

Growth, Strategy and Planning Committee Public Agenda - 7 October 2026

Council Chambers
101 Bank Street
Te Awamutu



Chairperson
MG Montgomerie

Members
Mayor MJ Pettit, LV Bennett, AA Camson, JM Davies-Colley, RDB Gordon, ML Gower, PA Kempthorne, DM Morgan, CS St Pierre, DH Taylor, SL Walsh

07 October 2026 09:15 AM

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HE KARAKIA TIMATANGA

Tākina te mārama ki a tātou.

Let the light be called forth to shine upon us.

Tākina te aroha ki a tātou.

Let love be called forth to rest among us.

Tākina te rangimārie ki a tātou.

May peace be called forth to dwell between us.

Ko Pirongia me Te Kawa,

Our mountains Pirongia and Te Kawa,

Ko Maungatautari,

Maungatautari, and Kakepuku.

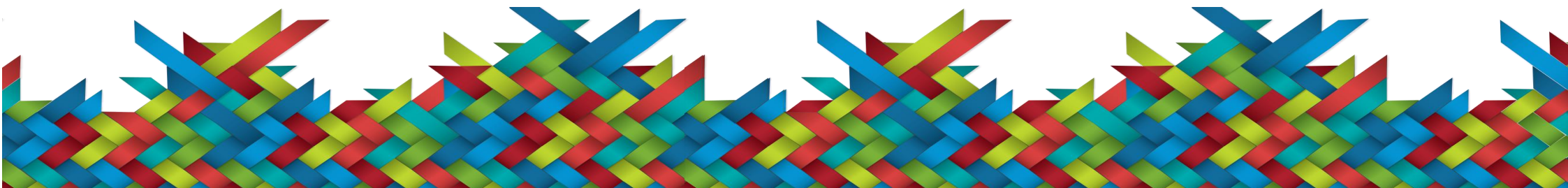
Ko Kakepuku ngā maunga.

Our rivers Waikato and Waipā.

Ko Waikato, ko Waipā ngā awa.

Tihei **mauri ora!**

Behold, the breath of life!





APOLOGIES

A member who does not have leave of absence may tender an apology should they be absent from all or part of a meeting. The Chairperson (or acting chair) must invite apologies at the beginning of each meeting, including apologies for lateness and early departure. The meeting may accept or decline any apologies. Members may be recorded as absent on council business where their absence is a result of a commitment made on behalf of the council.

The acceptance of a member's apology constitutes a grant of 'leave of absence' for that specific meeting.



DISCLOSURE OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Members are reminded to declare and stand aside from decision making when a conflict arises between their role as an elected member and any private or other external interest they may have.



LATE ITEMS

Items not on the agenda for the meeting require a resolution under section 46A of the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987 stating the reasons why the item was not on the agenda and why it cannot be dealt with at a subsequent meeting on the basis of a full agenda item. It is important to note that late items can only be dealt with when special circumstances exist and not as a means of avoiding or frustrating the requirements in the Act relating to notice, agendas, agenda format and content.



CONFIRMATION OF ORDER OF MEETING

Recommendation

That the order of the meeting be confirmed.



To: The Chairperson and Members of the Growth, Strategy and Planning Committee

From: Governance

Subject: **CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES**

Meeting Date: 7 October 2026

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY – WHAKARĀPOPOTOTANGA MATUA

The local authority, its committees, subcommittees and any local and community boards must keep minutes of their proceedings. These minutes must be kept in hard or electronic copy, authorised by a Chairperson's manual or electronic signature once confirmed by resolution at a subsequent meeting. Once authorised the minutes are the prima facie evidence of the proceedings they relate to.

The only topic that may be discussed at a subsequent meeting, with respect to the minutes, is their correctness.

2 RECOMMENDATION – TŪTOHU Ā-KAIMAHI

That the open and public excluded minutes of the Strategic Planning and Policy Committee meeting held on 5 August 2026 and the minutes of the Strategic Planning and Policy Committee meeting held on 26 August 2026, having been circulated, be taken as read and confirmed as a true and correct record of that meeting.

3 ATTACHMENT - ĀPITITANGA

Strategic Planning and Policy Committee Open Minutes – 5 August 2026
Strategic Planning and Policy Committee Public Excluded Minutes – 5 August 2026 (circulated separately)
Strategic Planning and Policy Committee Minutes – 26 August 2026

COMMITTEE MINUTES



Committee: Strategic Planning and Policy
Time: 10.30am
Date: Wednesday 5 August 2026
Venue: Council Chambers, Waipā District Council
101 Bank Street, Te Awamutu

PRESENT

Chairperson

JM Davies-Colley

Members

Mayor MJ Pettit, LV Bennett, RDB Gordon, ML Gower, PA Kempthorne, DM Morgan, CS St Pierre, SL Walsh.

Opening Karakia – Committee Members and staff

1 APOLOGIES

RESOLVED

2/26/40

That the apologies from Councillor Montgomerie, Councillor Taylor and Councillor Camson for absence due to personal reasons be received.

Councillor Kempthorne/Councillor St Pierre

2 DISCLOSURE OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

None.

3 LATE ITEMS

None.

COMMITTEE MINUTES



4 CONFIRMATION OF ORDER OF MEETING

RESOLVED

2/26/41

That the order of the meeting be confirmed.

Councillor St Pierre/Councillor Walsh

5 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

RESOLVED

2/26/42

That the open minutes of the Strategic Planning and Policy Committee meetings held on 3 June 2026 and 26 June 2026, having been circulated, be taken as read and confirmed as a true and correct record of that meeting subject to a typographical amendment.

Councillor St Pierre/Mayor Pettit

6 CAMBRIDGE CONNECTIONS – UPDATE ON PHASE 3 TECHNICAL WORK

The purpose of this report was to update Elected Members on the technical work being undertaken for Phase 3 of Cambridge Connections, which would inform the development of the draft Transport Plan.

Katie Mayes – Growth, Strategy and Planning Director and Community Reference Group (CRG) Co-Chair Peter Carr presented the report and highlighted the future steps of the project, the comms and engagement plan and the significance of the two additional technical criteria.

RESOLVED

2/26/43

That the Strategic Planning and Policy Committee

- a) *Receives the report of Katie Mayes, Growth Strategy and Planning Director titled Cambridge Connections – Update on Phase 3 Technical Work;*
- b) *Approves the inclusion of the recommended additional (two) technical criteria to the Cambridge Connections Multi Criteria Assessment (MCA) to support assessment against the Strategic Transport Network Review.*
- c) *Provides feedback on any additional communications and engagement activity considered important to support stage 3 of this project.*

Councillor Morgan/Mayor Pettit

COMMITTEE MINUTES



7 ANCHOR INSTITUTIONS ANNUAL REPORT

[Councillor Kempthorne left the meeting at 11.46am and rejoined at 11.49am]

The purpose of this report was to report on progress of the 2025/26 Anchor Institution Implementation Plan for Year 2, and to seek approval of the draft Anchor Institution Implementation Plan 2026/27.

The committee agreed not to approve the Anchor Institution Implementation Plan 2026/27 and removed that recommendation, which was noted as c) in the report, and requested further information to the next committee meeting.

RESOLVED

2/26/44

That the Strategic Planning and Policy Committee

- a) *Receives the report of Katie Mayes – Growth, Strategy and Planning Director titled Anchor Institutions Annual Report [ECM number 11726627];*
- b) *Notes the achievements made in implementing the Anchor Institution Framework for the 2025/26 year [ECM number 11695922]; and*

Councillor Walsh/Councillor Morgan

8 STRATEGIC PLANNING AND POLICY COMMITTEE 2026 - WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

[The meeting was adjourned at 12noon and recommenced at 12.45pm]

The purpose of this report was to present, for information, the most up-to-date version of the Strategic Planning and Policy (SP&P) Committee work programme for 2026.

RESOLVED

2/26/45

That the Strategic Planning and Policy Committee receives the report of Daisy Wills, Strategic Policy Advisor, titled 'Strategic Planning and Policy Committee 2026 – Work Programme' [ECM number 11734905].

Mayor Pettit/Councillor St Pierre

9 GROWTH STRATEGY REFRESH PROJECT UPDATE

The purpose of the report was to provide, for information, progress to date and note timing and touch points for Elected Members.

COMMITTEE MINUTES



RESOLVED

2/26/46

That the Strategy, Policy & Planning Committee receive the report of Karen Saunders – Programme Manager Strategic Growth Management, titled 'Growth Strategy Refresh Project Update' [ECM number 11740388].

Councillor Walsh/Councillor Gordon

10 2027-2037 LONG TERM PLAN WORK PROJECT UPDATE

The report provided Elected Members with an update on progress of the 2027-37 Long Term Plan (LTP) project.

RESOLVED

2/26/47

That the Strategic Planning and Policy Committee receives the report of Bridget Maclean, LTP Project Manager, titled '2027-37 Long Term Plan project update,' [ECM number 11737739].

Councillor Walsh/Councillor St Pierre

11 RESOLUTION TO EXCLUDE THE PUBLIC

A local authority may, by resolution, exclude the public from the whole or any part of the proceedings of any meeting under section 48(1) of the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987.

RESOLVED

2/26/48

THAT the public be excluded from the following parts of the proceedings of this meeting.

The general subject of the matter to be considered while the public is excluded, the reason for passing this resolution in relation to each matter, and the specific grounds under section 48(1) of the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987 for the passing of this resolution are as follows:

General subject of each matter to be considered	Reason for passing this resolution in relation to each matter	Ground(s) under section 48(1) for the passing of this resolution

COMMITTEE MINUTES



12. Confirmation of PE Minutes – 3 June 2026	Good reason to withhold exists under section 7 Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987	Section 48(1)(a)
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This resolution is made in reliance on section 48(1)(a) of the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987 and the particular interest or interests protected by Section 6 or Section 7 of that Act, or Sections 6, 7 or 9 of the Official Information Act 1982, as the case may be, which would be prejudiced by the holding of the whole or relevant part of the proceedings of the meeting in public, are as follows:

Item No.	Section	Interest
12	7(2)(i)	<i>To carry on, without prejudice or disadvantage, negotiations (including commercial and industrial negotiations).</i>
12	7(2)(a)	<i>To protect the privacy of natural persons, including that of deceased natural persons</i>
12	7(2)(c)(i) & (ii)	<i>To protect information which is subject to an obligation of confidence where the making available of the information would be likely to</i> <i>i. prejudice the supply of similar information, or information from the same source, where it is in the public interest that such information should continue to be supplied; or</i> <i>ii. would be likely otherwise to damage the public interest.</i>

Councillor Gower/Councillor Morgan

The meeting went into Public Excluded Session at 1.09pm
There being no further business the meeting closed at 1.10pm

CONFIRMED AS A TRUE AND CORRECT RECORD



CHAIRPERSON:

DATE:

COMMITTEE MINUTES



Committee: Strategic Planning and Policy
Time: 8.45am
Date: Wednesday 26 August 2026
Venue: Council Chambers, Waipā District Council
101 Bank Street, Te Awamutu

PRESENT

Chairperson

JM Davies-Colley

Members

Mayor MJ Pettit, LV Bennett, AA Camson, RDB Gordon, ML Gower, PA Kempthorne, MG Montgomerie (via Zoom), DM Morgan, CS St Pierre, DH Taylor, SL Walsh

Opening Karakia – Committee Members and staff

1 APOLOGIES

None.

2 DISCLOSURE OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

None.

3 LATE ITEM

None.

4 CONFIRMATION OF ORDER OF MEETING

RESOLVED

2/26/49

That the order of the meeting be confirmed.

Councillor Camson/Councillor Taylor

COMMITTEE MINUTES



5 CAMBRIDGE CONNECTIONS STAGE 3 – STRATEGIC TRANSPORT NETWORK REVIEW

[Councillor Morgan left the meeting at 9.56am and rejoined the meeting at 9.59am]

The purpose of this report is to seek endorsement of the following technical reports and inputs, to inform Phase 3 of the Cambridge Connections programme and development of the draft Cambridge Connections Transport Plan, including the:

- Cambridge Connections Strategic Transport Network Review (Network Review); and
- Refined themed long-list Multi-Criteria Assessment (MCA)

The report also outlines the communications and engagement approach including the overall key messages, and next steps for the Cambridge Connections Project (Cambridge Connections).

Councillor Morgan raised a Point of Order under Standing Orders 26.2, stating that Councillor Gordon's comments were causing disorder to the meeting due to the labouring of his point.

Chairperson Davies-Colley ruled to uphold the Point of Order, reminding members to confine their questions and comments to an appropriate speaking time.

After discussion there was an amendment to recommendation b) to reflect the concern of the limitations of the Waikato Regional Transport Model (WRTM).

RESOLVED

2/26/50

That the Strategic Planning and Policy Committee:

- a) *Receives the report of Katie Mayes, Growth Strategy and Planning Director titled Cambridge Connections Stage 3 – Strategic Transport Network Review and Refined Themed Long List Multi-Criteria Assessment [ECM: 11727150].*
- b) *Endorses the Strategic Transport Network Review as a technical input to inform the development of the draft Cambridge Connections Transport Plan attached as appendix A to the report [ECM 11758160], noting the acknowledged limitations of the Waikato Regional Transport Model (WRTM) and that further localised corridor, intersection and transport package assessment will be required to inform determination of a preferred future bridge corridor and 30-year implementation programme.*
- c) *Endorses the refined themed long-list Multi-Criteria Assessment of transport activities, as a technical input, to inform development of the draft Cambridge*

COMMITTEE MINUTES



Connections Transport Plan, attached as appendix B to the report [ECM: 11750347].

- d) *Supports no further technical investigations of the SH1/Tirau Road ramps at this stage, while retaining the activity on the long list for consideration in developing the draft Cambridge Connections Transport Plan.*

Councillor Gordon/Councillor Camson

There being no further business the meeting closed at 10.14am

CONFIRMED AS A TRUE AND CORRECT RECORD

CHAIRPERSON:

DATE:



To: The Chairperson and Members of the Growth, Strategy and Planning Committee

From: Principal Sustainability and Climate Change Advisor

Subject: **Council's Role in Economic Development and Anchor Institutions**

Meeting Date: 7 October 2026

1 PURPOSE – TAKE

The purpose of this report is to seek agreement on Council's future approach to economic development, including how Council aligns with the Waikato Regional Economic Development Strategy and uses its existing Anchor Institution Framework to guide its local contribution.

The report also seeks agreement not to progress the draft Waipā Economic Wellbeing Strategy as a separate strategy and presents an updated Anchor Institution Implementation Plan for 2026/27.

2 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY – WHAKARĀPOPOTOTANGA MATUA

Council has previously adopted an Anchor Institution Framework and developed a draft Waipā Economic Wellbeing Strategy. Since then, the Waikato Regional Economic Development Strategy has been adopted, providing a common direction for economic development across the region while recognising the need for local and sub-regional activity.

Staff recommend that Council does not progress the draft Waipā Economic Wellbeing Strategy as a separate strategy. Instead, Council would align its economic development activity with the Regional Economic Development Strategy and focus locally on the areas where it has the greatest influence through its core functions, investment, assets and relationships.

The existing Anchor Institution Framework would support this approach. An updated 2026/27 Implementation Plan is proposed, focusing on a smaller number of areas where Council can use its role and influence more deliberately. Relevant work from the draft Economic Wellbeing Strategy would be incorporated into this plan, existing Council work programmes, or regional initiatives as appropriate.

3 RECOMMENDATION – TŪTOHU Ā-KAIMAHI

That the Growth, Strategy and Planning Committee:

- a) *Receives the report of Haven Walsh, Principal Sustainability and Climate Change Advisor titled Council's role in economic development and anchor institutions & ECM Number 11781534;*
- b) *Agrees not to progress the draft Waipā Economic Wellbeing Strategy as a separate strategy;*
- c) *Agrees that Council align its economic development activity with the Waikato Regional Economic Development Strategy, while continuing to focus on the areas where Council can most effectively contribute at a local level;*
- d) *Notes that staff will continue to work with regional partners on implementation of the Waikato Regional Economic Development Strategy and identify opportunities relevant to Waipā; and*
- e) *Approves the updated Anchor Institution Implementation Plan for 2026/27, included as Appendix 2 to this report.*

4 BACKGROUND – KŌRERO WHAIMĀRAMA

Anchor Institution Framework

Council adopted its Anchor Institution Framework in April 2024. Anchor institutions are large organisations that are strongly rooted in their communities and can use their everyday activities and resources to support community wellbeing (including achieving economic outcomes).

Council's Framework identifies six areas where it can use its role more deliberately. These include:

- procurement
- employment
- workforce development
- cluster development
- community collaboration
- community assets and infrastructure

Annual implementation plans have been used over the past two years to identify practical activity under these areas. The 2025/26 annual report and proposed Year 3 Implementation Plan were presented to the Strategic Planning and Policy Committee in August 2026.

Draft Waipā Economic Wellbeing Strategy

Council has also developed a draft Waipā Economic Wellbeing Strategy. The draft strategy was developed to provide greater clarity about Council's role in supporting economic wellbeing and proposed three main areas of focus:

- high-quality employment growth in urban areas;
- rural economic growth; and
- tourism, destinations and culture.

The associated draft implementation plan identified a broad range of potential activity. Much of this activity is already undertaken through Council's core functions or other work programmes, including spatial and growth planning, infrastructure, procurement, climate change and resilience work, property, placemaking and regulatory functions. Other proposed activities may be more effectively progressed with regional partners or at a regional scale, where this can achieve greater impact or efficiency.

Waikato Regional Economic Development Strategy

Since the draft Waipā strategy was developed, the Waikato Regional Economic Development Strategy has been developed and adopted. Waipā District Council contributed to development of the strategy alongside other territorial authorities and regional stakeholders.

The strategy was adopted by Waikato Regional Council on 25 June 2026. Its vision is to 'enable and promote a productive region that delivers shared prosperity and security'. It seeks to increase household incomes, productivity and employment through three strategic levers: information and insights; coordination of partners and activities; and initiatives to deliver outcomes. Six strength-based priorities are identified:

- leveraging the Waikato's location advantages
- boosting bioeconomy productivity
- increasing electricity supply
- growing export and advanced manufacturing
- supporting a thriving and connected metropolitan area and towns
- partnering with Waikato regional Māori

The strategy also identifies economic enablers including labour skills, ease of doing business, transport, energy, infrastructure investment, innovation, housing, commercial property and business land. Many of these are areas where local government already has significant influence through delivery of its core functions.

With the strategy now adopted, attention is shifting to implementation. A regional steering group has been established to help develop and recommend implementation activity, with practical initiatives expected to be developed over time. There will be opportunities for territorial authorities and sub-regional areas to contribute as relevant initiatives are developed. Waipā is likely to have opportunities to contribute through both metropolitan and other sub-regional initiatives as these are developed.

The regional strategy is intended to complement local and sub-regional activity rather than replace it. Each council therefore still needs to consider its particular contribution

within the regional economy, including how its core functions can support economic activity and whether there are particular local strengths or opportunities that warrant additional focus.

Tariq Ashraf (Regional Economic Development Lead) from Waikato Regional Council is scheduled to attend the meeting to provide an overview of the Regional Economic Development Strategy.

Proposed approach for Waipā

The development of the Regional Economic Development Strategy provides an opportunity to reconsider whether a separate Waipā Economic Wellbeing Strategy is still required.

Staff consider that progressing two economic development strategies at different geographic scales would add unnecessary complexity, particularly given the significant overlap between the draft Waipā strategy, our existing Council activity, and the new regional strategy. The proposed approach is therefore to:

- use the Regional Economic Development Strategy to provide the wider economic direction and identify opportunities where working at a regional or sub-regional scale will add value;
- focus Council's local contribution on the things it is particularly well placed to influence through its existing functions, investment, assets and relationships; and
- use the existing Anchor Institution Framework and annual Implementation Plan more strategically to identify areas where Council can put additional effort or use its influence more deliberately.

This approach recognises that economic development is not solely the responsibility of a dedicated 'in-house' economic development function. Council influences the local economy through growth management, including housing and business land; infrastructure and transport; its regulatory and consenting functions and the ease of doing business; procurement and employment; investment in community assets and placemaking; and its relationships with iwi, businesses, other councils and regional organisations.

It also provides scope to be more deliberate about areas where Waipā has particular strengths or opportunities. These can be considered as regional implementation activity develops rather than requiring a separate district-wide economic strategy.

Council will also continue to engage with local businesses and other stakeholders, including local chambers of commerce, to understand where Council can most effectively support local economic development.

Updated Anchor Institution Implementation Plan

The Anchor Institution Framework is broader than economic development and is intended to support social, cultural, economic and environmental wellbeing.

The proposed 2026/27 Implementation Plan therefore retains the six areas of the adopted Framework, while focusing on a smaller number of priority actions where Council intends to use its role or influence more deliberately. Delivery of the Framework is organisation-wide, through relevant Council functions and work programmes rather than as a separate programme of activity. The Implementation Plan helps make this existing contribution visible, alongside the priority areas for additional focus in 2026/27.

