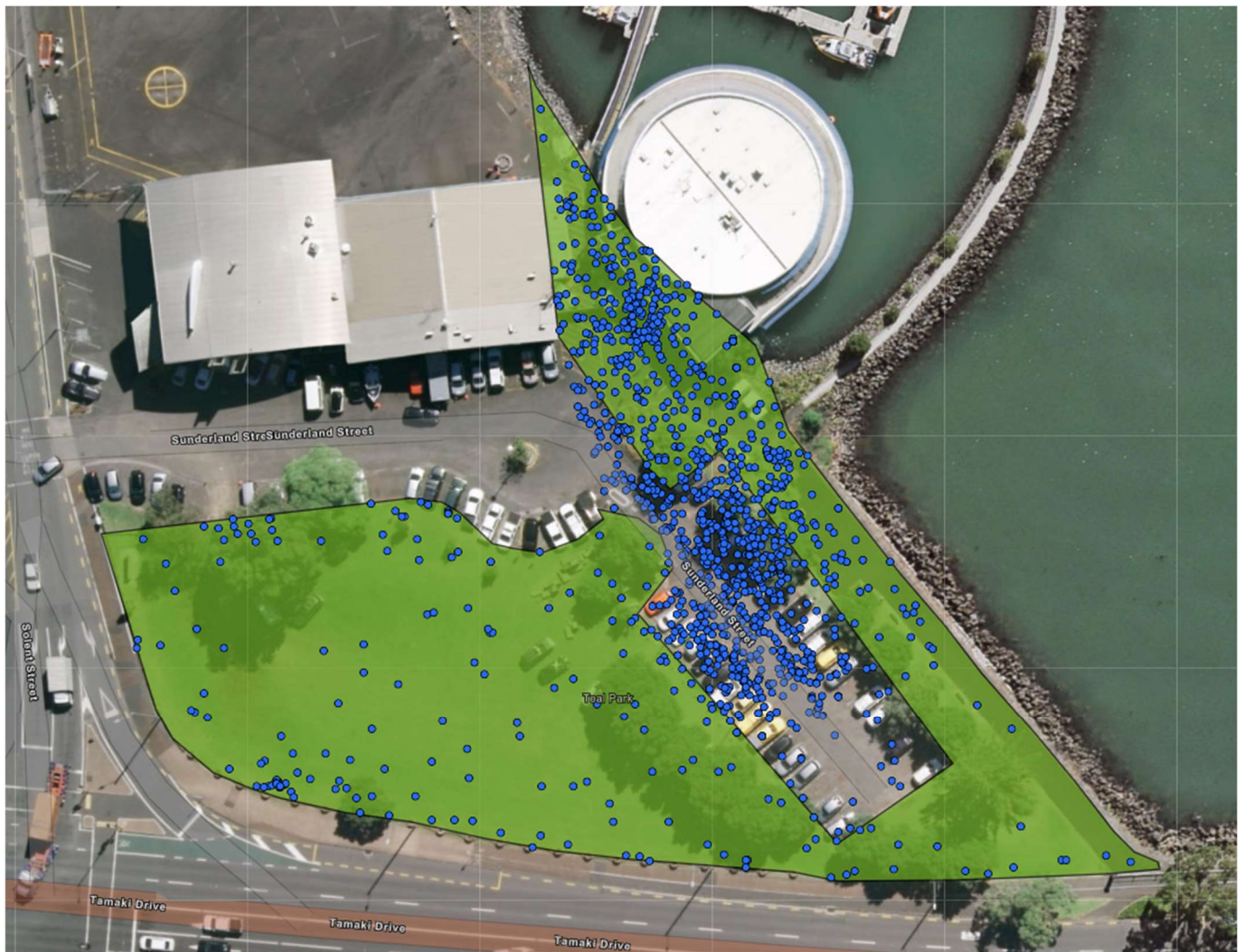




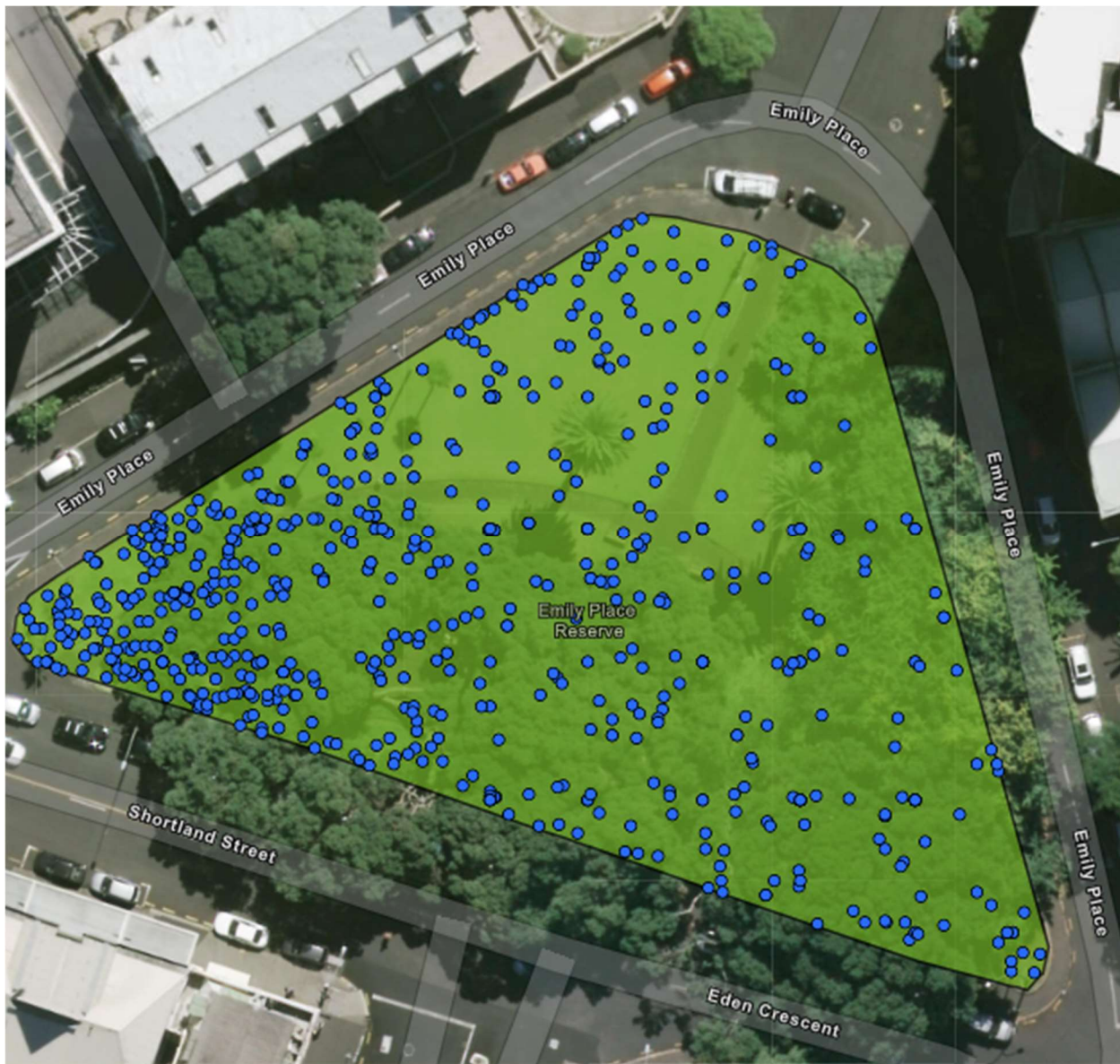
Silo Park



Teal Park



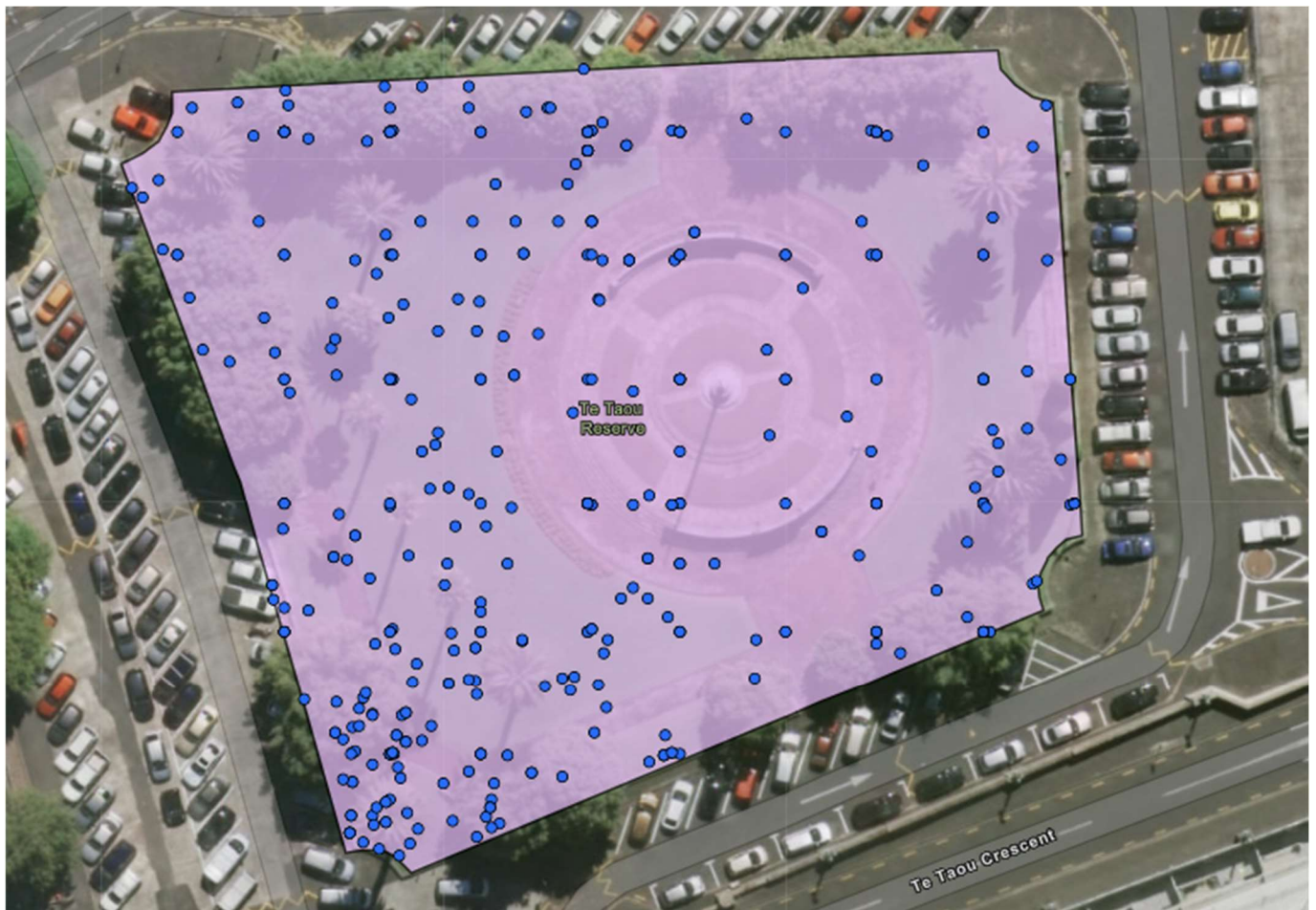
Emily Place



Parliament Reserve



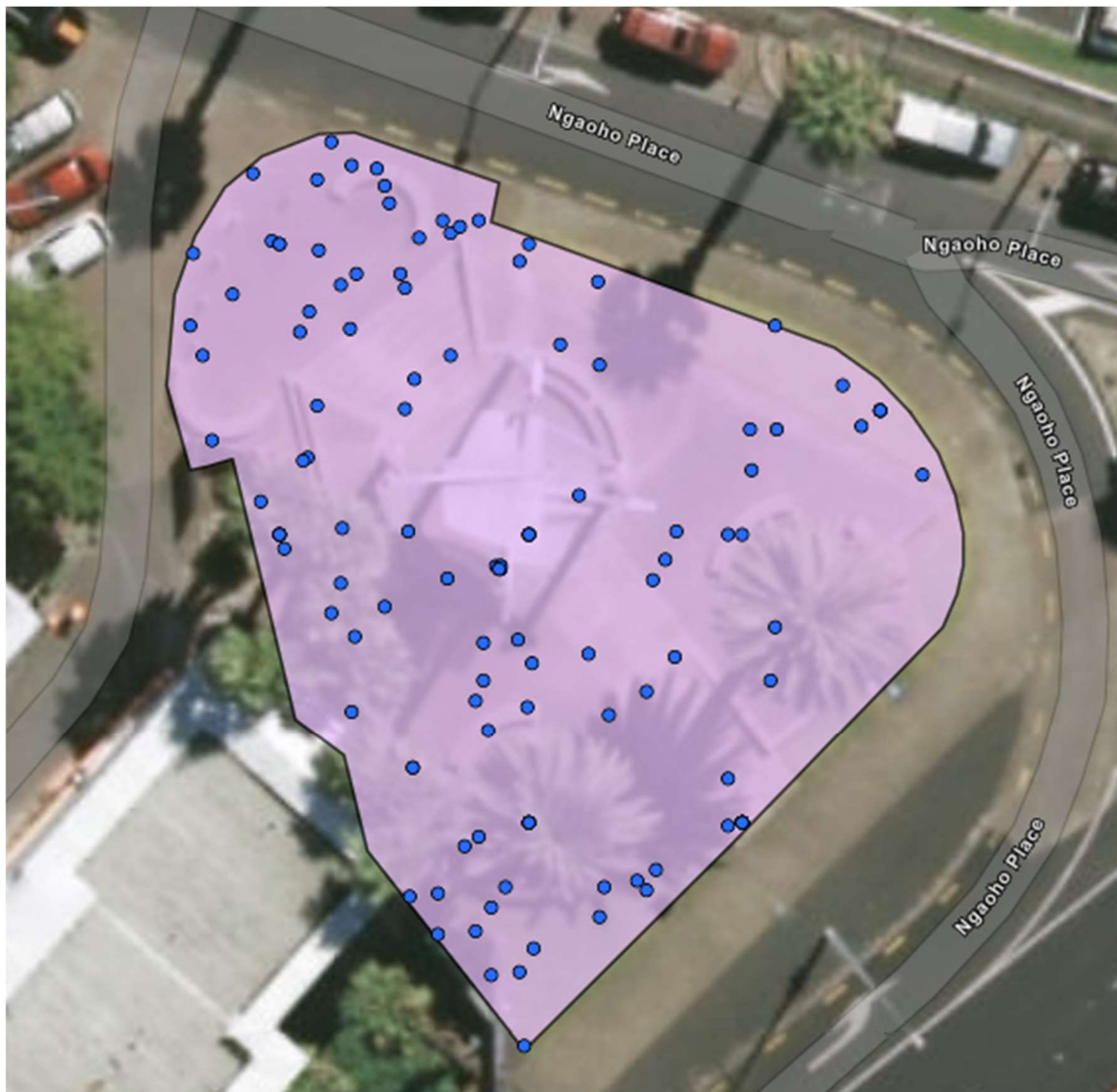
Te Taou Reserve Railway Gardens



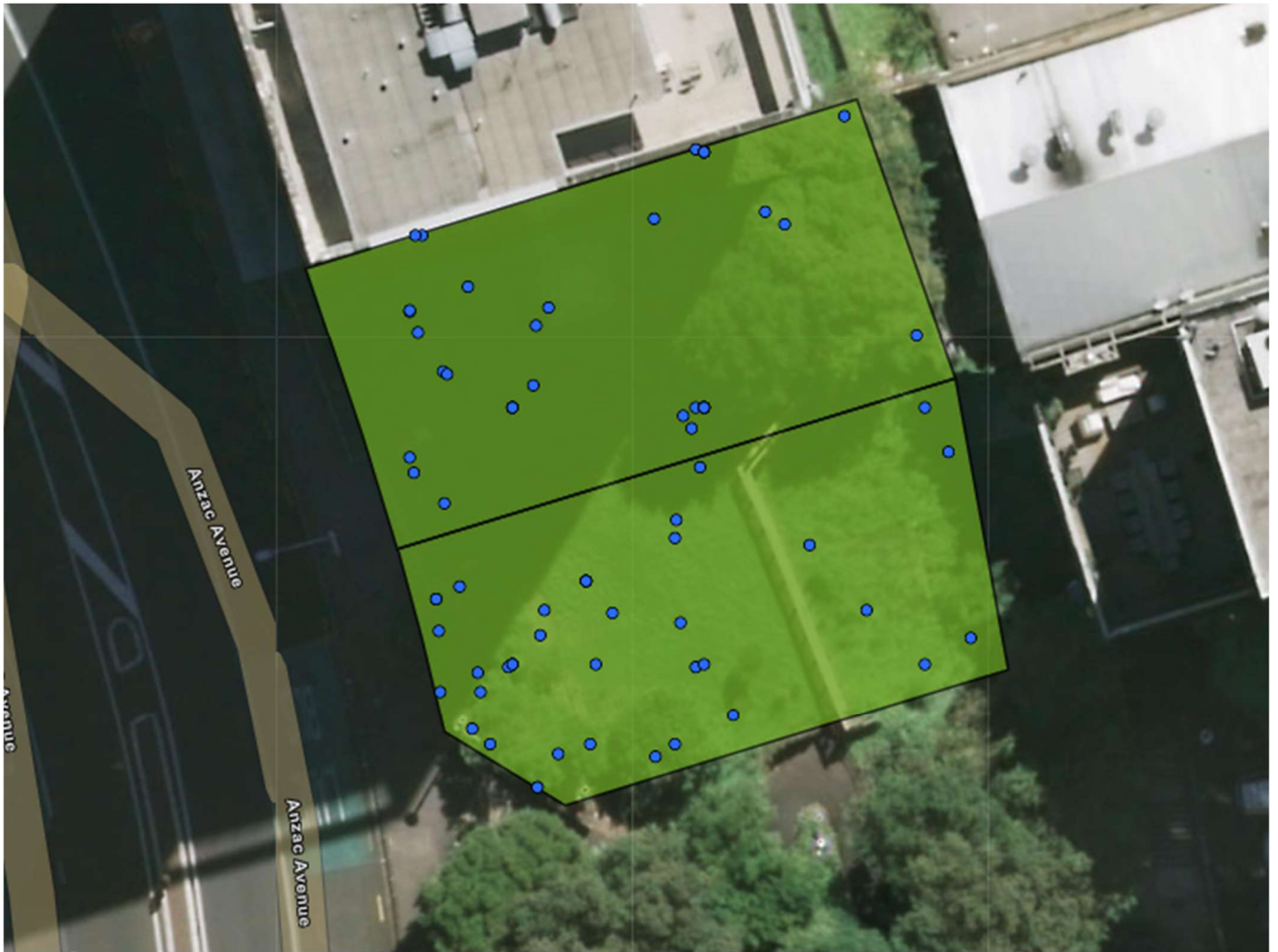
Te Uringutu Reserve



Ngaoho Reserve



Anzac Avenue 110 -112/ Ernest Davis Lookout



Part 2: Facilities overview

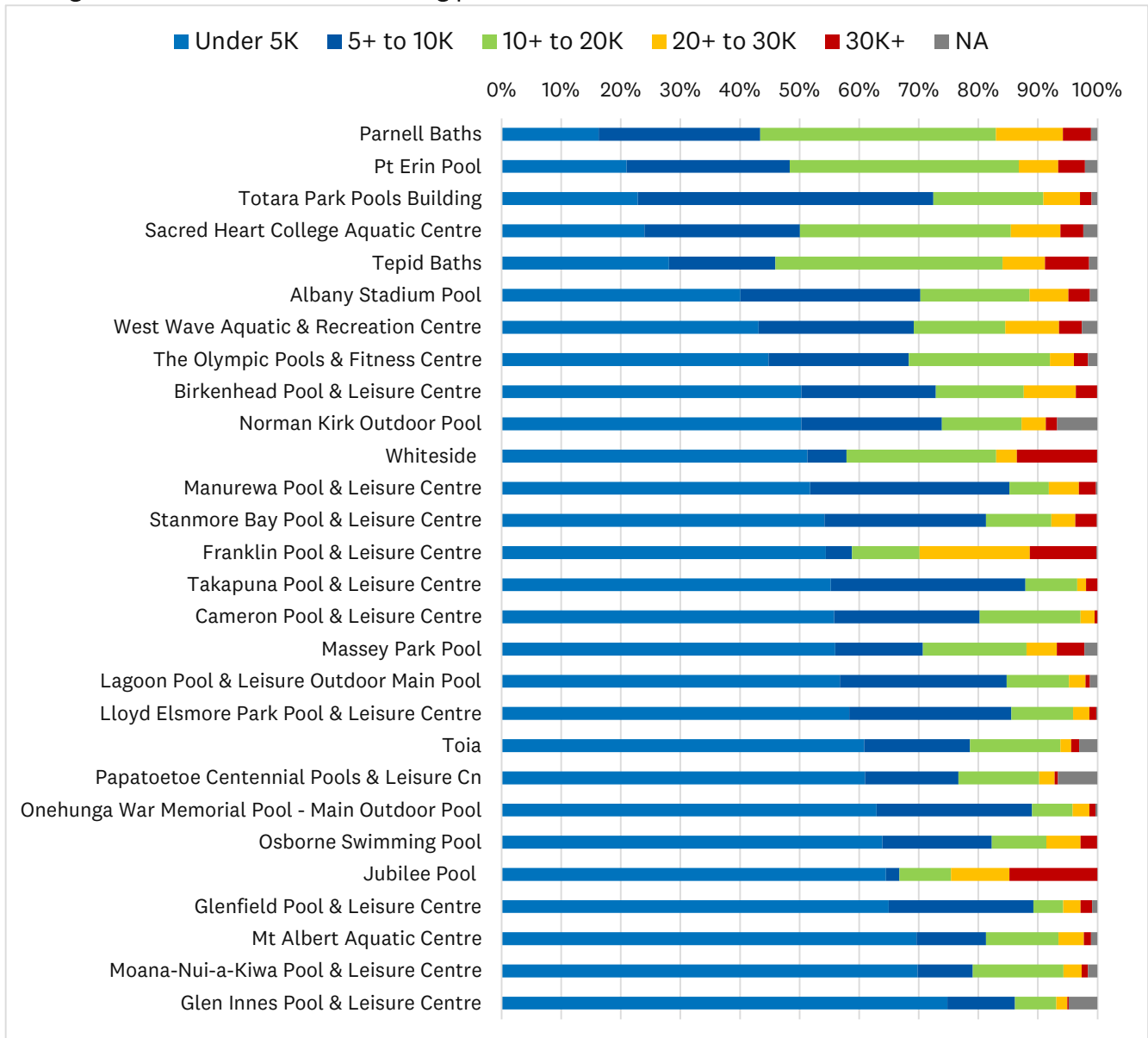
Tepid Baths