The plan presented at the August meeting has been refined following further staff and Executive Leadership Team consideration. The updated plan includes a stronger focus on areas such as Council's procurement activity, strategic iwi and mana whenua partnerships, implementation of the Property Strategy, opportunities in the North Waipā–southern Hamilton area, and Council's contribution to implementation of the Regional Economic Development Strategy.

Relevant economic development actions from the draft Economic Wellbeing Strategy have been reviewed as part of this work. Where these remain useful, they can either be incorporated into the Anchor Institution Implementation Plan, continued through existing Council work programmes, or connected to implementation of the Regional Economic Development Strategy.

5 SIGNIFICANCE & ENGAGEMENT – KAUPAPA WHAI MANA ME NGĀ MATAPAKINGA

Staff have considered the key considerations under the Significance and Engagement Policy, in particular sections 7 and 8 and have assessed that the matter(s) in this report has a low level of significance.

The recommendations primarily relate to how Council organises and aligns existing strategic and operational activity. They do not propose a significant change to levels of service, ownership of strategic assets or Council funding.

The draft Economic Wellbeing Strategy has not progressed to public engagement. The proposed approach would mean that public engagement on the draft strategy does not proceed. Engagement on economic development matters would continue through relevant Council work programmes and implementation of the Regional Economic Development Strategy where appropriate.

6 OPTIONS – NGĀ KŌWHIRINGA

Option	Advantages	Disadvantages
Option 1: Do not progress the Waipā Economic Wellbeing Strategy and align Council's economic development activity with the Regional Economic Development Strategy and strengthened Anchor Institution Implementation Plan.	- Provides clearer alignment between regional and local activity. - Reduces duplication and makes greater use of existing Council frameworks and work programmes. - Allows Council to focus on areas where it has the greatest local influence. - Retains useful work from development of the draft strategy.	- Council would not have a standalone district economic development strategy. - Regional implementation arrangements are still developing and Council will need to remain actively involved as these evolve.
Option 2: Progress the draft Waipā Economic Wellbeing Strategy as a separate strategy.	Provides a standalone district-level economic strategy and retains the structure already developed through the draft strategy.	- Creates another layer of strategy alongside the recently adopted Regional Economic Development Strategy. - Duplicates activity already undertaken through Council's core functions and Anchor Institution Framework. - May make Council's role and priorities less clear.

The recommended option is Option 1.

7 OTHER CONSIDERATIONS – HEI WHAIWHAKAARO

Council's Vision and Strategic Priorities

The Anchor Institution Framework supports implementation of Ahu Ake – Waipā Community Spatial Plan, including its focus on community wellbeing, partnership and Council's role as an anchor institution. It provides a practical way of considering how Council's everyday activities, investment and relationships can contribute to these outcomes.

The proposed approach also supports Council's current strategic direction and organisational priorities through areas such as procurement, strategic partnerships, property, growth and investment, and regional collaboration.

Legal and Policy Considerations – Whaiwhakaaro ā-Ture

There are no specific legal requirements for Council to maintain a standalone economic development strategy. The proposed approach does not change Council's statutory functions or existing policy/strategy responsibilities.

Financial Considerations – Whaiwhakaaro ā-Pūtea

There are no immediate additional funding requirements arising from the recommendations in this report. Proposed activity would generally be progressed through existing work programmes and budgets. Any future initiatives requiring additional funding would be considered through the appropriate Annual Plan, Long Term Plan or separate decision-making process.

Risks – Tūraru

A key risk is that, without a separate Waipā strategy, Council's local economic development role could become less visible or activity could become overly dependent on regional level priorities. This is mitigated by retaining a clear local programme through the Anchor Institution Implementation Plan and continuing to identify Waipā-specific opportunities as implementation for the regional strategy progresses.

There is also a risk of duplication and unclear priorities if Council continues to maintain separate district and regional economic development strategies alongside the Anchor Institution Framework. The recommended approach seeks to reduce this risk by clarifying the purpose of each.

Iwi and Mana Whenua Considerations - Whaiwhakaaro ki ngā Iwi me ngā Mana Whenua

Iwi and mana whenua are important partners in both Council's Anchor Institution Framework and the Regional Economic Development Strategy. The regional strategy identifies partnering with Waikato regional Māori as one of its six priorities. The proposed 2026/27 Anchor Institution Implementation Plan also includes a continued focus on strengthening Council's strategic iwi and mana whenua partnerships and supporting relevant economic, housing and wider community aspirations.

8 NEXT ACTIONS

Action	Responsibility	By When
Progress the 2026/27 Anchor Institution Implementation Plan	Relevant Council teams, coordinated and monitored appropriately	2026/27

Action	Responsibility	By When
Participate in development and implementation of relevant Regional Economic Development Strategy initiatives	Relevant Council staff	Ongoing
Report progress on the Anchor Institution Implementation Plan to the Committee	Relevant staff / Principal Sustainability and Climate Change Advisor	TBC

9 APPENDICES - ĀPITITANGA

No:	Appendix Title
1	Regional Economic Development Strategy (ECM 11785300)
2	Anchor Institutions Proposed 2026/27 Implementation Plan (ECM 11783038)
3	Draft Waipā Economic Wellbeing Strategy (ECM 11466972)
4	Draft Economic Wellbeing Implementation Plan (ECM 11466970)



Haven Walsh

PRINCIPAL SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE ADVISOR



Approved by Katie Mayes

GROWTH, STRATEGY AND PLANNING DIRECTOR

APPENDIX 1

Regional Economic Development Strategy (ECM 11785300)

[Title/cover page]

Waikato Regional Economic Development Strategy 2026/27-2029/30

[insert image]

Waikato economy at a glance (as at May 2026)

Waikato's economy is large, growing and diverse. It can do even more for both New Zealand and people in the region.

Working age population 422,000 10% of New Zealand. 1.6% per year growth over the last 5 years (compared to 1.2% for New Zealand)	Economic growth 2.2% per year over last 5 years, (compared to 1.7% for New Zealand). Waikato GDP is \$38.8 billion, 9% of New Zealand's GDP	Economic diversity 21.3 Waikato economic concentration index (greater diversity than 22.8 for New Zealand)
Household income \$118,000 Mean household income is 87% of the New Zealand level. 4.5% per year growth over the last 5 years (compared to 4.1% for New Zealand)	Productivity \$152,000 GDP per filled job is 97% of the New Zealand level. 0.5% per year growth over the last 5 years (compared to 0.4% for New Zealand)	Unemployment rate 5.7% 5.0% for New Zealand. 4.4% average over the last 5 years (compared to 4.1% for New Zealand)

Introduction

Waikato's benign climate and rich natural resources have attracted economic activity from the first arrival of people. As the population and economic activity have grown, so too has the role of the region in the context of the upper North Island and beyond. These factors have made the bioeconomy nationally important, particularly for food production. Waikato's hydrological and geothermal resources make it a centre for electricity generation and distribution.

The region's economy has evolved to build several regional and subregional industry specialisations on these foundations, particularly the manufacturing and export of food and other goods. The Hamilton-Waikato metro area plays a complementary role to its surrounding network of connected towns. The Waikato Māori economic thread runs through all the region's opportunities and is an important priority in its own right.

This strategy identifies six intertwined opportunities to build on Waikato's strengths and increase employment, productivity and incomes. Waikato can:

- build on its locational advantages to increase the value it earns within an upper North Island and New Zealand context
- increase productivity in its bioeconomy sectors through emerging and future platforms and greater use of technology
- use its untapped and emerging potential to increase electricity supply and electrification, and establish new industrial hubs
- strengthen resilience by diversifying its solid base of manufactured exports to higher value ingredient, nutrition, and consumer premium products
- cluster economic activity in priority areas in the Hamilton-Waikato metro area
- optimise the economic functions of surrounding towns and improve connections between them
- grow partnership with Waikato regional Māori through adding value to collectively-owned assets and the growing role of rangatahi Māori in the workforce.

This strategy complements existing sub-regional economic development activities and helps achieve:

- **a shared vision** by defining what the Waikato region is trying to achieve and why
- **stakeholder confidence** through a well-articulated strategy that builds trust and credibility within the region and with external investors
- **efficient resource allocation** by helping prioritise initiatives that deliver the greatest impact regionally and nationally, ensuring resources are used effectively
- **comparative advantage** by identifying and taking opportunities that differentiate the region in a national context.

This strategy takes a flexible and responsive approach to adjust actions based on changing internal and external conditions, while continuing to have a long-term orientation and involve multiple stakeholders from across the entire ecosystem (see Figure 3). Unlike traditional strategies that rely on fixed long-term plans, it emphasises continuous learning, experimentation and real-time responsiveness.

This strategy has a rolling time horizon for maximising economic outcomes over the medium- (10 years) and long-term (30 years). There is greater emphasis on continually monitoring internal and external conditions and identifying, implementing and evaluating a small number of short-term (1-3 years) initiatives, which contribute impactfully to the medium- and long-term outcomes.

The strategy on a page

Values (See Appendix A)	Kotahitanga Alignment		Kia eke panuku Ambition		Tūraru Appetite for risk	
	Mahi tahi Collaboration		Manawaroa Resilience		Tiaki taiao Nature positive	
Vision	Enable and promote a productive region that delivers shared prosperity and security					
Economic outcomes	Increase household incomes		Increase productivity		Increase employment	
	See <i>Monitoring and evaluation</i>					
Strategic levers	Information and insights		Coordination of partners and activities		Initiatives to deliver to outcomes	
Waikato’s strength-based priorities	Leverage location advantages	Boost bioeconomy productivity	Increase electricity supply	Export and advanced manufacturing	Thriving and connected metro area and towns	Partner with Waikato regional Māori
Opportunities	National service provision, add value to goods, grow value of tourism/education, leverage sports and creativity	Emerging and future platforms, resource efficiency, greater use of technology	Untapped/emerging generation potential, biomass and bioenergy, industrial hubs	Higher value ingredients, nutrition, consumer premium products, diversify markets	High growth, cluster economic activity, optimise towns and improve connections	Add value to assets, e.g. collectively owned. Youth growing part of in workforce
Strengths	Interregional connections, popular destinations, sports and recreational assets, creative identity	Large scale of natural resources (e.g. land and water) and bioeconomy/blue economy industries, agritech, biotech	Largest share of electricity generation, high productivity, geothermal and forestry	Large share of national merchandise exports and large manufacturing sector in region	Regional centre and “super” marketplace surrounded by complementary towns and rural or coastal areas	Kiingitanga, Tainui and Te Arawa waka, large asset base and population
Enablers	See overleaf					

Enablers of regional economic development

Labour productivity

Economic output (GDP) per full-time equivalent (FTE)

Transport services

Modes and systems; land (road, rail and coastal shipping), air and maritime; intra-regional, inter-regional, international

Perception of the region

Value proposition and image of the region among businesses and individuals onshore, offshore and within Waikato. Both branding for different audiences and purposes, and placemaking of physical spaces

Entrepreneurship

Business entry: proportion of new firms to existing firms

Business growth: increase in business size, proportion of high-growth businesses

Amenities

The range of natural, cultural, sports, recreational and retail amenities available and access to facilities or services

Business land and water space

Stock, availability and cost of different land types. Quality and availability of water space for blue economy

Labour skills

E.g. formal educational attainment and achievement, on-going development of skills

Energy

Generation and distribution of power for businesses, fuel for vehicles

Industry diversity or performance

Diversity: the contribution of different industries to economic output

Business growth: increase in business size, proportion of high-growth businesses

Culture

Identity, creativity, beliefs, values and preferences: influencing economic behaviour; that promote and support entrepreneurship, innovation and economic development generally

Housing

Affordability, quality, tenure

Ecosystem services

Stock and quality of land, minerals, forests, freshwater, coastal and marine, biodiversity

Ease of doing business

Implementation of government regulations; development and implementation of local government policy, planning, consents etc

Infrastructure investment

Spending, stock and quality of energy, transport, telecommunications, water assets

Innovation

Business capability to undertake innovation, linkages between researchers and businesses, technical and knowledge-based skills, support for innovation

Access to capital

Access to capital for business innovation and growth at different business life cycle stages

Commercial property

Office, commercial and industrial property capacity, value and rentals

Inter-regional enterprise connections

Connections based on enterprises employing people in multiple regions

Waikato's strengths-based priorities

Waikato has many, intertwined economic strengths that flow from its natural environment and people. These inform economic development priorities so that Waikato can play its optimal role nationally.

Priority	Leverage location advantages	Boost bioeconomy productivity	Increase electricity supply	Export and advanced manufacturing hub	Thriving and connected metro area and towns	Partner with Waikato regional Māori
Waikato strength	1st in NZ for share of freight movements	1st in NZ for share of bioeconomy	1st in NZ for share of electricity generation capacity	2nd= in NZ for share of food manufacturing	3rd fastest growing urban area in NZ	1st= in NZ for value of Māori asset base
Selected evidence	40% of freight movements, the largest proportion in the country	18% of New Zealand's bioeconomy* *This includes horticulture, farming, fishing and aquaculture, forestry and logging	37% of New Zealand's electricity generation capacity	16% of New Zealand food manufacturing, equal with Canterbury	The Hamilton-Waikato metro area is the third fastest growing urban area in New Zealand (2020)	\$21.51 billion Māori asset base (2023), equal with Tāmaki Makaurau

Leverage location advantages

Waikato can lean into locational advantages in the upper North Island and beyond, so that higher value activities are undertaken here. Waikato's natural resources are the foundation of its economic advantage: water resources are shared with Auckland and Bay of Plenty (BoP) and geothermal resources are shared with BoP. There is an opportunity to grow goods and services provided nationally and inter-regionally from Waikato. Waikato has strong commercial connections with Auckland, BoP, Wellington and Canterbury, and Waikato includes labour market areas that overlap with Auckland, BoP and Manawātū-Whanganui respectively. The region's upper North Island location between the largest ports makes it a key corridor for much of the country's exports, imports and inter-regional commerce. Transport contributes to economic development and there is an opportunity for Waikato to add value to these goods rather than being a thoroughfare, and to increase the efficiency of logistics. Figure 1 (below) illustrates the inter-regional economic linkages and region-wide and sub-regional industry specialisations.

Naturally competitive

Waikato has a range of internationally and nationally significant natural assets that support economic activity, including land-based and marine farming, electricity generation and tourism, and provide valuable ecosystem services. Lake Taupō is the largest lake in Australasia and the Waikato River is New Zealand's longest. Whangamarino Wetland is the second-largest wetland on the North Island and Sanctuary Mountain Maungatautari is New Zealand's largest mainland ecological island. The Hauraki Gulf, also known as Tīkapa Moana, is one of New Zealand's most ecologically rich marine areas and approximately one-third of the West Coast North Island Marine Mammal Sanctuary – New Zealand's largest – is in Waikato. Natural features such as Cathedral Cove and Waitomo Caves are already among the most attractive destinations in the region for domestic and international visitors. There is an opportunity to attract domestic and international investment to protect and restore Waikato's valuable natural environment through the sale of instruments such as nature credits. For example, Sanctuary Mountain Maungatautari recently completed New Zealand's first international sale of biodiversity credits, building on regular domestic transactions since 2022.

Destination for leisure, learning and screen

Waikato is the third-largest destination for international students and domestic visitors, attracted by its supportive environment, proximity to employment and natural amenities, such as Lake Taupō and Cathedral Cove and other destinations on the Coromandel Peninsula. International visitors also travel through Waikato and to major attractions in the region. Notable international and national screen productions are attracted by the region's diverse locations and proximity to Auckland, contributing direct and indirect benefits in the short-term and on an ongoing basis, such as the development of visitor attractions. There is an opportunity to increase the value

earned from tourism, international education and screen production, for example by increasing the yield per visitor, wider dispersal of tourism benefits geographically, addressing seasonality and converting transit visitors into longer-stay, higher-value visitors. The New Zealand Graduate School of Medicine in Waikato exemplifies the opportunity to increase productivity, incomes and employment in the region by locating national tertiary education facilities or services here.

High performance

Waikato's winning combination of a favourable environment, location and talented people make it home to a network of 12 internationally and nationally significant sports and recreational venues (such as two of seven national training centres for high performance sports, and two major motorsport circuits including the country's only Federation Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA) Grade 2 rated circuit), 18 regionally significant facilities, natural recreation environments (such as Waikato River Trails and Hauraki Rail Trail) and community sport and recreational spaces. It is home to major sports and recreation events that attract visitors and 34 per cent of Tailored Athlete Pathway Support athletes. Sports (such as equine) and recreation are part of the regional economy. Waikato can leverage the Cambridge–Karāpiro high-performance sport cluster, strengthen the regional sport events portfolio, expand and connect tracks and trails, and integrate sport infrastructure with urban growth and active transport planning.

Cultural riches

Waikato's nature, including the Waikato River, imbues the renowned and unique creative pursuits of Kiingitanga, and Tainui and Te Arawa waka iwi, and significant cultural events, facilities, writers, performers and artists in the region. There is an opportunity to integrate Waikato's unique creative identity for greater economic benefit.

Figure 1:
Waikato industry specialisations
and economic linkages



Boost bioeconomy productivity

Waikato can increase productivity in its abundant bioeconomy industry sectors. A disproportionately large amount of New Zealand's relatively limited supply of highly versatile land is within Waikato. It is the premier region for dairy farming (26% of the national total) and makes up a large proportion of sheep, beef and grain farming; horticulture and other farming; and forestry and logging. Coromandel accounts for 22% of national oyster farming and 27% of mussel production. Figure 1 (see previous page) illustrates the regional and subregional bioeconomy industry specialisations. Figure 4 illustrates the value of the contribution of the primary and manufacturing sectors to Waikato (see Appendix B).

The bioeconomy also supports visitor experiences as "food and place" can drive visitor demand. For example, aquaculture supports food tourism in the Coromandel, and land and environmental management directly impacts destination quality.

Productivity in agriculture, forestry and fishing in Waikato is higher than this industry sector nationally. However, it is lower in Waikato than sectors with higher capital inputs (such as utilities and mining). Productivity could be increased through improving the skills of the workforce, greater use of science, innovation and technology, emerging and future bioeconomy platforms (such as biomaterials, bioenergy and health), protecting the productivity of natural assets (such as soil and coastal water), and producing more with what we have.

Waikato's primary sectors and established production systems provide a strong foundation for developing a circular bioeconomy hub, supported by biomass availability, mature value chains, and regional coordination structures. Waste materials and co-products from dairy and meat production can be upcycled, repurposed, or recycled to create additional value and export revenue, while organic waste streams offer valuable feedstock for biogas, improving energy security and reducing reliance on fossil gas.

Waikato is already home to significant businesses in the agricultural technology (agritech) and biotechnology (biotech) industries and has a regional aquaculture strategy, which can support these opportunities.

Export and advanced manufacturing hub

Advanced manufacturing for interregional and international customers offers opportunities to increase productivity. Manufacturing is a regionally important sector with several subregional specialisations. These are related to processing of primary sector production (food and forest products) and competencies that have developed as a result, such as agritech. Waikato is home to the highest concentration of agritech companies, with over \$1 billion of revenue (2023). Figure 1 illustrates the regional and subregional export and manufacturing industry specialisations. Figure 4 illustrates the value of the contribution of the primary and manufacturing sectors to Waikato (see Appendix B).

Waikato produces 14 per cent of New Zealand's merchandise exports, behind only Auckland and Canterbury. Major exports from the region include food- and other manufacturing. In addition, Waikato's exports per person (\$27,200) were higher in 2025 than the more populous regions. This export orientation is an important source of dynamism for the economy, positively influencing innovation and productivity.

There is an opportunity to grow the value of exports and diversify markets and the existing solid base. Waikato can strengthen resilience and increase productivity through innovation, for example higher value ingredients, nutrition and consumer premium products. A skilled workforce will be critical to this.

Increase electricity supply

Waikato's strong foundation of renewable generation and untapped and emerging potential (wind, solar and emerging green fuels) offer opportunities to increase electricity supply to meet current and future demands and increase employment and productivity.

Waikato exports two-thirds of electricity generated to other regions, particularly Northland, Auckland and BoP. However, rising electricity prices and high transport costs continue to erode export competitiveness. This is compounded by the impacts of the 2026 Iran war. Previously, the COVID-19 pandemic had challenged long, just-in-time supply chains. Greater electrification would increase economic resilience, for example, through the electrification of transport (including transport systems for residents, visitors and the movement of goods) and the transition of sectors such as tourism to low-emissions operations. Productivity (GDP per filled job) in electricity, gas, water and waste services is the highest of all industries in Waikato and is higher than this industry nationally.

Waikato is a centre of the geothermal sector, including generation, industries that use geothermal heat, services firms, research providers and policy/regulatory authorities. Co-location of geothermal fields and extensive central North Island forests offers strong potential for biomass and bioenergy industries, supported by electrified rail links for efficient transport. There is also potential for industrial hubs such as Tokoroa, Huntly and Wairakei/Taupō to offer further potential in renewable energy. Figure 5 illustrates the value of the contribution of infrastructure and public service sectors to the region.

Thriving and connected metro area and towns

A thriving and connected Hamilton-Waikato metro area (see Figure 2) can increase regional productivity and incomes. Hamilton is the fastest growing city in New Zealand. The metro area is the region's primary centre of knowledge, innovation, economic specialisation and cultural assets. Figure 1 (above) illustrates the industry specialisations in the subregion.



The Waikato River, a taonga and historical transport route, traverses this area, enhancing its high amenities. The metro area facilitates trade and business in the region by providing a “super” marketplace. The Hamilton central business district is the regional and city centre. The metro area has the highest concentration of professional, cultural and retail sectors in the region.

There is an opportunity for Waikato to increase productivity and incomes through integrated spatial planning across the metro area and surrounding towns, by clustering economic activity in priority areas in a denser urban agglomeration, with efficient movement of people and goods.

Vibrant places

The metro area is surrounded by towns with unique local identities, heritage and culture. These towns often provide important economic functions for adjacent rural or coastal areas, domestic and international visitors, screen production and the intra- and inter-regional movement of goods. In turn, these towns and rural or coastal areas provide economic functions that complement the metro area. As a result, they depend on reliable infrastructure and services, including transport and digital connectivity. They are also impacted by extreme weather events, which are occurring with increasing frequency and severity.

There is an opportunity for Waikato to build community partnerships (such as with mana whenua), prioritise the resilience of economic enablers in towns and rural or coastal areas such as transport infrastructure, leverage local assets such as cultural or sporting events or facilities, optimise their economic functions – through activities such as the creation of vibrant public spaces and business improvement districts – and improve connections between them and with the metro area.

Partner with Waikato regional Māori

There is an opportunity to grow partnership with Waikato regional Māori for shared prosperity. Waikato is home to Kiingitanga, Tainui and Te Arawa waka, imbuing it with a unique identity and values. Iwi throughout the region exercise rangatiratanga to pursue economic outcomes. Iwi and Māori businesses are resuming a large role in the Waikato economy.

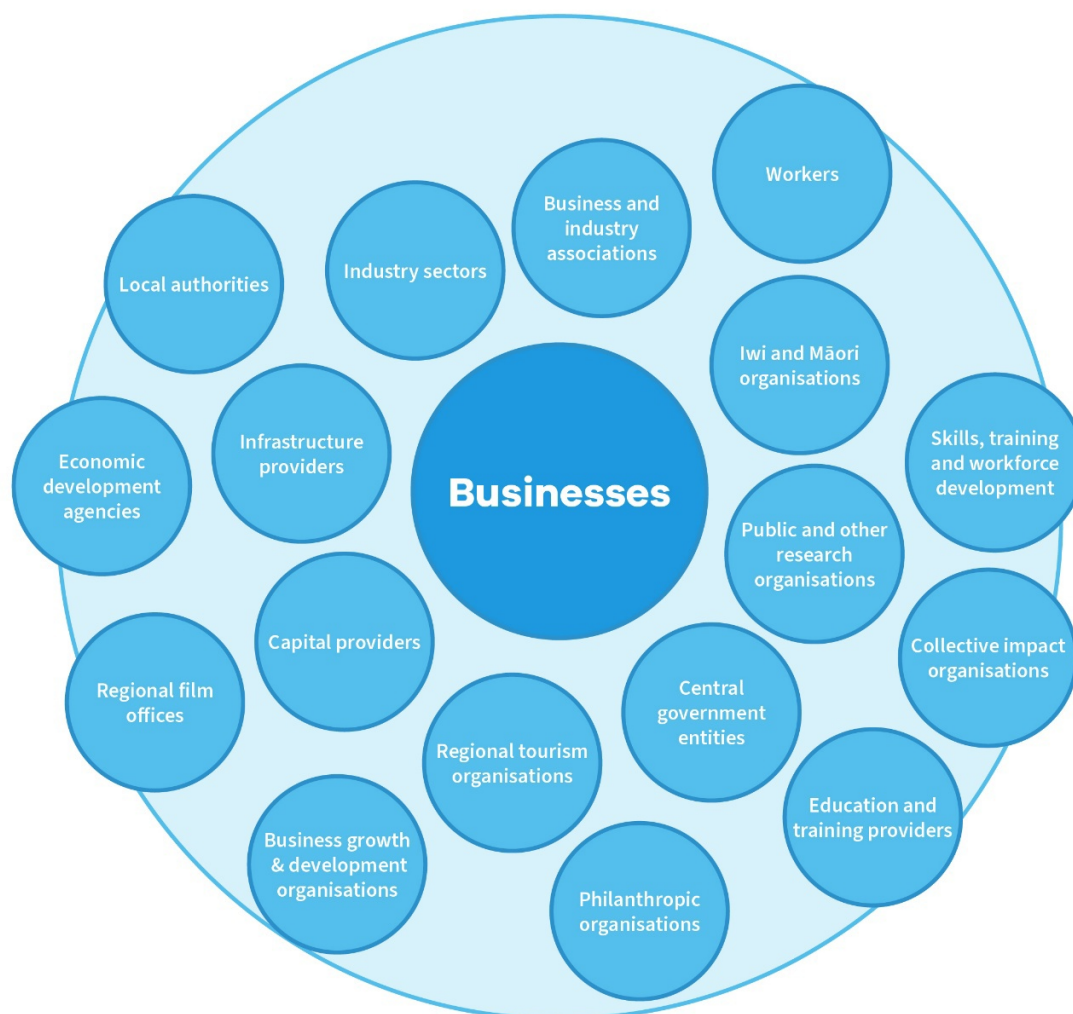
The value of the Māori asset base in Waikato grew by 88 per cent from 2018 to 2023. Waikato has the largest share of Māori primary sector assets, which comprise around 40 per cent of the Waikato Māori asset base. There are also significant asset bases in property, manufacturing and construction, and the public and professional services sectors. Waikato also has the third-largest number of Māori-owned businesses. There is an opportunity to add value, particularly to collectively owned assets. For example, by partnering with iwi to support the growth of authentic, iwi-led tourism experiences, cultural storytelling and contributing to the development of differentiating destinations.

Māori made up nearly a quarter of the Waikato population at the time of the 2023 Census, are growing significantly faster than the general population, and have a much younger age profile than the general population. Rangatahi Māori are a growing part of the regional work force. They need education and training that gives them the skills for emerging employment opportunities.

About this strategy

Multiple parties contribute to economic development in the Waikato region (see Figure 3). For this reason, this strategy has been developed with stakeholders and is based on the sharing of evidence and insights, coordination of actions, and partnerships to achieve initiatives.

Figure 3 Economic development ecosystem



Monitoring and evaluation

Progress towards this strategy's outcomes will be monitored regularly. The effectiveness of key initiatives and the overall strategy will be evaluated annually.

This strategy is intended to address several problems (market failures) facing the Waikato region. It will be evaluated for its effectiveness in addressing the intervention logic framework (see overleaf).

This strategy uses *positive trends* rather than specific targets to monitor progress towards the economic outcomes. This is because these trends, outcomes are long term and system wide and are strongly influenced by external factors unrelated to this strategy. In addition, we want to encourage learning and adaptation.

We will seek to identify the net benefits associated with the initiatives and actions in this strategy. Net benefits are the advantages of an initiative after subtracting its costs. Ideally, this will consider the outcomes of each initiative and compare them to what we would have expected to result if the initiative was not implemented.

The evaluation methodology is yet to be determined, but – given the diversity of initiatives – it is likely that it will need to vary from case to case.

We will avoid linking the actions of this strategy to changes in high-level indicators (such as regional GDP), given the many forces beyond our control that are likely to have a much bigger impact on these indicators. For example, extremely high prices or physical shortages of diesel or fertilisers, droughts or other climatic events, or other shocks.

Intervention logic framework

Final outcomes (30-year horizon)	Increase household incomes	Increase productivity	Increase employment
Intermediate outcomes (10-year horizon)	Increase factor mobility Factors of production such as labour and capital move to priority activities that support the final outcomes	Reduce barriers To the entry or exit of businesses to priority activities that support the final outcomes	Shared direction Parties make aligned decisions, such as investment in areas with the greatest net benefits
Outputs and immediate-short term outcomes (3-year horizon)	Improve information and insights Fill gaps and develop new information to achieve efficient outcomes or maximise economic opportunities	Improve coordination Provide strategy and forums to bring together parties with common interests. Deliver/facilitate infrastructure to align activities around it	Positive spillovers Facilitate market solutions by establishing connections between parties, providing information, or subsidising positive activities in some way
Problems	Imperfect information Where parties lack perfect information, markets can fail to achieve efficient outcomes or to maximise economic opportunities	Coordination failures Opportunities missed because of independent actions across parties, which working together would have provided	Poor economic performance Under-provision of economic activities with positive spillovers contributes to sub-optimal incomes, productivity, employment

Appendix A: Glossary of terms

The following terms and definitions are used in this Strategy:

Term	Definition
<i>Economic concentration index</i>	This index, more formally known as the Herfindahl-Hirschman Index, measures how concentrated an economy is. An index of zero would imply a highly diverse economy in which all industries contribute the same amount; the higher the index, the less diverse/more concentrated the economy is on relatively few industries.
<i>GDP</i>	Gross domestic product. All the income from work and from businesses, or the returns to labour and returns to capital.
<i>Kotahitanga</i>	Oneness of purpose. Shared direction and priorities.
<i>Kia eke panuku</i>	Desire to achieve success
<i>Location quotient</i>	A measure of an area's industrial specialisation relative to the whole country. It identifies which industries are more concentrated and prominent in the regional economy compared to the national average.
<i>Mahi tahi</i>	Collective action that involves combined effort and coordination.
<i>Manawaroa</i>	Enduring inner strength, ability to endure through difficulty and disruption.
<i>Nature credits</i>	Tradable, verifiable units representing measurable ecological improvements, designed to finance biodiversity conservation and ecosystem restoration.
<i>Regional economic development</i>	Identifying and maximising current and future comparative advantages, to improve regional and national economic productivity and, in turn, to drive higher incomes and living standards over time. It also includes anticipating and responding to short-term opportunities and risks. It can help to improve economic resilience, the natural environment and disparities between different population groups.
<i>Tiaki taiao</i>	Active protection of nature
<i>Tūraru</i>	The level of exposure to trouble, harm, or loss. 1. tū → short form of tūpono (chance, contingency, something that may or may not occur); 2. raru → trouble, disruption, difficulty, issue

Appendix B: Figures 4-6

Figure 4 Waikato region GDP, GDP growth (2000-2025) and GDP location quotients: primary and manufacturing sectors

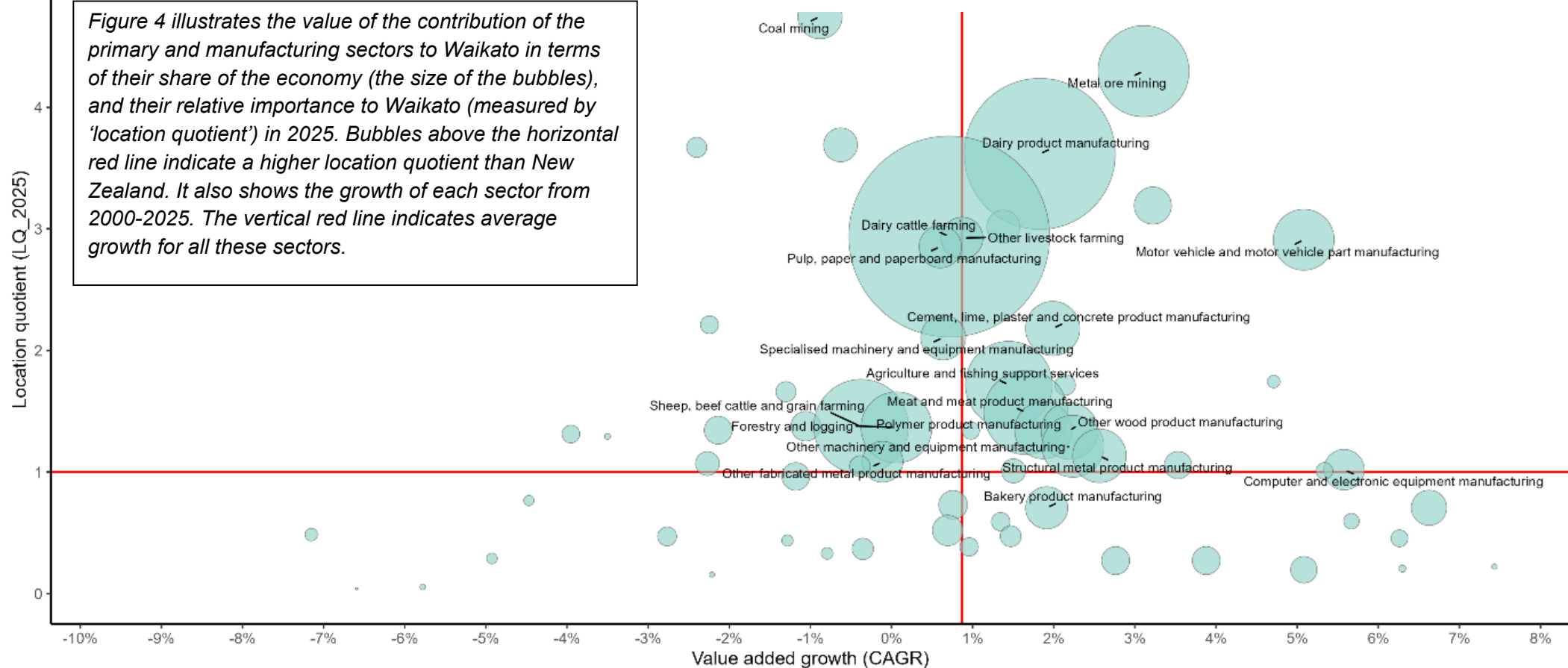


Figure 5 Waikato region GDP, GDP growth (2000-2025) and GDP location quotients: infrastructure and public service sectors

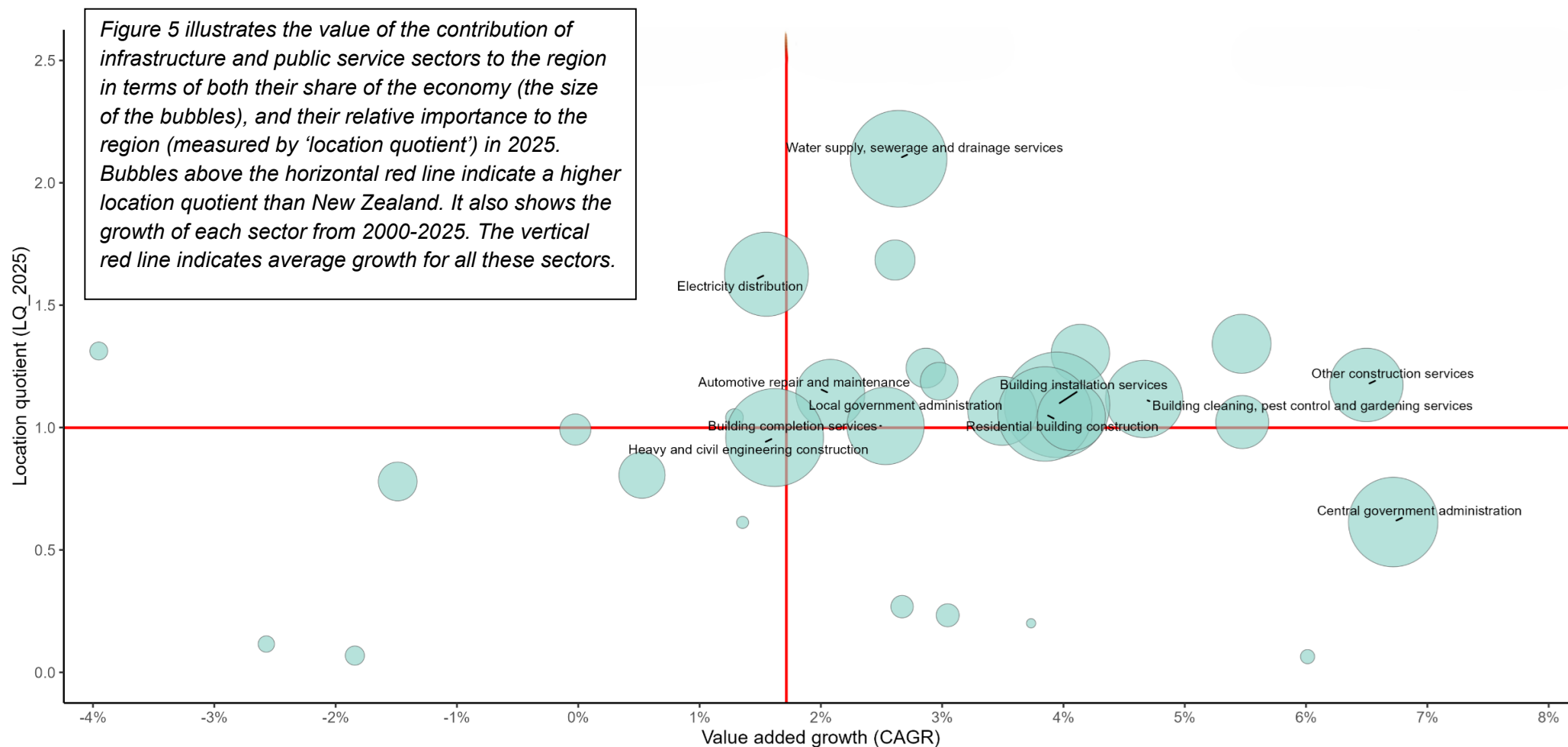
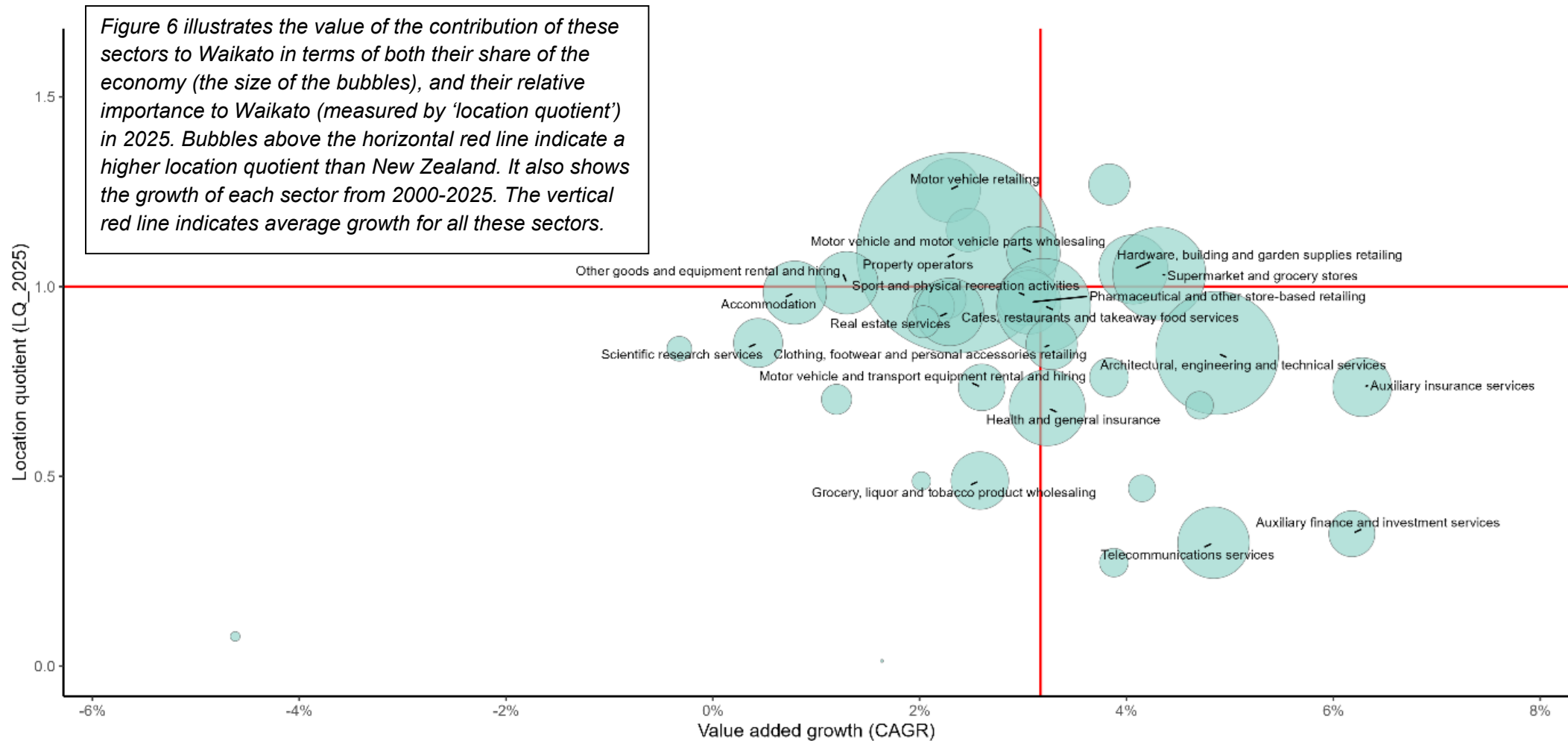