Timeframe: Jan 2020-Aug 2023		
Visits (customer count)	509,032	
Visits (HMI)	556,732*	26% of visits from Waitematā local board; 18% of visits from high deprivation areas

*See “Understanding HMI data” at the start of the report for an explanation of the difference between HMI and customer counts.

Tepid Baths has the highest percentage of visits where travel distance was 10 km or more compared to other all-year swimming pools (Parnell Baths are open only in summer season). The distance was calculated based on the centroid of the neighbourhood of origin in HMI data.

Average distance travelled to swimming pools :



Central Library

Period: Jan 2020-Aug 2023	
Visits: 1,599,377 (customer count)	HMI data cannot be used because the Library is located in a multi-level building with other levels occupied by corporate offices, café etc. and HMI visits to the library levels cannot be separated from visits to other floors.
Physical issues (items borrowed): 556,200	The relatively low 0.35 items borrowed per visit shows that the Central Library attract people to the facility not just to borrow books. People also come to use the space, use the computers and WiFi, book rooms, use the Makerspace and attend events, making the Central Library an important community hub.

Ellen Melville Centre

Period: FY 21-FY24	
Hours booked: 3,499 Participation (visitors to booked rooms): 25,061 Utilisation (as % of hours available): 40% HMI (Jan 2020-Aug 2023) 217,936	The Centre is well utilised, above the region-wide average for the period (the period includes covid lockdowns and restrictions which affected gatherings). HMI data shows greater visit numbers than registered booking participants because the well-used publicly available community kitchen on the ground level attracts a lot of visits.

Community leases and partner facilities

HMI visits data on community leases is not included in this report because the lessees are diverse organisations where visitor numbers not always reflect impact. Lessees' reporting is available from their websites.

Organisation	Website
Basement Theatre	https://basementtheatre.co.nz/
The Classic: Comedy Club	https://www.comedy.co.nz/
Q Theatre	https://www.qtheatre.co.nz/
Victoria Park Sports and Cultural Trust	https://victoriapark.nz/
Myers Park Kindergarten	https://aka.org.nz/our-locations/kinz-myers-park/
Sargeson Centre	https://franksargeson.nz/the-trust/
Campbell Free Kindergarten	https://www.circability.org/