Figure 6 GDP, GDP growth (2000-2025) and GDP location quotients: professional, cultural and retail sectors



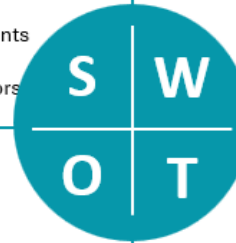
Appendix C: SWOT analysis

Strengths

- Relatively large area and labour force
- Relatively high economic diversity
- Favourable natural capital and environment (e.g. climate, Waikato River, rainfall, soils, coastal and marine, geology)
- Attractive place to live; and to invest when priorities agreed
- Popular amenities, visitor destinations and events
- Unique Māori identity and values: Kiingitanga, Tainui and Te Arawa waka
- Second-largest Māori asset base, growing talent & opportunity
- Relatively secure infrastructure (electricity, water)
- Leader in electricity generation and energy distribution
- Strong inter-regional links, e.g. with Auckland and BoP (goods, people, businesses)
- Abundant primary sectors, in vibrant rural and coastal communities
- Large and specialised role of metro area, supported by joint planning arrangements
- Excellent education and research organisations
- Nationally significant activities (including sports and cultural) and industry sectors
- Councils generally business friendly, some shared services

Opportunities

- Growing and young population in some areas
- Improve productivity of existing industries, e.g. through adding value
- Optimise economic role within upper North Island
- Build economic resilience and adaptability (e.g. resource efficiency, water storage, shorten supply chains)
- Grow newer activities/industries (e.g. energy-dense)
- Improve intra-regional, inter-regional and international connections
- Optimise economic advantages of metro area
- Better match business skill needs with regional education offerings
- Develop & promote region as a place to work, invest, study, visit etc
- Coordinate infrastructure planning and investment
- Increase efficiency of council functions, e.g. expand shared services
- Partner with Māori for shared prosperity, adding value
- Leverage government policy to grow housing supply



Weaknesses

- Low productivity compared to other regions and NZ
 - Pressure on resources
- Lower education and higher unemployment and NEET
- Competition (and proximity) between urban and rural land uses
 - High telecommunications fault rate per connection
- High electricity costs (national market structure and settings)
 - Relatively low productivity in metro area
 - Relatively low public R & D capacity
 - Attraction and retention of capital, talent etc
- Many council entities with varying priorities, inconsistent responses to business needs, regulatory complexity and uncertainty, including for blue economy activities in marine area
 - Housing supply/quality, particularly outside metro area

Threats

- Increasing number of dependents per worker in some areas
- Biosecurity threats, pressure on marine environment and other natural risks
- Constraints on expansion of existing and attraction of new industries, such as water and electricity
 - Constraints on capacity to meet domestic or international market requirements
 - Inconsistent planning or infrastructure across upper North Island
 - Hydrological risks to existing large-scale hydro generation
 - Diversion away of talent, capital and customers
 - Future risks to resilient infrastructure pipeline
 - Impact of shocks (e.g. February 2026 storms, 2026 Iran war)
 - International risks to imports or exports
- Central or local government policy shifts worsen business environment

APPENDIX 2

Anchor Institutions Proposed 2026/27 Implementation Plan (ECM 11783038)

Anchor Institution Implementation Plan Year 3 – 2026/27

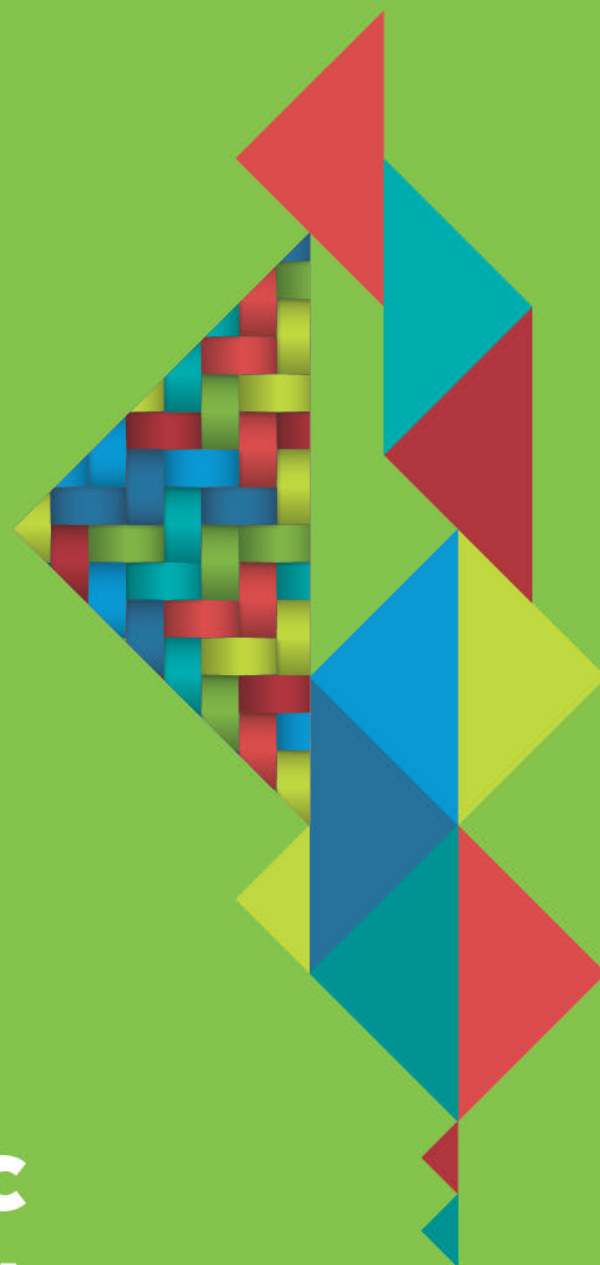
Framework pillar	2026/27 focus and targeted activity	Comments and actions
Procurement	Deep dive (to scope)	The purpose of the deep dive is to better understand how Council's procurement settings are supporting local economic, employment and social outcomes, and where they can be strengthened. This will include reviewing how local contribution requirements are being applied, how benefits are being monitored and reported, and how procurement can continue to support local businesses, iwi and mana whenua enterprises, and other suppliers to participate in Council work.
Employment	Support delivery of priorities in the Regional Economic Development Strategy	The strategy focuses on six interconnected priorities to position the region for the future, all of which are directly relevant for Waipā District Council and the way we play our role as an anchor institution. These are: ▪ leveraging the Waikato's location advantages ▪ boosting bioeconomy productivity ▪ increasing electricity supply ▪ growing export and advanced manufacturing ▪ supporting a thriving and connected metropolitan area and towns ▪ partnering with Waikato regional Māori We will therefore work with others to identify, support and partner to deliver specific initiatives from the Regional Economic Development Strategy that are relevant to Waipā, so we can achieve employment outcomes at the scale required for the district to be successful. This will include considering opportunities relevant to Waipā's strong rural and primary sector economy through the regional bioeconomy priority.
Workforce development	Support delivery of priorities in the Regional Economic Development Strategy	We will deliver on agreed commitments to support Waipā Tech meetings and AgConnect 2026, designed to promote employment opportunities in existing and emerging clusters. However, we will change our focus from these local initiatives to identifying, supporting and partnering to deliver specific initiatives from the Regional Economic Development Strategy that are relevant to Waipā, so we can achieve changes to the workforce and labour market at the scale required for the district to be successful.

Cluster anchor	Seek opportunities to deliver on the government's objectives for simplifying local government in the Waikato region Enhance the District's profile, strengthen investor and developer confidence, and support increased investment in the District Facilitate an action plan to unlock the economic potential of the North Waipā-southern Hamilton area Strengthen strategic iwi and mana whenua partnerships Identify opportunities to make it easier to do business and invest in Waipā	Partnering to deliver shared outcomes is a fundamental way of working as an anchor institute and is aligned with Council's priorities for this triennium. We will therefore: i. Work with other councils across the Waikato region to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of local governance, guided by Council's agreed principles for any future change: protecting local voice, improving outcomes for communities, strengthening strategic capacity, supporting financial sustainability, enabling better infrastructure planning and delivery, maintaining meaningful iwi and mana whenua partnership, ensuring practical and timely transition, and retaining a clear focus on Waipā's interests. ii. Deliver a strategic promotion campaign to leverage external funding and expertise and strengthen Waipā's profile as a place to live, work and invest. As implementation of the Regional Economic Development Strategy develops, identify opportunities to build on Waipā's distinctive strengths and clusters, including where these provide a strong basis for investment and employment growth. iii. Building on the spatial work already completed through Future Proof, we will work with Hamilton City Council, mana whenua and other partners to develop an action plan that identifies the practical actions and investment needed to unlock these opportunities. This recognises that North Waipā and southern Hamilton form an increasingly connected part of the wider metropolitan economy, with significant opportunities associated with growth, employment, business land, infrastructure and connectivity. iv. Continue to work with each iwi partner on their specific vision and strategies, including but not limited to the following: ▪ Continue to deliver on all JMAs ▪ Work with Te Nehenehenui on housing aspirations ▪ Work with Ngāti Korokī Kahukura on housing and other economic aspirations ▪ Work with Raukawa and Ngāti Haua on specific anchor related opportunities ▪ Develop relationship agreements with Ngāti Apakura and Raukawa
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		v. We will work across Council and with local businesses to identify practical opportunities to make it easier to establish, invest and do business in Waipā, focusing on areas where Council can make a meaningful difference. This recognises that Council's planning, regulatory and other customer-facing functions can have a significant influence on the local business environment.
Community collaboration	Strengthen council engagement with our community	This matters because Council's role as an anchor institution is not limited to what we deliver directly. It also depends on how well we involve communities in shaping the plans, projects and investment decisions that affect them. Stronger engagement helps build trust, draw on local knowledge, reach a wider range of voices, and ensure Council's work reflects the needs and aspirations of Waipā communities. We will therefore continue to include community participatory processes in development of key strategic plans and projects including: ▪ 2027/37 Long Term Plan ▪ Cambridge Connections ▪ Review of Waipā 2050 We will also continue to apply IAP2 engagement framework, AI technology and digital methodology in key community engagement processes to enhance community participation opportunities.
Community assets and infrastructure	Adopt Council's Property Strategy	The Property Strategy will provide a more deliberate framework for how Council manages, uses and invests in its land, buildings and community facilities. It will help ensure these assets are aligned with Council's strategic priorities, support community wellbeing, enable better use of public places and facilities, and identify opportunities where Council property can be used in partnership with others to deliver wider public value.

APPENDIX 3

Draft Waipā Economic Wellbeing Strategy (ECM 11466972)



Draft Economic Wellbeing Strategy

April 2025





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Setting the scene

In 2023 we engaged with our communities as part of the development of Ahu Ake – Waipā Community Spatial Plan. Here is a taste of what we heard that has helped inform this Waipā Economic Wellbeing Strategy.



“Māori economy will strengthen with relationships. Need to bring Māori business leaders together in a shared space.”



“Great idea for Waipā as a destination! Capitalise on our natural assets!”



“To attract high quality businesses that create new jobs, our towns need good developers to create great new/revitalised spaces for office, retail and living.”



“Business and accommodation needs to be encouraged in Pirongia and Te Pahu to support the mountain as a destination.”



“Agree with retaining Hautapu as a key industry area, provided that the supporting infrastructure the development would need is in place (beforehand).”



“Housing and better pay elsewhere are key obstacles for working whānau wanting to come home.”



“A focus on youth education and employment also delivers on providing for overall community wellbeing.”



“The district needs to provide a high quality of infrastructure and social infrastructure to support thriving families.”



“We should be encouraging live, work, play options in and around key centres alongside focussed and targeted industrial land use activities.”

Ready. Act. Aim.

This is the mantra for business today as rapid change, multiple challenges and enormous opportunities have become everyday occurrences impacting our economy.

We face the same challenges in developing a strategy to provide for economic wellbeing in our communities – how can we provide a relevant, agile strategy in anticipation of fast-paced change?

Firstly, we need to understand that economic **wellbeing** is different from economic **development**. Wellbeing is all encompassing and includes our people, culture and environment as key parts to a thriving economy. Economic wellbeing relates to everything and everyone including access, equity, social support, income, housing, medical care, education, employment, and community development.

Economic **development** focuses on business development, investment and productivity. All important to a 'well' economy, but not the only aspects that indicate success.

Secondly, we need to use data-driven analysis and reporting to develop assumptions for the future. Throughout this strategy we reference several data reports from various sources including Infometrics, Market Economics and Waikato Regional Council.

These reports, on a range of data including housing, population, and industry sectors, tell us we can expect to see continued population growth in our towns and villages; continuing demand for industrial land; increasing impacts from climate change and changes in farming and land use practices; and a desire to entwine culture and art in the public realm as both an expression of our communities and to create destinations.

Thirdly, through the development of Ahu Ake - Waipā Community Spatial Plan, we have engaged with mana whenua and iwi, business and industry, key stakeholders and our communities, to get their input into how Council can provide for economic wellbeing.

We have created the Waipā Economic Wellbeing Strategy to understand what we need to do as a Council as we work together with mana whenua and iwi partners, key stakeholders and our communities to deliver the outcomes our communities aspire to have. In striving to build a sustainable and growing economy we recognise that economic wellbeing does not stand alone – to truly thrive our community needs to be well culturally, socially, and environmentally.

People, places, and partnerships are at the core of our communities and this strategy, along with others that implement Ahu Ake - Waipā Community Spatial Plan, will help to guide us along this journey to successfully achieve our vision and community outcomes.

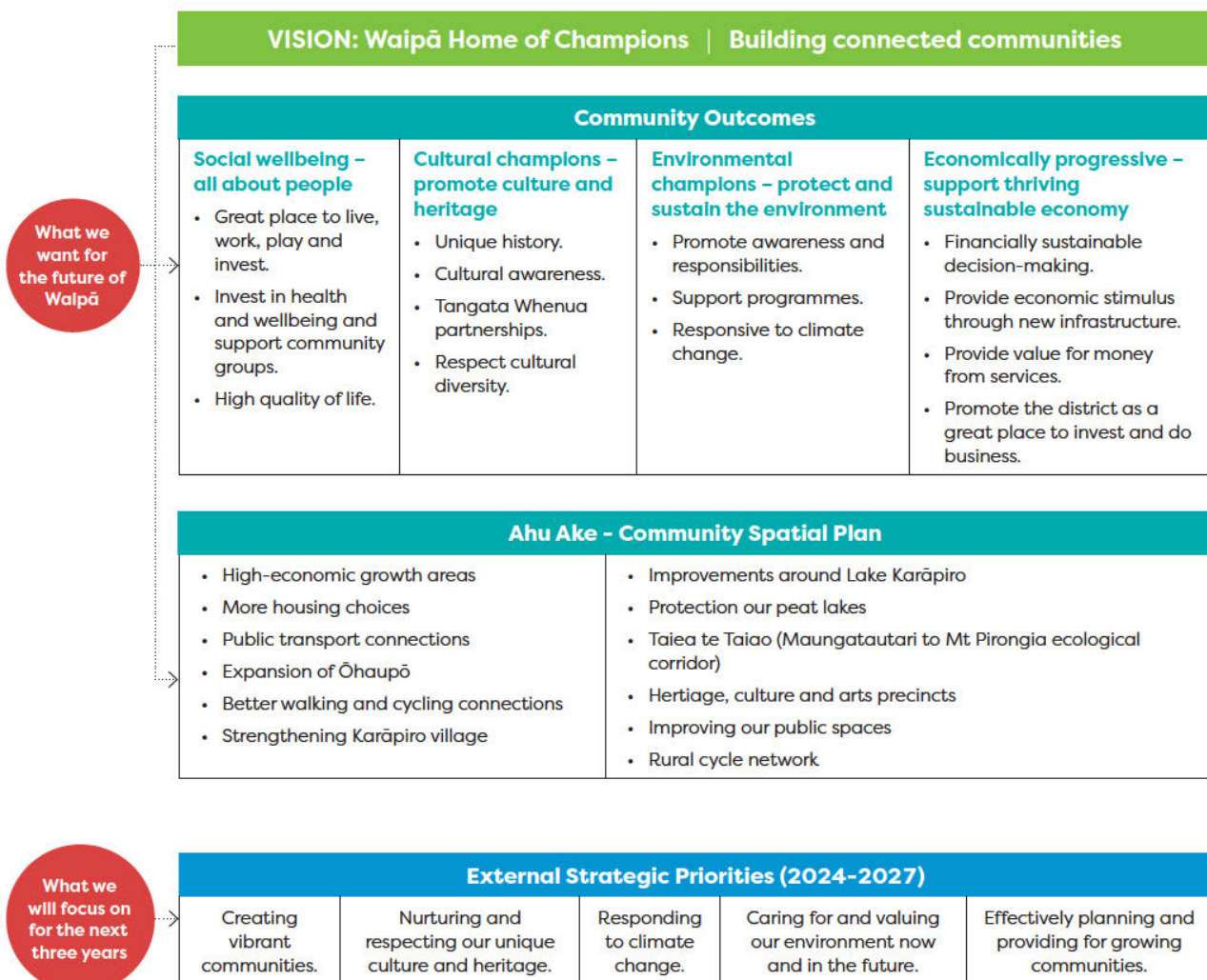
Connecting our vision: From Strategic Framework to Economic Wellbeing Strategy

In our pursuit of building connected communities, one of our four community outcomes is to foster an economically progressive environment. This commitment to “supporting a thriving economy” was one of the key factors that informed the development of the Ahu Ake – Waipā Community Spatial Plan.

Ahu Ake serves as a blueprint for shaping our community's future, and includes a comprehensive chapter on economic development. Within this

plan, we recognise that our Economic Wellbeing Strategy is not just a standalone initiative but a crucial component of Ahu Ake's broader framework.

The Economic Wellbeing Strategy emerged from the strategic vision outlined in Ahu Ake. By aligning with Ahu Ake's goals, our strategy aims to address key economic priorities and ensure sustainable growth.





How did we get here?

Council supports and contributes to Waipā District's economic wellbeing through our everyday areas of work that include:



Infrastructure: Water services, roads and pathways



Community assets: Libraries, pools, parks, reserves and playgrounds



Planning: District Plan, spatial and strategic planning



Community programmes: Mayoral Task Force for Jobs



Partnership: Collaboration with mana whenua and iwi, and our local government partners with Colab and Hamilton Waikato Tourism being examples



Future proof: Growth planning and affordable housing across the sub-region



Climate change: Through delivery of a comprehensive work programme to better understand and effectively respond to impacts of climate change



Events: An events programme that brings our community together and attracts tourists and tourism investment

The Waipā Economic Wellbeing Strategy outlines a pathway towards our vision and community outcomes, through partnerships and collaboration, further defining the role we play in economic wellbeing.

Mana whenua and iwi, key stakeholders and community members who joined us in workshops informing the development of the strategy as well as those who contributed to Ahu Ake – Waipā Community Spatial Plan through world café workshops, told us that an Economic Wellbeing Strategy needs to be delivered with a 'whole of community' approach. We also sought input from businesses, industry bodies and associations, support and training organisations, tertiary institutions, local and central government authorities, and agencies.

We will continue to grow relationships with these organisations as we deliver the strategy – walking shoulder-to-shoulder, not in front or behind, meeting challenges and making the changes needed for collaboration, alignment and agreement.



Our way forward

Connecting our future: The link between Ahu Ake and Economic Wellbeing

In Waipā, we are committed to a future where everyone thrives – our land, our people, and our economy. Ahu Ake has laid the groundwork through extensive community engagement where we heard that economic wellbeing and a district that balances growth with sustainability are important to our people. Now, the Economic Wellbeing Strategy takes these ideas forward, turning vision into action, creating the foundations for new opportunities right here in our communities.

What we have learned – our foundations

From listening and engaging with our community while developing Ahu Ake, three key themes emerged which have informed the new Economic Wellbeing Strategy. The themes are:

- 1. High-quality employment growth in urban areas:** Our communities emphasised the need for more high-quality jobs that are accessible within our urban centres. This aligns with our commitment to transform Waipā's urban areas into dynamic economic hubs where innovation and opportunities thrive.
- 2. Rural economic growth, including support for land-based primary production industries and adaptation to climate change:** Engagement highlighted the importance of supporting our rural economy and the necessity for sustainable practices that are adaptable to climate change. We aim to support our rural economy by promoting methods that combine tradition with innovation, ensuring our agricultural and horticultural practices can thrive sustainably.
- 3. Tourism/destinations and culture-based foundations:** Our communities highlighted the value of our cultural and natural heritage and its potential to attract tourists. This insight is driving our focus on developing tourism in ways that celebrate our cultural narratives, making Waipā a must-visit destination.

These themes guide our actions, ensuring that the Economic Wellbeing Strategy is a comprehensive response to the community's needs and aspirations. Ahu Ake has been developed to ensure we successfully deliver our vision and community outcomes, providing for

the enhancement of community wellbeing. The Economic Wellbeing Strategy gives us the 'how' – the specific steps we'll take to make that happen.

Incorporating the Māori economy

The Māori economy, deeply rooted in values of whānau (family), health, wellbeing, and support, aligns naturally with the principles of the Anchor Institution Framework. While traditional European economic models are often dollar-centric, focusing primarily on financial gain, the Māori economy prioritises making sure that all elements—social, economic, cultural, and environmental—are in harmony. This values-based approach resonates strongly with this strategy, which is not solely about financial success but about nurturing our communities.

The Māori economy was, and still is, built on trade. Thriving and vibrant well before European settlement, it continues to do so today and is predicted to be the fastest growing economy nationally. Historically Māori have traded domestically and internationally in kai (food, including kaimoana), tools and utensils, clothing and textiles.

Today, Māori own a significant portion of assets in the primary sectors: 50 percent in fishing quotas; 40 percent in forestry; 30 percent in lamb production; 30 percent in sheep and beef production; 10 percent in dairying and 10 percent in kiwifruit.¹ The Māori economy is also diversifying, with new investment areas including geothermal, digital services, education, tourism and housing. Māori have adapted quickly to the digital age, combining these skills with a natural entrepreneurial flair producing a new era of Māori enterprise.

Culture, whānau, and whakapapa are core principles in the Māori economy, and align strongly with the three themes identified in Ahu Ake.

By integrating these themes we ensure that:

- In our urban centres, economic initiatives actively include Māori enterprises and cultural insights, enhancing the economic landscape.
- Our rural strategies are enriched by traditional Māori knowledge and current practices that together foster sustainable environmental management.

¹ New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT), *The Māori Economy*

- The promotion of tourism is deeply connected with Māori culture, ensuring that our cultural tourism not only attracts visitors but also educates and inspires them about the Māori way of life.

Council as an anchor institution

As we developed this strategy we recognised our role as an anchor institution in Waipā, providing the right environment for economic development, voice, choice and control at a local level. Legislative change; tough economic times; recognition of our place in the district as a major employer and procurer of local goods and services; and our ability to leverage local strengths through partnerships, all contributed to this understanding.

Anchor institutions are organisations characterised as:

- Large, place-based organisations with an enduring presence in their communities
- Having long term, enduring commitment to a place
- Combining several characteristics – large scale employers; having control of large landholdings or assets; major purchasers; enhancers of community-led initiatives.

The Anchor Institution Framework was approved by Council in April 2024 and an accompanying work programme was adopted in June 2024. Collectively they show the alignment between Ahu Ake, the draft Economic Wellbeing Strategy and the Anchor Institution Framework.

Through our workshops and conversations, we identified consistent themes (employment growth, rural economy growth and tourism/culture based destinations) that align with the Anchor Institution Framework illustrated. Employment growth as a theme aligns with employment in the framework – creating employment opportunities for local people. Likewise rural economic growth aligns with cluster development in the framework. Tourism/culture-based destinations align with community assets/infrastructure and community collaboration. These themes identify how we need to work and the actions we need to take to respond to the challenges and opportunities ahead.

This framework will form the strong foundation on which we will bring together and enhance what we are already doing. It seeks to provide for increases in efficiency, improve effectiveness, and enhance community wellbeing.





Why do we need an economic wellbeing strategy?

"Without families and communities, the economy means nothing. It has no life of its own. Its only purpose is to enable us to live, to care for one another and to raise our children to take our place. If we lose the power to do that, no matter how fast the gross domestic product rises or how much the budget surplus grows, we will not have a future worth working for."

- Anne Else, New Zealand writer, editor and author, 1996

Waipā's economy faces challenges/opportunities that have effects at community, regional, national and global levels.

Macro trends impacting economic wellbeing

Climate change – this is already influencing our key industry sectors, communities, infrastructure, and the cost of services. We need to consider how we build resilience into what we produce, how we live, how we move around, and how we deliver infrastructure and services.

Unprecedented forecast population growth – our population is expected to grow from almost 55,000 people in 2018 to 79,000 by 2050. Within this growth, we will see a shift in demographics, with the Māori population increasing from 13.1 percent to 15 percent of the total population. More people from diverse cultures are moving to Waipā, attracted by the location and quality of life on offer. We anticipate that people affected by climate change – 'climate refugees' – will also choose to live here in the future.

The number of aged residents (over 65 years) is expected to double to 30 percent by 2050. When combined with a population that is ageing overall, we will see increasing demand for services, facilities and amenities that provide for this sector of our communities. We also need to recognise that ageing itself has changed. Older people are more active and involved and many want to keep working beyond the traditional retirement age of 65 years. They have skills, knowledge and work habits that suit today's work environment and can be valuable contributors to the workforce population. For the first time, we are seeing workplaces with five generations of workers.

We need to consider how these changes will affect the types of jobs and the skill sets we need in our workforce to best meet industry needs.

A skilled workforce – Waipā District has a higher-than-average number of semi-skilled or low-skilled workers and individuals without qualifications compared to the rest of New Zealand. At the same time, we have industry sectors lacking skilled workers. Our agricultural and construction sectors are examples of this. We need to improve our educational outcomes and skill building for employment opportunities to more effectively meet these demands. To do this, we need to be active in our role as an anchor institution, fostering new and existing relationships with providers who have the skills, expertise and experience to make a real difference.

Technology – How we work has changed. Remote working is not just the 'new norm' – it is now an integral way of working. Today, Artificial Intelligence (AI) is doing jobs that were previously exclusive to humans. Robots are no longer limited to assembly lines; they are used in customer service and healthcare as example industries. By automating time-consuming tasks, AI boosts overall efficiency, allowing employees to focus on more creative and highly skilled work. We need to consider how we can incorporate the future of work into our skills-for-work programmes and training.

Affordable housing – An increased population means we need more housing across the entire housing continuum to provide homes for our residents. We need to plan for growth in areas best suited to residential development, and to make sure we have a regulatory environment that allows for alternative and less traditional housing options. We need to make sure housing is not considered in isolation from cultural connectivity, transport, access to community recreational and leisure opportunities, and access to work.

In April 2024, Council adopted a Housing Implementation Plan with a vision that 'every person in the Waipā District is well-housed,

living in sustainable, flourishing and connected communities.'

In adopting the plan, Council acknowledges that a diverse supply of housing across the housing continuum is required as a stepping stone for individuals and families to achieve their goals of safe, warm and affordable houses.

Our housing statistics (Appendix 3) show that not everyone shares the same quality of life within our district. The starting line is not the same for everyone – we need to remove barriers, so more opportunities are created.

Challenges

Sustainability and climate change

Our district faces challenges from the impacts of climate change and moving towards a sustainable economy. Balancing the use of key resources, like fresh water and soil, to support our economic wellbeing while ensuring sustainability will be an ongoing challenge. As high intensity rainfall events and droughts become more frequent and severe, our agricultural and horticultural sectors, our supply chains, and our infrastructure are at greater risk. These risks can impact local businesses and contribute to rising costs, which can increase hardship in our communities and potentially increase inequality and inequity.

To address these issues, we must prioritise resilience and help our economy to adapt to climate impacts and industry changes. Diversifying economic activities and promoting sustainable practices in our district will be key to long-term success. Initiatives like moving towards

a circular economy and investing in sustainable infrastructure can help reduce climate risks, create jobs, and boost economic wellbeing in our communities.

Circular economy

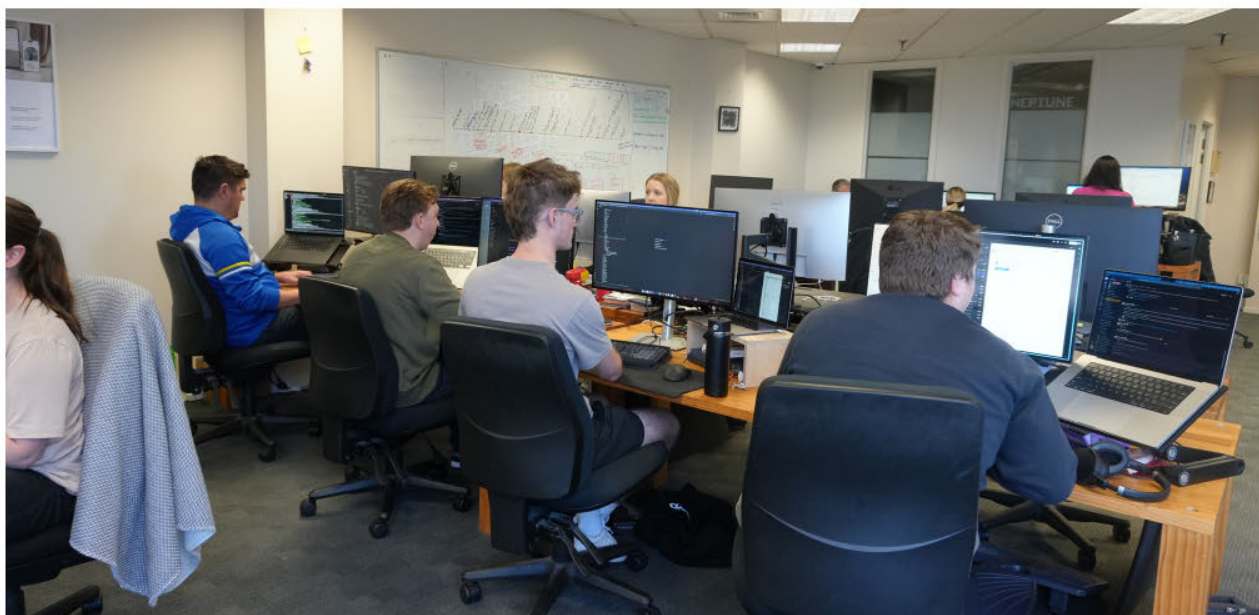
Central Government's Te Rautaki Para/Waste Strategy, commits New Zealand to become a low emission, low waste economy by 2050, built upon a circular economy. A waste-focused circular economy is based on three key principles:

- Design out waste and pollution
- Keep products and materials in use
- Regenerate natural systems.

Some of the benefits of taking a circular economy approach are:

- Long-term cost savings
- Increased local job opportunities
- Encouragement of technical innovation
- Reducing the amount of harmful waste produced
- Reversing our impacts on climate change.

Council and other large businesses in the community have a very real role to play in exploring ways to increase our social procurement. Social procurement is about creating more value and better outcomes through our purchasing of goods and services. This can look like buying local, opting for more environmentally sustainable methodologies, and local learning and capability building opportunities being built into our larger contracts.



Infrastructure

Transport

Waipā is growing and changing. This presents challenges in how we plan the transport network now and safeguard for the future. While growth continues, vehicles will still be part of the transport solution, but we also need to prioritise low carbon solutions, improve people's access and mobility, and support community and stakeholder aspirations.

Road maintenance and construction costs have increased up to 25 percent in the last four years.

An efficient public transport network that keeps us mobile and connected is also essential. We contribute funding towards a passenger service between Hamilton and Cambridge, and Hamilton and Te Awamutu, in conjunction with Waikato Regional Council.

What we have heard from our community:

Community feedback received through Ahu Ake engagement revealed that our communities are calling for a safer, more sustainable, and multi-modal transport system. They imagine a future where public transport, walking and cycling are the preferred modes of transport by 2050. The feedback outlined residents want less reliance on private vehicles, especially in towns and villages. There is a preference for faster, more frequent public transport options.

The community is keen to make places around schools and local centres safer and easier to reach. Strategic projects like the Cambridge-Piarere State Highway 1 extension are seen as crucial for linking places together and helping the economy grow. These projects aim to make towns more people-friendly and vibrant.

During the development of our Waipā Transport Strategy, the community raised several concerns. These include dealing with climate change effects, improving cycleways and walkways, managing growth and traffic congestion, and making buses and trains more readily available. People really supported better pathways, safe road designs, and buses and trains running more often and reaching more places. Parking was also highlighted, particularly for the elderly and rural residents visiting our towns. Submitters also said it's important to use technology to manage traffic and keep roads safe. Overall, from both sets of feedback, there is a clear community sentiment for a shift towards more sustainable and inclusive transport options that not only meet current needs but also anticipate future growth, opportunities and challenges.



Energy

There are two lines companies servicing Waipā District – Waipā Networks and WEL Networks. This means that cross-district organisations need to build relationships with both companies to discuss energy supply issues. This can lead to time delays and uncertainty for businesses looking to expand or to invest in the district.

Increasing energy costs are starting to impact on business viability. Recently announced closures of timber processing plants in Ohakune and Ruapehu provide evidence of this.

Solar energy is still relatively new technology in terms of supporting commercial and industrial development in New Zealand. All the country's current solar installations are 'distributed generation' – meaning they feed into the local distribution networks, rather than connecting directly to the national grid. This type of generation is usually used at or near where it is produced, like smaller hydro generation schemes, geothermal, windfarms and generation produced from industrial processes. While Waipā does not currently have any solar farms in the district, it is expected that farms will be established during the period covered by this Economic Wellbeing Strategy.

Development

As a recognised high population growth area, the Council must maintain a more than sufficient long-term supply of development capacity for projected residential growth as well as business demand in the district. It does this through the sequenced release of greenfield growth cells to accommodate the demand for additional residential and industrial development capacity.

The most recent 2023 Housing and 2024 Business Development Capacity Assessment carried out by Market Economics for Waipā as part of the Future Development Strategy

led by Future Proof, concluded that based on current information and growth projections, there was more than sufficient development capacity in Waipā for the next 30 years. In terms of development capacity, Central Government requires Waipā to provide for a competitive margin of 20 percent above the projected demand in the short and medium term and 15 percent for the long term. This margin is said to ensure that land and capacity supply is not constrained by real world market issues such as a fragmented ownership of land or individual landowners holding onto vacant land (land banking).

Council has been proactive in setting aside land for commercial and industrial development and is actively bringing this land into development as demand requires. We need to work closely with energy suppliers to our district to make sure that this land, when released, has energy infrastructure in place.

Three waters

Having a resilient and sufficient water supply is a priority - without it we cannot grow as a district. In July 2025, Council agreed to form Waikato Waters Limited, a water services delivery model designed to meet this demand.

Waipā has joined with six other district councils from within the Waikato region and are now working through the process of establishing the new water organisation. Through this we will provide access to water and manage wastewater and stormwater in a way that our community now and into the future can sustain.

A new wastewater treatment plant is being built in Cambridge that will treat wastewater to a standard that is comparable to the best treatment plants in New Zealand. The new plant will also align with Te Ture Whaimana o te Awa o Waikato, the vision and strategy for the Waikato

River, and with Tai Tumu Tai Pari Tai Ao, the Waikato-Tainui Environmental Plan. These are both legal requirements. It will comply fully with Waikato Regional Plans and resource consent conditions imposed by the Waikato Regional Council while also having considered matters of importance to mana whenua and iwi.

The new plant will be operational in late 2026 and provides supporting infrastructure to existing and newly released commercial and industrial land in Cambridge, as well as to our residential residents.

There is also work underway upgrading the Alpha Street water treatment plant in Cambridge to provide a more resilient water supply for Cambridge to support growth. In Te Awamutu, Council is planning for a technology upgrade to the wastewater treatment plant by 2030.

Digital connectivity

With an increasing population we need to make sure digital connectivity is maintained and improved in more remote places where connectivity is non-existent/slow. Flexible working and studying, increased online shopping and services, e-commerce and growth in artificial intelligence are continuous challenges.

Social infrastructure

Places to gather and support services are all part of a welcoming and thriving community and great attractants to businesses looking to invest here. Marae, kōhanga reo, schools, parks, pools, halls and meeting spaces are part of this social infrastructure. We need to make sure it is fit for purpose and able to meet our future needs.

As examples, Council worked with Cambridge High School to provide a school gym and community facility, and they partner with Go Waipā in supporting the ASB Stadium in Te Awamutu. These facilities provide not just physical





spaces bringing communities together, but also nurture social, physical, and mental wellbeing. They are safe places of connection.

Housing

A lack of suitable, affordable, healthy housing and rental insecurity can lead to social issues that undermine economic wellbeing and wider individual, whānau and community wellbeing.

Businesses find it hard to expand and attract workers when they cannot find suitable housing.

There is opportunity to make our urban areas more affordable and attractive with greater housing choice through partnerships offering innovative community-driven solutions. Council is working alongside Hamilton City Council, Waikato and Matamata-Piako District Councils and the Waikato Housing Initiative in the Future Proof Partnership, investigating possible pathways to promote the provision of affordable housing in our districts.

Housing affordability is a significant issue for Waipā. A report on Housing Affordability by Infometrics completed in February 2024 showed that housing costs were higher in Waipā District, as were house values and rents, than across the sub-region. Waipā District also had the most unaffordable housing market in comparison to its Future Proof partners. People lack choice in the type and location of housing. Home ownership rates have declined, and Māori and Pacific peoples have lower home ownership rates compared to the general population. The average house value in Waipā is 7.3 times the average household income, above the New

Zealand average of seven times (refer Appendix 3). Affordable renting options are also an increasing concern with average rents in Waipā accounting for almost a quarter of weekly income. Again, this is higher than the New Zealand average.

Rangitahi – preparing youth for work

Tukuna te rangatahi kia tū, kia whanake | Allow youth the opportunity to grow²

Across the district, there are a high number of 15 to 24-year-olds that are not in education, employment or training compared to the region and nationally. In 2023, the figure for this was 9.4 percent. Some local employers have identified that employing people from out of the district and sometimes even from overseas to work in their businesses and take on apprentices is preferable and more affordable than employing local young people, because some local youth are not work-ready.

Access to adequate public transport, affordable housing and a supportive social network are all barriers to taiohi/youth as they transition from school into the workforce.

Through the engagement approach within Ahu Ake, some progress was made in hearing taiohi/youth aspirations for the future. Recognising this as a starting point, Council is in a formative state of better understanding what these needs are and what options could be explored for the future.

Providing a safe, meaningful environment to share their aspirations is essential to growing trusted relationships with taiohi/youth, as is collaboration with mana whenua partners and community organisations.

Skills and education

In 2023, secondary school zoning was reintroduced. New enrolments will be restricted by zone boundaries. The anticipated population growth should see an increase in student numbers district wide, giving secondary schools greater access to Ministry of Education funding to support continuing improvement of educational opportunities to the community.

“It has become even more important to better utilise what people and skills we currently have (It’s called growing our own). This means education and training outcomes need to be better, and more targeted for our district. And focussed on retention in the district.”

– Business Focus Group Workshop feedback, November 2021

² This whakatauaiki is attributed to Ngāti Maniapoto.

The future

Improving economic wellbeing is a long game. This strategy will help us focus on agreed priorities, define the role of Council with respect to economic wellbeing and ensure any investment of Council resources helps us to more effectively achieve our community outcomes.

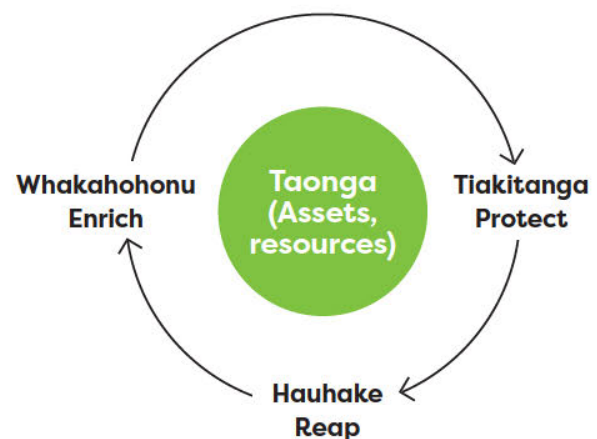
This strategy and the implementation plan that supports it:

- Highlights Council's direct role as an anchor institution in our Waipā communities.
- Helps clarify Council's role in economic wellbeing, and where and how we can invest to make a difference across all parts of our communities.
- Identifies economic wellbeing priorities, ways to leverage our existing strengths and resources, and opportunities to innovate and diversify our local economy.
- Explores opportunities to improve better wellbeing for mana whenua and the environment.
- Explores synergies and shared goals we might have with mana whenua and iwi, businesses, other supporting agencies/organisations, and communities of interest. It will allow us to discover collectively what effective collaboration we could achieve.
- Identifies ways to invest, retain and attract people, increase opportunities to work together, partner and collaborate as we seek opportunities for attracting external investment.
- Identifies ways we can come together through spaces and events to continue to build our community, making sure that those already here as well as those who are new feel welcome and connected.

High quality jobs in urban areas; a thriving rural economy, and growth in tourism and destination-

based offerings that leverage Waipā's unique cultural offering are the goals of this strategy. The Implementation Plan outlines the specific programmes and timelines for delivery of the programmes that will ensure we achieve these goals, in partnership with key stakeholders and the community and as funding allows.

Most importantly it signals the change in how we view our involvement in the economy – moving from the traditional economic development focus, measured by changes in GDP, employment numbers and industry growth, to a more holistic approach as shown below.



By utilising our taonga (assets and resources) in a sustainable way we ensure their longevity (protect), while still being able to draw the benefits from them (reap) that ensure community wellbeing (enrich).

Monitoring and review

This strategy is a living document. It provides a pathway to our shared vision. We will regularly monitor both the delivery of our actions identified in the accompanying Implementation Plan and the outcomes we are achieving and be ready to flex to deliver better outcomes. We will report progress to our communities as part of our environmental scan every three years to support the delivery of our Long Term Plan.

Appendix 1: How this strategy was developed

In 2012, Waipā District Council adopted an Economic Development Strategy to guide Council in its role supporting business development. Twelve years have now passed, and this strategy is redundant – COVID, legislative changes, the challenges of a global economy have made the need for a new strategy with a broader focus on wellbeing necessary.

In 2022, Council started working with iwi/mana whenua and the community on creating a vision for the future through Ahu Ake – Waipā Community Spatial Plan. As part of this process several workshops and world café-style engagement opportunities were held district wide where economic wellbeing was discussed.

We heard from iwi/mana whenua, business owners and operators, business chambers, key community and business stakeholders, industry associations and peak bodies, neighbouring local and regional councils, universities and schools, training and skill building providers, government and non-government support agencies and members of our community.

From the Ahu Ake engagement we summarised the feedback into four bottom lines:

There are a range of businesses in our district

The types of businesses in Waipā diversify with growth focusing increasingly on knowledge based economic activities with higher value employment, improving local career choices for the next generations.

There are more Māori owned businesses in Waipā

Mana whenua can better use their land to support their whānau.

High quality soils and peat soils are preserved

We minimise further loss of high-quality soils and peat soils.

We manage growth so it is affordable

Growth and the provision of infrastructure are integrated for a cost-effective approach to development.

From business engagement workshops, we heard:

- Must balance protection of the Waipā lifestyle against promoting positive growth and progress.
- Affordable housing is important to employment and education.
- We want to attract businesses and people – accommodation is important for this.
- Economic wellbeing is a 'whole of community' approach and needs support from others e.g. government and non-government support agencies, schools, major employers, business chambers.
- Planning for growth, regulating land use, protecting high quality soils are key drivers.
- Events, tourism and promotion of the district also important.
- A focus on youth education and employment not only upskills and increases our labour pool, it improves quality of life, community connectivity and so on.
- We need to 'grow our own' – provide better education and skills training for our labour force.
- Agriculture and agribusiness are important to iwi and Waipā as are sustainable farming practices.

We also completed work on town, village and urban concept plans for Pirongia, Ōhaupō, Cambridge and Kihikihi to help us better understand what things are important to our communities.

We used data and statistics from a range of sources to support evidence-based decision making for this strategy.



Appendix 2: What we already do

Our mahi

We fund, are a member of and/or provide support to:

Hamilton Waikato Tourism

Hamilton Waikato Tourism attracts domestic and international visitors to the region to contribute to cultural, economic, environmental and social wellbeing. Their work includes:

- Marketing to attract visitors to the region and encouraging them to stay longer.
- Capability building and working with operators.
- Responding to emergency events such as Cyclone Gabrielle – wherever tourists might be impacted.

Business Chambers

Cambridge and Te Awamutu Business Chambers lead and support Waipā's strong, connected business community through a programme including workshops and skills training, advocacy, networking and awards.

Future Proof Waikato

Future Proof Waikato is a joint project set up to consider how the Waikato region will develop into the future. This approach is needed to manage growth in a coordinated way. The project will deliver a 30-year growth strategy and considers iwi aspirations, building a strong and productive economic corridor, thriving communities and neighbourhoods, housing and the environment.

Mayoral Taskforce for Jobs – Tuia Programme

It is a national group of Mayors working towards the vision of all young people under 25 being engaged in education, training, work or other positive activity in their communities.

One successful programme is the Tuia Programme to develop the leadership capacity of young Māori in their communities. The programme is funded by Ministry of Social Development in partnership with Council.

We also

- Strengthen our relationships with iwi/mana whenua through existing joint management agreements with Waikato/Tainui, Raukawa and Maniapoto/Te Nehenehenui and enhance the relationship with Ngāti Koroki Kahukura and other iwi.
- Administer the Creative Communities grant

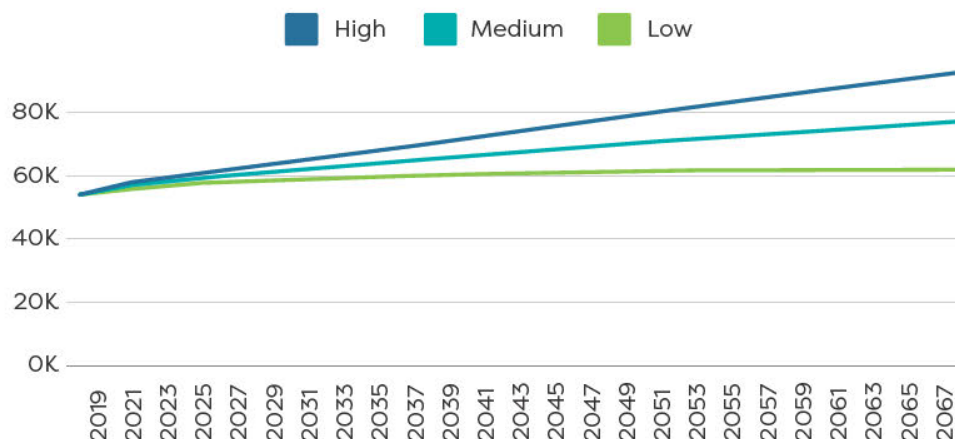
scheme

- Administer the Waste Minimisation Community Fund
- Provide and administer the Community Discretionary Fund, District Promotion (Event) Fund, Heritage Fund
- Support and encourage private events that promote the district
- Invest time in community partnerships
- Provide housing for older persons
- Build and maintain roading, water and community infrastructure
- Provide district library services
- Facilitate events attracting visitors to our district and providing opportunities for our communities to showcase, connect and build strong cultural connections.



Appendix 3: Data & statistics

Population



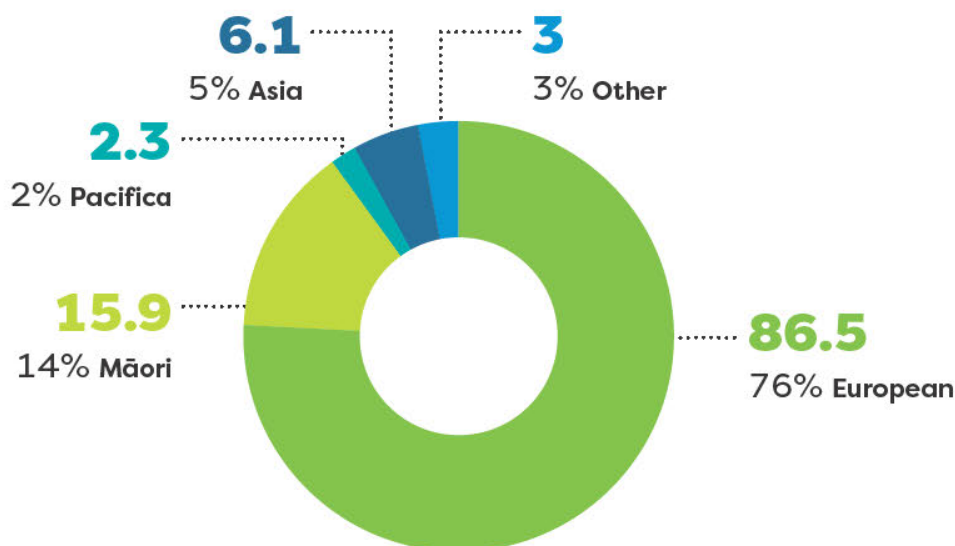
Source: Waikato Regional Council Data Dashboard 2024

Waipā's population has grown at double the average rate for New Zealand over the past five years, and this growth is expected to continue from a start of approximately 62,700 in 2024 to over 78,000 in 2068.

Māori are returning to the rohe in greater numbers as they respond to the call of whenua and whānau. New Zealand's record high migration rates have also seen a boost to growth in international migrants, bringing greater cultural diversity. These cultures bring their own economic expertise and contribute towards a more diverse economy.

Most people live in the townships of Cambridge and Te Awamutu, with smaller towns of Kihikihi, Pirongia and Ōhaupō supporting surrounding rural populations.

Waipā population - ethnicity

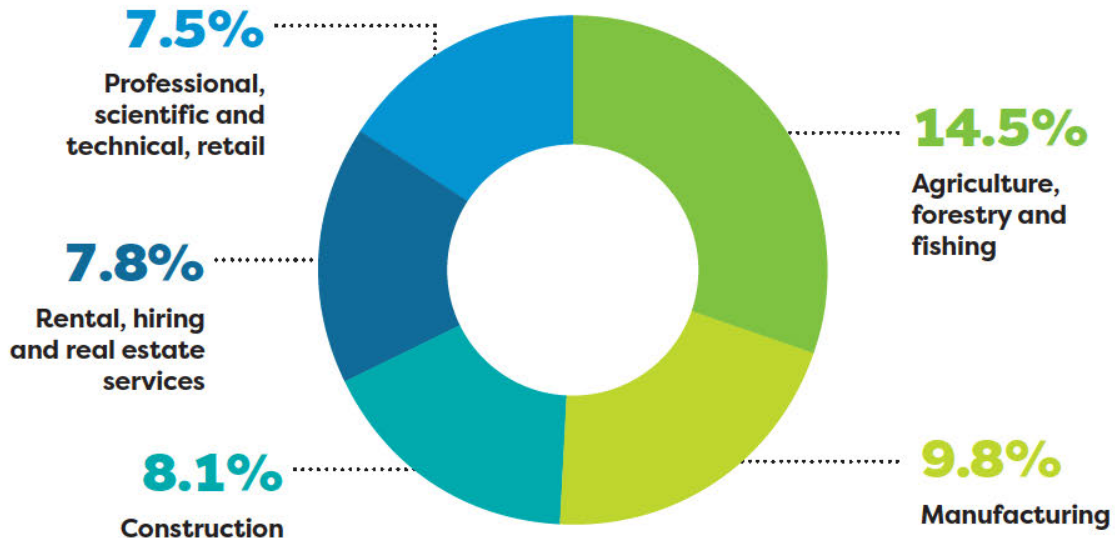


Source: Stats NZ 2023

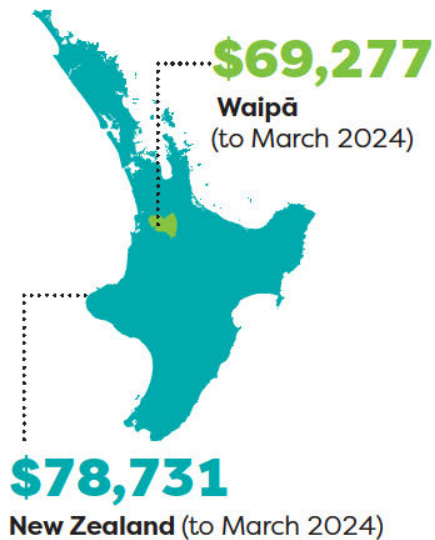


Income and employment

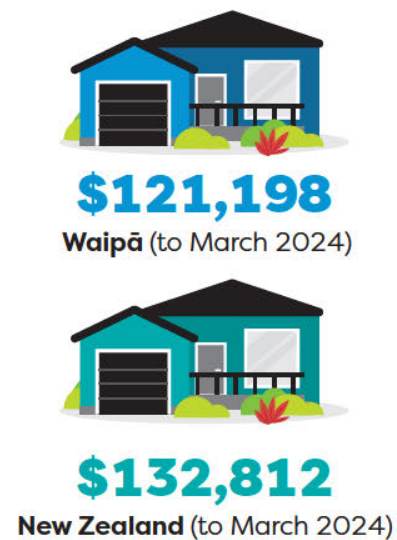
The top five employment sectors for Waipā in 2024 were:



Mean annual earnings



Average household income



Source: Infometrics 2024

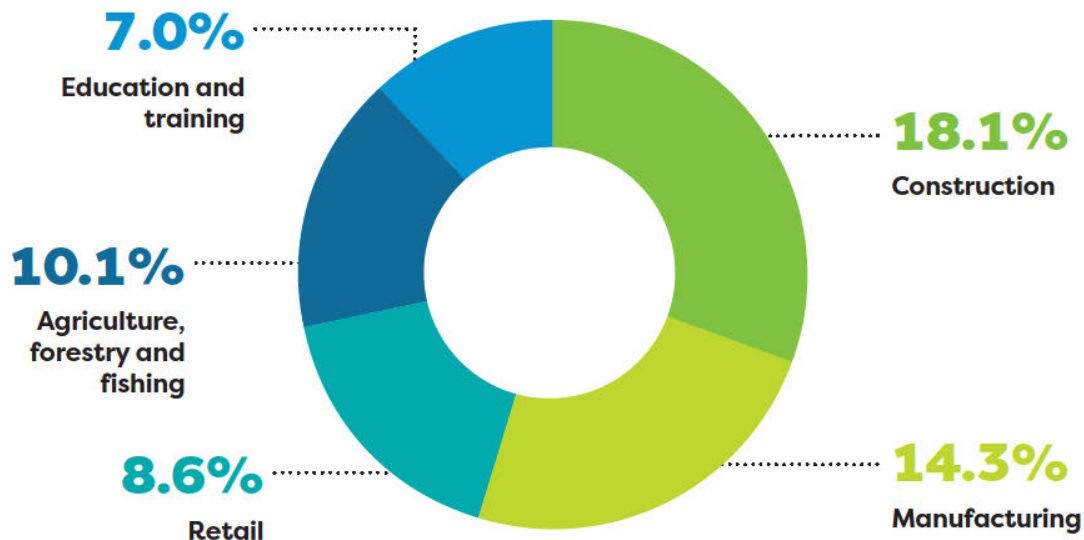
Earnings are income earned through employment, whereas household income includes income earned through employment, self-employment, allowances, benefits and superannuation. It provides a more holistic measure of living standards and affordability than income alone.



Māori employment

Māori are the second largest ethnic group in Waipā and play an increasingly important role in our economy as their population is much younger than the average for our district and increasing faster, so they make up more of our workforce – a trend that is projected to rise.

The top five employment sectors for Māori in Waipā in 2024 were:



Skill level

Higher skilled jobs offer a higher standard of living for residents. There is also a better chance of retaining residents and attracting more people into the area if there are more highly skilled jobs and knowledge-based jobs available.

Skill level (to March 2024)	Waipā	Māori
Highly skilled	36.5%	29.2%
Semi skilled	15.6%	15.4%
Skilled	11.4%	8.4%
Low skilled	36.4%	46.4%

There is a higher percentage of Māori in low skilled jobs which aligns with the large numbers of Māori employed in the construction and agriculture industry sectors which have traditionally been lower skilled sectors. This is expected to change as technology and the rise of artificial intelligence in these sectors increases requiring a higher skilled workforce.

Housing

Region	Value (to March 2024)	Affordability*	Rent (to March 2024)	Affordability**
Waipā	\$873,900	7.2	\$575	24.7%
NZ	\$928,623	7.0	\$560	21.9%
Waikato	\$807,218	7.0	\$495	22.2%

Source: Infometrics 2024

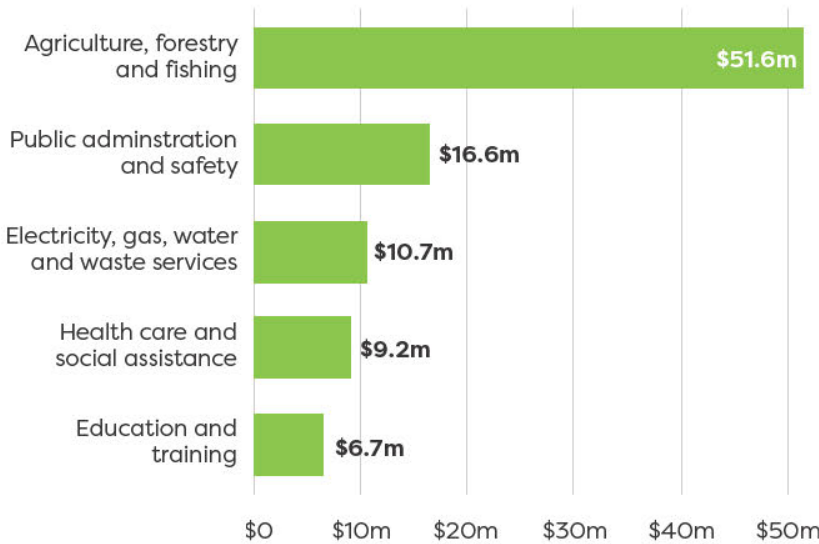
*Affordability – Housing. Ratio of average household income to average house price. 2024
** Affordability – Rent. Percentage of average weekly rent to average household income. 2024

Gross Domestic Product

Top three industry sectors contributing to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth in 2024 were agriculture, forestry and fishing, manufacturing and wholesale trade. Although an industry may be growing rapidly, if it's a small sector relative to the district economy it may not contribute much to local GDP.

Top five industries, ANZSIC Level 1, 2023 - 2024

Absolute change in GDP, March 2024 prices



Source: Infometrics 2024

Waipā has a more diverse economy than the average when measured across New Zealand's 68 territorial authorities – great news for the district as this means that if one industry sector experiences a downturn, we have a greater range of other sectors who are good performers, lessening the impact.







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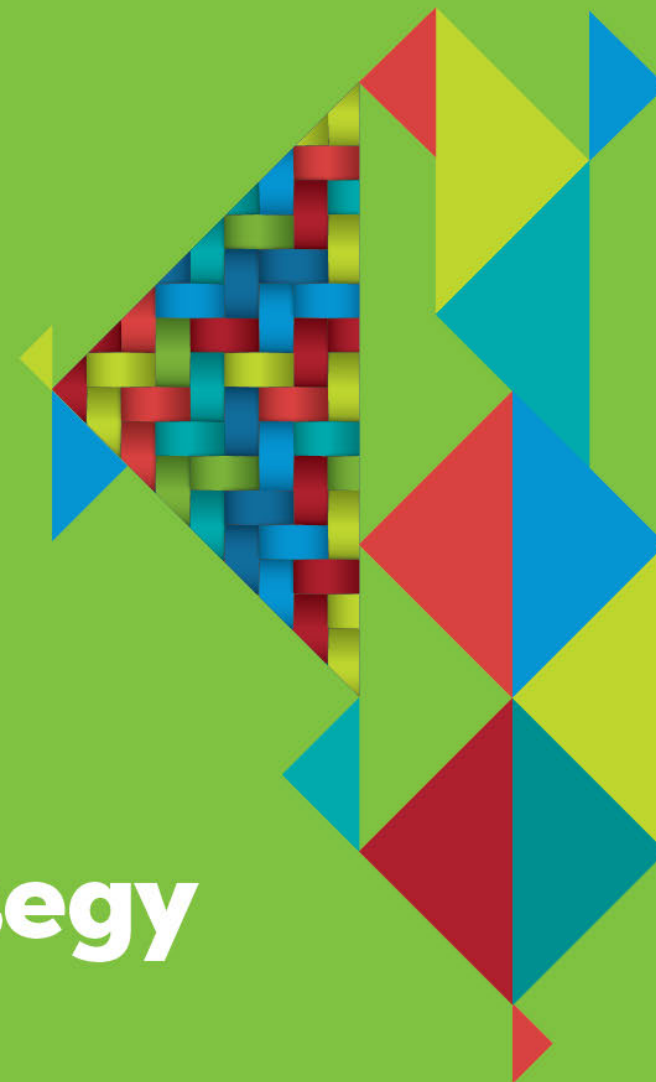
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APPENDIX 4

Draft Economic Wellbeing Implementation Plan (ECM 11466970)



Economic Wellbeing Strategy

Draft Implementation Plan

April 2025





Introduction

Waipā's Economic Wellbeing Strategy gives effect to two key plans that in turn inform Council's vision and community outcomes, Ahu Ake - Waipā Community Spatial Plan and the Long Term Plan (LTP).

This Implementation Plan supports Waipā's Economic Wellbeing Strategy, outlining the projects and initiatives that will turn the strategy into reality. To be effective, these projects and initiatives need funding support from Council over the anticipated ten-year timeframe of the strategy. Many are inter-dependent on other Council activities, collaborative support from external stakeholders/ partners and subject to those also being delivered in a timely manner and funded appropriately.

Timeframes have been allocated using a short/medium/long term categorisation commencing July 1, 2025. Each term is for three years.





Implementation Plan

Themes	Projects	Initial actions	When	We know we're successful when
High quality employment growth in urban areas	Programs and pathways that allow the community to make their own decisions about their employment future.	Mayoral Taskforce for Jobs – The Tuia Program supporting young Māori leadership.	Short term	Tuia Program successfully delivered annually. Increase in Māori Employment (Stats NZ).
		Work with mana whenua/iwi and Joint Management Agreement Partners to understand where we can incorporate a Māori world view in our activities.		
		Coordinate discussions between mana whenua/iwi, aged support organisations and businesses and industry sectors to develop programs that recognise and utilise the skills and capabilities of our older population.	Medium term	Appropriately skilled local talent is available to fill local jobs. (Stats NZ)
	Social procurement that encourages local employment.	Coordinate discussions between key industry sectors, local business chambers, schools and universities, skills providers and support services to identify skill gaps and training needs, aligning training with industry requirements ensuring a pipeline of skilled, work-ready people are available to fill higher valued jobs.	Short term	Skill gaps identified in key industry sectors and training programs developed to meet the need. Appropriately skilled local talent is available to fill local jobs (Stats NZ). Secondary Schools Employment Program delivered locally.
		Encourage other anchor institutions and employers to adopt social procurement measures that encourage local employment.	Short term	District employment numbers. (Stats NZ)
High quality employment growth in urban areas	Masterplan high-growth areas in collaboration with mana whenua, stakeholders, and developers to enable co-investment in infrastructure.	Encourage Council to masterplan in high-growth areas.	Short term	There is strong demand for commercial/ industrial investment in high-growth areas
	Foster sustainability of new and existing businesses.	Facilitating discussions with mana whenua, business chambers, and stakeholders investigating the need for and ways to support working labs/micro business startups.	Short term	10 percent of new startups survive beyond two years. (MBIE stats)



Themes	Projects	Initial actions	When	We know we're successful when
Rural economic growth	Respond to and plan for climate change through the development of climate change policies and strategies.	Investigate with and learn from others to better understand the risks and opportunities of climate change on communities including our rural community. Develop and adopt a Climate Change Strategy.	Short term – commence discussions with our communities Short to medium term – develop draft Climate Change Strategy	Our communities are more informed about the effects of climate change and how their activities impact on the environment. Number of businesses adopting sustainability measures. Number of businesses reporting benefits from discussions/support. Waipā Climate Change Strategy adopted.
	Understand the impacts of changing land use on our economy.	Facilitate discussions with mana whenua/iwi, key stakeholders and key industry sectors to better understand food security and how we can ensure our community has access to sufficient food at all times. Work with mana whenua/iwi and the rural sector to understand the effects of carbon farming and increasing horticulture on the agricultural industry and how to best manage the change. This includes defining 'no-go' areas for certain types of land use to manage reverse sensitivity issues and to help manage effects that are impacting farming operations. Investigate and facilitate opportunities for research into new crops and land use opportunities as a result of climate change. Map major rural activity sites in Ahu Ake - Waipā Spatial Plan and historic locations of Mahinga kai/food cultivation (where available) to inform decisions about reverse sensitivity.	Short term – commence discussions Short term – commence mapping	We are more informed about food security in our district and the impacts of changing land use on it. Mahinga kai/food cultivation is recognised as an essential component of food security for future generations. The impacts of changing land use are understood and inform the District Plan review. Mapping of rural activity sites in Ahu Ake and Mahinga kai/food cultivation commences.



Themes	Projects	Initial actions	When	We know we're successful when
Rural economic growth	Work with our primary sector to develop a Rural Economic Strategy.	Initiate discussions with primary industry sector stakeholders to better understand their changing business environment and to understand what Council's role could be in assisting them. Work with mana whenua/iwi, anchor institutions and business/industry to understand the impacts that may be on the environment from rural business activities, how they can be minimised and managed, and encourage the introduction/use of more sustainable business practices. Using this information, develop a Rural Economic Strategy.	Medium term Medium term	Communities have a better understanding of the effects of their business operations on the environment and know what steps to take to mitigate these effects. Number of regenerative farming initiatives hosted in Waipā. Draft Rural Economic Strategy developed and adopted.
	Protect highly productive land	Ensure changes in land use are monitored in accordance with the provisions of the District Plan, using the plan to proactively manage reverse sensitivity constraints. Align terminology in the District Plan to the National Policy Statement – Highly Productive Land.	Medium term	Highly productive land is available to meet production needs. District Plan review reflects changes.
Tourism, destination and culture	Progress Te Ara Wai	Contribute towards discussions with mana whenua/iwi and stakeholders to explore potential ownership models and funding options.	Short, medium term	Revised project plan adopted, and potential funding model and partnership agreed.
	Work with other infrastructure providers and our partners to advocate on behalf of our community to deliver new infrastructure where it is needed and to encourage improvements in existing infrastructure.	Contribute, as appropriate to plans and strategies including: - Local Water Done Well – provision of water infrastructure - Waikato Regional Public Transport Plan 2022 – 2032 and Waipā Transport Strategy actions underway - Future Proof Waikato - Waikato Housing Initiative.	Short, medium and long term	A connected community through appropriate provision of infrastructure with capacity to support growth.
	Carry out systematic reviews of our processes, systems, planning rules and policies to become more enabling for business.	District Plan review. Ongoing bylaw/policy reviews.	Short term Short, medium and long term	District Plan review is completed. Ongoing reviews completed.



Themes	Projects	Initial actions	When	We know we're successful when
Tourism, destination and culture	Placemaking – embed culture in our physical landscape to foster a 'sense of place and belonging' as well creating a physically unique location.	Align with Ahu Ake's urban design review.	Medium and long term	Waipā District has a unique physical landscape that showcases our cultural history and is expressed visibly through our rural villages and town landscapes. Planned capital and operational infrastructure projects include art and cultural elements in design and installation.
	Destination Marketing Plan	Working with mana whenua/iwi, Hamilton Waikato Tourism, businesses and industry, develop a Waipā Destination Marketing Plan to brand, promote and market our district as a premier tourist destination where unique experiences are found.	Medium term	Increased tourism numbers. (Hamilton Waikato Tourism Statistics)
	Waipā Property Strategy	Develop a strategy for the best use of and future development opportunities for Council lands that considers how they can catalyse redevelopment or improved community outcomes.	Medium term	Property Strategy drafted and adopted.
	Inter-regional collaboration to identify opportunities to grow our economic wellbeing.	Work in collaboration with sub-regional and regional local authorities and central government agencies e.g. Department of Conservation to leverage subregional opportunities in investment promotion, business engagement and development of narratives.	Short term	Work actively with Future Proof Waikato and contribute towards achievement of Future Proof Waikato vision and outcomes. Contribute to sub-regional alliance between Waipā, Waikato, Matamata-Piako and Hamilton Councils in leveraging opportunities in economic development.



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COMMITTEE REPORT



INFORMATION ONLY

To: The Chairperson and Members of the Growth, Strategy and Planning Committee

From: Karen Saunders, Programme Manager, Strategic Growth Management

Subject: **Housing Affordability in the Waikato – presentation by Wellbeing Waikato**

Meeting Date: 7 October 2026

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY – WHAKARĀPOPOTOTANGA MATUA

The purpose of this report is to support Elected Members to understand housing affordability challenges in the Waikato region and potential pathways to improve housing affordability.

Housing affordability, or rather unaffordability, is a significant determinant of wellbeing. It is a topic Elected Members discussed on 13 May 2026 when developing growth principles, recognising that people need to be at the heart of growth.

At the committee meeting, Harvey Brookes, Executive Director of Wellbeing Waikato, will be presenting the findings of recent research that provides evidence about the cost of housing in the Waikato region, explores what it would take for housing in the region to be affordable, and sets out six actions that will be presented and discussed at the meeting.

The presentation also provides an opportunity to consider housing affordability as a key matter through the Growth Strategy refresh and to inform relevant actions through the Strategic Growth Management Programme and other Council work programmes over time.

2 RECOMMENDATION – TŪTOHU Ā-KAIMAHI

That the Growth, Strategy and Planning Committee receives the report Karen Saunders, Programme Manager Strategic Growth Management titled Housing Affordability in the Waikato – presentation by Wellbeing Waikato [ECM 11776495].

3 COMMENTARY - KŌRERO

Housing affordability, or more correctly its unaffordability, is a significant determinant of wellbeing. Many cities and communities are grappling with house prices (to rent or to own) which are now significantly out of proportion with incomes.

Unaffordable and unavailable housing creates a cascading series of other challenges, from less money for other household needs, especially food, to insecure housing and ultimately severe housing deprivation and even homelessness.

Waipā District Council has long recognised the challenges presented by housing unaffordability. Ahu Ake, the Waipā Community Spatial Plan, describes a desired future where:

“Housing meets our needs and is affordable.

Housing meets all residents’ needs, especially those of youth and older adults, in a way that is integrated, affordable, accessible, and multi-generational. People do not have to move away because they cannot access the right type of housing in their community.

Different housing types are integrated and mixed to create diverse communities. Senior living community villages have been well integrated into the main urban areas, and our towns are composed of multi-generational neighbourhoods.

Māori housing enables Mana Whenua to return home to the Waipā district. Council works with Mana Whenua and Iwi to facilitate small- and large-scale Māori housing developments including papakāinga on and off Māori land in both rural and urban areas throughout the district”.

More recently, Elected Members have approved growth principles on 24 June 2026. The first of these is “*people at the heart of growth*” so that, as Waipā grows, decisions about where, when, and how growth happens will support people and communities thrive and align with the long-term vision for Waipā’s towns, villages and rural areas.

The draft principles also refer to Council’s role in enabling the market to deliver homes, and housing choice, by providing clear and consistent signals about where growth is expected, and openly managing trade-offs between affordability, infrastructure investment, quality of place, levels of service, environmental outcomes and risk in decision making.

Housing affordability is a complex issue influenced by a range of market, regulatory, infrastructure, funding and community factors. While no single intervention will address the challenge, the Waipā District Growth Strategy refresh provides an opportunity to consider the role growth management can play alongside other Council, partner and government initiatives in supporting more affordable housing outcomes.

In the Waikato region, collective leadership groups such as the Waikato Housing Initiative and the Waikato Housing Forum have been working address housing affordability. Wellbeing Waikato (and its predecessor the Waikato Wellbeing Project) has played an important information and data brokering role in these forums, making sure that decision makers and funders have access to timely accurate data.

Successive governments and councils have made ongoing efforts to address housing affordability. There are examples of these interventions working (for example in Auckland and Christchurch) and the government's [Going for Housing Growth](#) and RMA reform programmes should make a positive difference but will take time.

However, the current evidence for the Waikato region paints a continuing situation of unaffordability and exclusion, even for households earning solid incomes. [Wellbeing Waikato](#) therefore undertook research in 2025 to better understand the state of housing in the region, the causes of unaffordability and what might make a difference in the future. The result is [Hiding in Plain Sight: the real cost of housing in Waikato](#), prepared within support from FutureProof, the Waikato Housing Initiative and Kāinga Ora.

The report reveals that, while the Waikato has long been a place where families could build better lives, rising house prices and stagnant incomes are stretching households to breaking point. With a price-to-income ratio of **6.4:1**, saving for a deposit now takes on average **13 years** - and could blow out to **28 years** within two decades if nothing changes.

The report lays out the data behind the crisis and highlights why collective action is urgently needed to ensure housing in the Waikato is affordable, equitable, and sustainable for generations to come.

Wellbeing Waikato commissioned further research in late 2025 to identify practical and commercially feasible actions to support housing affordability. The result is the [Housing Affordability Challenge Summary Report](#).

It identifies practical and commercially feasible pathways for delivering affordable rental and ownership housing to middle-income households (earning \$60,000–\$150,000 annually) in the Waikato region.

The report identified three areas where change could make the greatest difference:

- simplifying the regulatory process
- making it easier to deliver smaller, more affordable homes
- shifting market demand and buyer preferences towards smaller new builds.

Building on these focus areas, six potential actions were developed and presented to the Future Proof Committee in June 2026. These focus areas and actions form the basis of Wellbeing Waikato's presentation being provided to the Growth, Strategy and Planning Committee.

Further information about Wellbeing Waikato and its work is provided in the briefing paper attached as **Appendix 1**. The presentation for the meeting is attached in **Appendix 2**.

4 APPENDICES - ĀPITITANGA

No:	Appendix Title
1	Housing Affordability Briefing Paper to Waipā District Council, Wellbeing Waikato (ECM 11778607)
2	Housing Affordability Presentation to Waipā District Council, Wellbeing Waikato (ECM 11781645)



Karen Saunders

PROGRAMME MANAGER – STRATEGIC GROWTH MANAGEMENT



Approved by Katie Mayes

DIRECTOR GROWTH, STRATEGY AND PLANNING

APPENDIX 1

Housing Affordability Briefing Paper to Waipā District Council - Wellbeing Waikato (ECM 11778607)

Wellbeing Waikato- Briefing to Waipa District Council.

September 2026

1. Introduction

Wellbeing Waikato is an independent Charitable Trust established in February 2026. It continues the work of the Waikato Wellbeing Project, which was established in 2019 by the WEL Energy Trust and Waikato Regional Council. The Trust is governed by three Trustees, Delwyn Abraham (Chair), Mike Rolton and Don Scarlet, with scope for another 4 to be appointed. The purposes of Wellbeing Waikato are:

- To promote and benefit the general health and wellbeing of the Waikato community, through research, knowledge sharing, storytelling and advocacy which aims to uncover the root causes of Waikato region's wellbeing challenges;
- The relief of poverty and its causes, through the undertaking and publishing of research and reports on wellbeing, including but not limited to youth wellbeing, health, housing, access to food, energy security and social equity;
- The advancement of social and community welfare;
- The advancement of education and learning;
- To provide and facilitate community workshops, events, resources and forums for public dialogue in relation to wellbeing, for the benefit of the Waikato community, and to enhance social cohesion;
- The support of other charitable organisations which further the above purposes;

Vision: Our Mokopuna are thriving.

Mission: To hear our people and transform their lives through positive impact.

2. The Role of Affordability

Our distinctive contribution lies in high-quality primary research, deep engagement with lived experience, and rigorous synthesis across silos. We identify system pressures, clarify trade-offs, and translate insight into decision-relevant framing for those who hold authority and resources. Our State of the Region reports provide an integrated picture of wellbeing in the region. Our most recent report can be seen [here](#).

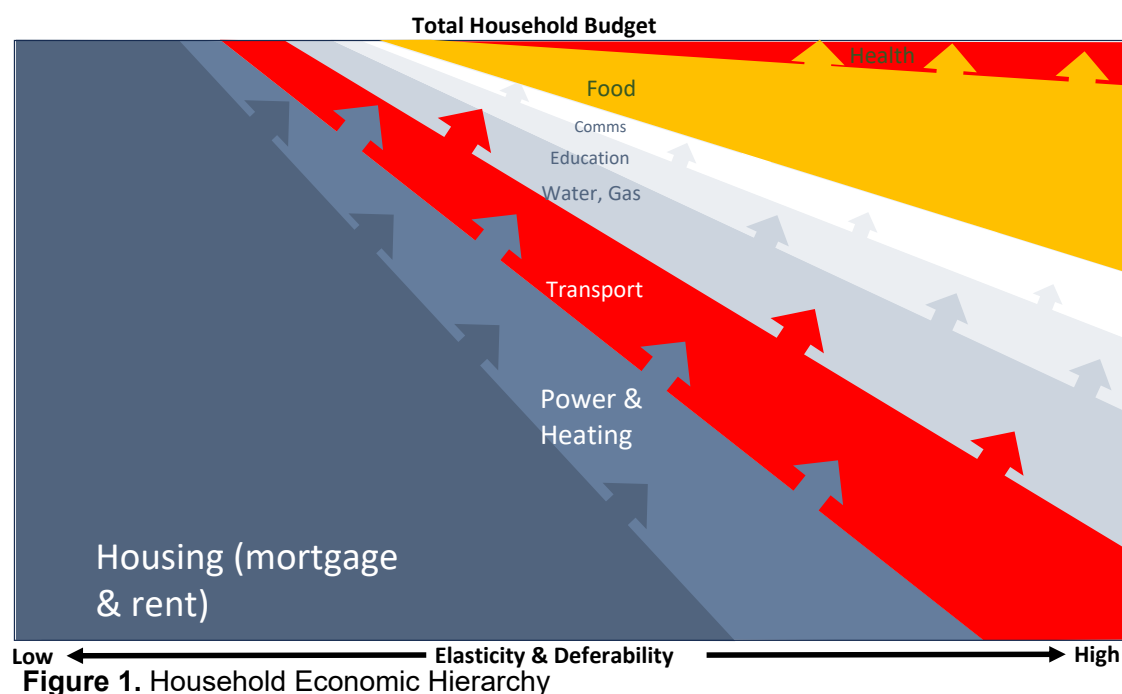
Our research and storytelling programmes have, over the past 5 years, consistently identified the importance of the affordability of household essentials for wellbeing and prosperity- such as **affordable housing, food and in 2026, energy**. The paradox of these, and other, foundational elements of wellbeing being so abundant in the Waikato and yet unaffordable and scarce, deserves greater attention to understand why this is, and what can be done to improve affordability and security for households.



Antecedent conditions, life course stages, social, economic and cultural factors and structural inequities all affect affordability. Differences in income have a fundamental role, as was shown in our [Want Amongst Plenty](#) report on food security in the Waikato. Differences

in household income along with the number of dependents in a home have a major influence on the adequacy of income for people and families.

Our work shows that **housing affordability** is a major force multiplier issue for improving not only housing outcomes, but overall prosperity and wellbeing in the Waikato. We have developed a simple household budget schematic (**Figure 1**) of how affordability, especially of housing, drives other aspects of wellbeing and prosperity¹.



The schematic illustrates a total household budget and shows how price increases for household budget items with low demand elasticity squeezes the budget available for more elastic/deferable items. In the above model, increasing housing costs (mortgage, rent and insurance) mostly cannot be deferred. At the other end of the budget, health costs, especially preventative and chronic health issues, are much more deferrable and elastic. Put simply, fixing a toothache can be deferred, good food can be substituted for cheap takeaways, but paying the rent can do neither.

The more housing costs encroach into the household budget, the less capacity there is for food and health costs. This leads to food insecurity, with even middle-income people and families accessing food support via charities and government services. Food insecurity and substitutions further exacerbate chronic health challenges in the longer term.

3. Housing Affordability in the Waikato

Since 2020 we have partnered with many organisations, including the Waikato Housing Initiative (WHI) and Futureproof to help better understand the state of housing in the region, the causes of unaffordability and what might make a difference in the future. This includes developing an integrated housing [dashboard](#) and an updated regional housing [stocktake](#), which has shown a persistent shortfall in the gross number of houses, relative to the population growth.

¹ Transport is coloured red due to the current high oil prices.

In 2025, we released a [report](#) which updated information on the state of housing affordability in the region. The report aggregated data on the relationship between household incomes and house prices and explored the impacts of these on the ability of people to enter the housing market. **Figures 2 and 3** show two major conclusions from the report.

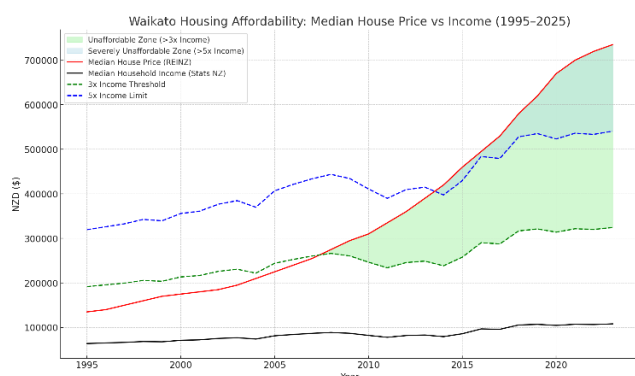


Figure 2. Waikato Housing Affordability 1995-2025

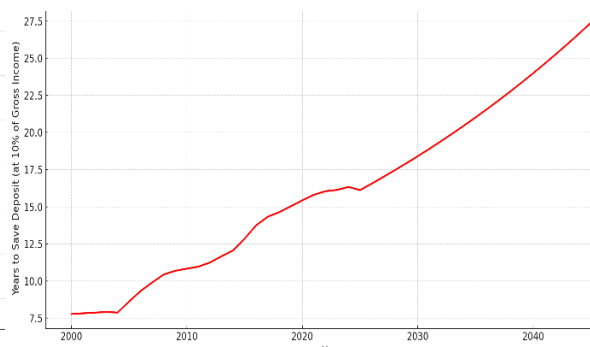


Figure 3. Years to Save a 20% Deposit, Hamilton

Figure 2 shows, since 1995 the ratio between median household incomes and median house prices, using the internationally accepted benchmark of 3 and 5. Before about 2008, the ratio was less than 3 ('affordable'), and it was less than 5 ('seriously unaffordable') until about 2014. The ratio for the Waikato region is currently 6.2 (down from 7.6 in 2022)², a level which Demographia defines as 'severely unaffordable'.³⁴ **Figure 3** estimates how long it would take to save a 20% deposit for an existing home in Hamilton, using a savings rate of 10% of gross median income. The time required could stretch from about 16 years today to 21 years by 2035 and over 28 years by 2045, assuming house prices continue to grow at 7% annually and incomes at 4.2%⁵. Such discouraging timeframes will have ongoing effects on social mobility and cohesion.

More recently, wider economic conditions have seen a modest improvement in housing affordability across New Zealand. This is due to rising interest rates, lower immigration, more new homes being constructed and welcome period of correction since the rapid rises in house prices and rents in 2021-2023. Data from Dot Loves Data for June 2026 shows a mixed picture:

- **Median Sale Price:** the median sale price in Waipa District is \$820,000, which has increased by 2.5% since March 2026.
- **Purchasing Affordability** (% of income spent on mortgage): the purchasing affordability in Waipa District is 32%, which has increased by 2.5% since March 2026.
- **Years to Save for Deposit:** the number of years to save for a deposit in Waipa District is 9.7, which has increased by 2.7% since March 2026.
- **Home Ownership Rate** (% of individuals who own their home): the home ownership rate in Waipa District is 48%, which has increased by 7.4% since March 2018.
- **Median Rent Price:** the median weekly rent price in Waipa District is \$602, which has increased by 0.53% since March 2026.
- **Rental Affordability:** in Waipa District is 27%, which has increased by 0.53% since March 2026.

² [Regional Economic Profile | Waikato Region | Housing Affordability](#)

³ [Demographia International Housing Affordability, 2025 Edition](#)

⁴ These ratios vary significantly across the region by district and within districts.

⁵ These are the 40-year real rates as report by official sources.

The Dot Loves Data database also profiles the sub-district variations (at SA2 level) which sit below these aggregate figures- demonstrating why case is needed when applying averages at the district level. For example in relation to rental affordability in Waipa, Cambridge Central was the least affordable place to rent, with rents taking up 46% of income as of June 2026 (affordable is defined as 30% or less). Rotongata was the most affordable, with rents taking up only 6.2% of income. Examples include:

Community	% of Household Income	% Change since March '26
Cambridge Central	46%	+0.53%
Leamington West	40%	+0.08%
Goodfellow Park	36%	-0.63%
Te Awamutu Central	36%	-2.4%
Sherwin Park	36%	-0.73%

Recent research by The Salvation Army⁶ has focused on the overall housing system, especially as it is experienced by those in the lower quartile of incomes. The report highlights a growing disconnect between increased housing supply and the lived reality of many lower income households.

While overall housing stock has materially expanded, only a small percentage of the homes created are affordable. Housing stress is shifting and intensifying in regional communities, where demographic change, affordability pressures, overcrowding, and insecure tenancies remain persistent. The report also identified of ex-urban gentrification, with higher-income and retiree households from Auckland displace lower-income renters in smaller rural settlements, reducing the availability of affordable housing⁷. This dynamic may play out in Waipā district towns, where rising demand and greater buying power of new residents may see previous rental properties being removal from the overall stock of affordable homes.

4. What Would it Take to Achieve Affordability?

In 2025 we worked with Futureproof, the WHI and Kainga Ora to identify practical and commercially feasible pathways for delivering affordable rental and ownership housing to middle-income households (earning \$60,000–\$150,000 annually) in the Waikato region. This income bracket represents households which, using standard affordability metrics, should be able to rent or own an adequate home without undue financial stress or trade-offs as per Figure 1. This work was co-commissioned by Wellbeing Waikato in partnership with FutureProof. Veros Limited were selected to undertake the work. Their work can be viewed at our website here: [Kāinga | Waikato Wellbeing Project](#), along with the recording of a webinar in May 2026.

Veros Ltd were asked to develop practicable, implementable options which the relevant agencies and housing organisations in the Waikato could make happen. Veros engaged with a wide range of stakeholders across central and local government, housing developers, iwi, community organisations, banking and funders. They also interviewed prospective first time home buyers.

⁶ [TSA HomeTruths Aug2026 v2.pdf](#)

⁷ In this dynamic, cashed up urban buyers acquire existing lower quality stock and renovate, rather than buying new, leaving them with retirement cash.

Wider legislative and policy actions being undertaken by central government were assumed to happen and make a positive difference⁸. This is important as the first-best options for improved housing affordability are more competitive land markets and better approaches to infrastructure funding and financing. This still leaves considerable room for other finer scaled improvement actions at the regional and sub-regional level.

The headline conclusions from the stakeholder feedback and analysis were:

1. Delivering Affordable Homes is like ‘Death by a Thousand Cuts’ - The development process is long, uncertain, costly and risky. Processes add time, increase risk, and drive up costs, ultimately reducing supply and worsening the affordability challenge.

Action: Simplify the regulatory process.

2. Affordability Means Building Smaller, Smarter Homes. Reducing the per square metre cost of house construction is extremely difficult. There are significant wage growth pressures, material costs remain high due to reliance on imports, business expenses continue to rise, and complex processes add layers of cost and risk. The current default to large high-spec houses makes this worse.

Action: Make it easy to build smaller.

3. Buyer Mindset + Market Demand Matter. Financial literacy and confidence in off-the-plan purchases will create the real demand developers need from lenders to deliver smaller, more affordable homes.

Action: Shift mindsets and create demand for smaller new builds.

From these, a set of 6 actions have been proposed and these were presented to the Futureproof Implementation Committee in June 2026. These will be presented and discussed at the workshop. It should be noted that the results of this work operate at the aggregate/average level, and there are notable positive exceptions to the patterns described. In Waipa district for example, with work of Bridge Housing stands out as an excellent alternative to the BAU housing system, helping to make homes more affordable and available to moderate income people and families.

⁸ For example, Going for Housing Growth and RMA reform

APPENDIX 2

Housing Affordability Presentation to Waipā District Council, Wellbeing Waikato
(ECM 11781645)

Affordable Housing in the Waikato

Harvey Brookes
Wellbeing Waikato



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Harvey Brookes
Executive Director
Wellbeing Waikato

Wellbeing Waikato

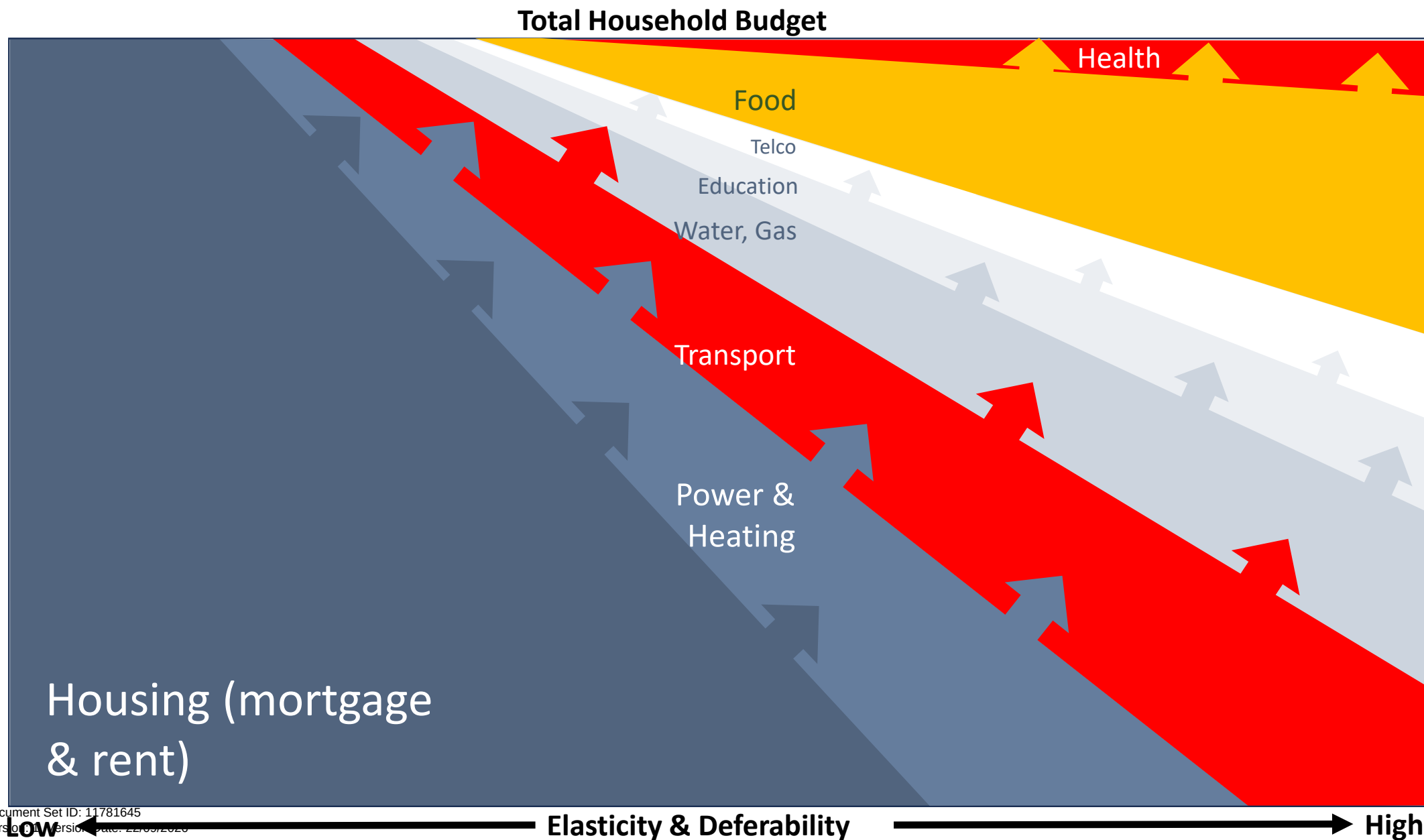


Independent Charitable Trust focused on:

- Regional intelligence about what's most important to households and whanau
- Identifying emerging risks early
- Surfacing underlying drivers, not just symptoms
- Convening government, iwi, councils, community organisations and the private sector around decision-useful insights.



Document Set ID: 11781645
Version: 1, Version Date: 22/09/2026



Housing Affordability- Futureproof

Sources: Infometrics, Waikato Wellbeing Project, Dot Loves Data, WHI

Benchmarks

Price: Income Ratio: 3-5
Mortgage/Income : 30%
Rent/Income: 30%
Years to Save Deposit: 6-10
DTI: 6-7

Waikato Region

Price: Income Ratio: 6.2
Mortgage/Income : 37%
Rent/Income: 23%
Years to Save Deposit: 8.0
DTI: 6.2

Waipa District

Price: Income Ratio: 6.9
Mortgage/Income : 32%
Rent/Income: 27%
Years to Save Deposit: 9.5
DTI: 7.0

MPDC

Price: Income Ratio: 7.3
Mortgage/Income : 34%
Rent/Income: 29%
Years to Save Deposit: 10.4
DTI: 7.0

Waikato District

Price: Income Ratio: 6.1
Mortgage/Income : 28%
Rent/Income: 24%
Years to Save Deposit: 7.9
DTI: 6.0

Hamilton City

Price: Income Ratio: 6.9
Mortgage/Income : 37%
Rent/Income: 24%
Years to Save Deposit: 9.2
DTI: 6.5



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Varies Within Districts



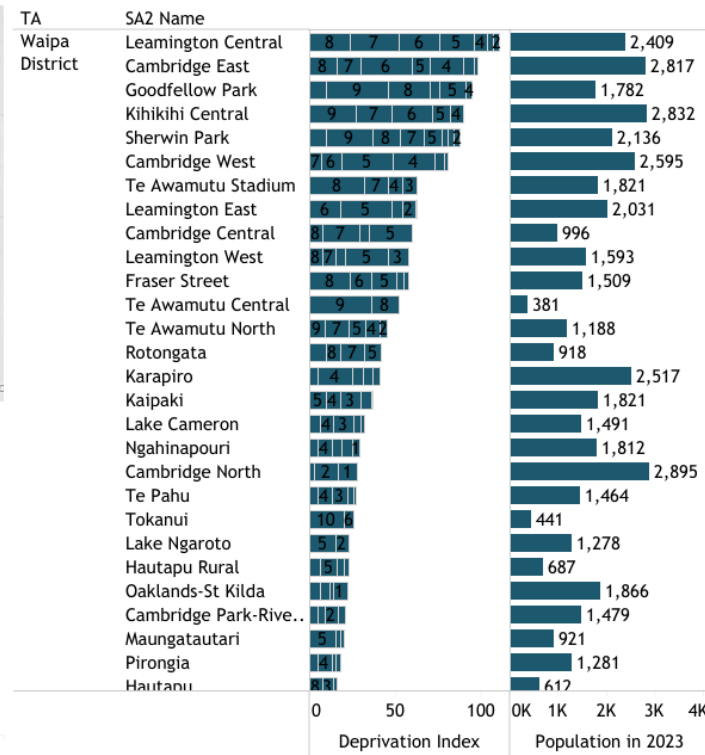
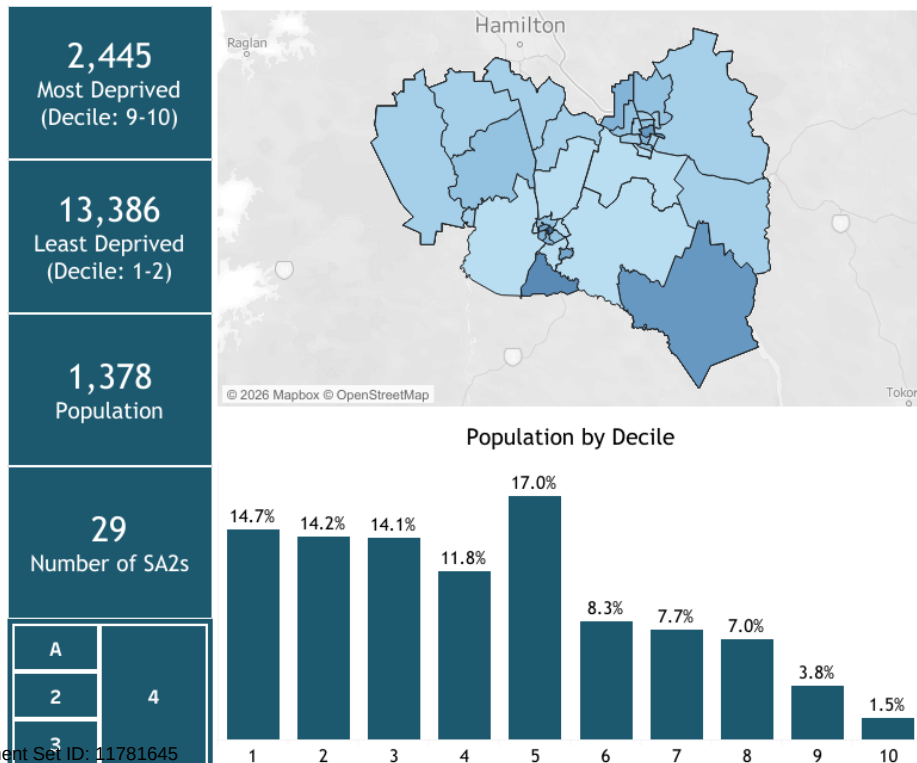
Socioeconomic Deprivation Index Census 2023

Frequency: 5 years
Data Availability (Source):
Jun 2023



Area
Waipa District

Waipa District



“The median income is not really representative of anybody.”

Alain Bertaud
Auckland Conversations
March 2026

A High Price : Income Ratio = Long Deposit Saving Time

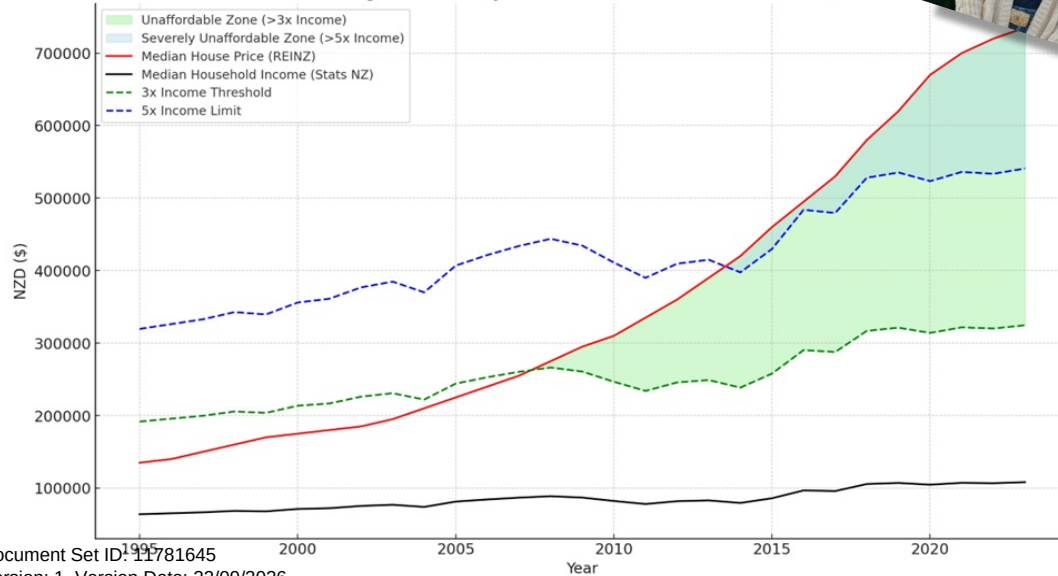


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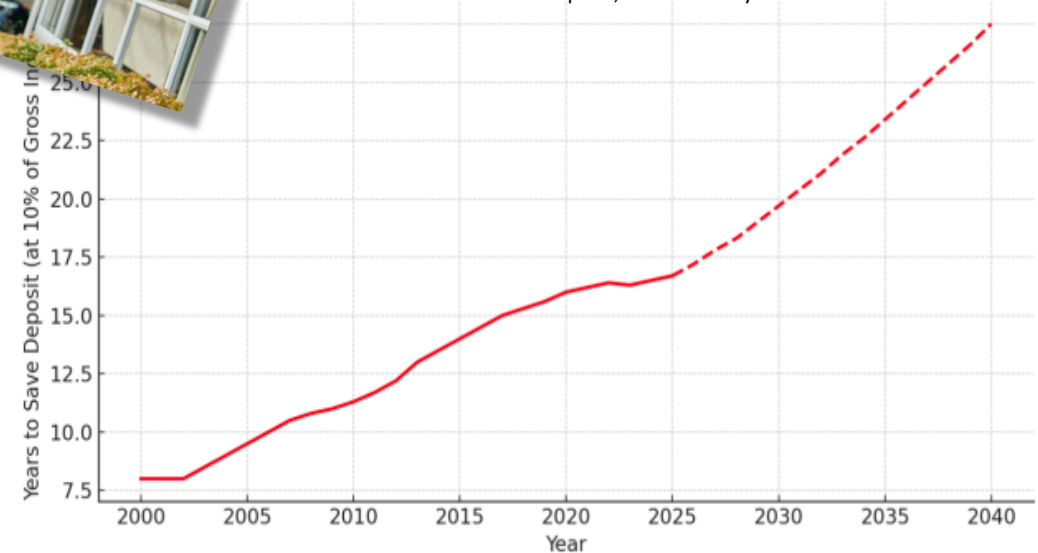
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Waikato Housing Affordability: Median House Price vs Income (1995-2025)



Years to Save a 20% Deposit, Hamilton City



What Would it Take to Make Housing More Affordable?



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In November 2025, there
were around 3,200 houses
for sale in the Waikato

Only seven listings priced
under \$550,000 -0.2% of all
listings.

What we focused on

Everyone's working on this problem – nationally and globally.

We don't have all the answers – no one does.

We focused on: what we can control, short to medium term impact

- 1. Market housing** – Because these are the hard working kiwis who cant get ahead.
- 2. New homes** – Because saving for the deposit is the biggest barrier to ownership.
- 3. Interventions that relate to everyone** – From the biggest developers to “Bob and Betty”
- 4. What is actionable within the Waikato Region** in the short to medium term

How we did it

We met with:

- Developers
- Group Builders
- Councils
- Valuers
- Banks
- First home buyers
- Land development professionals



Raw stakeholder feedback

“Urban designers process / reviews / panels add cost, time and uncertainty”

“The banks lending criteria is too tight and risk appetite too low (% margin needed, contingency, presales, take out etc)”

“Red tape up the wazoo”

“House is seen as asset and not shelter”

“Whenever we look to deliver small, smart and affordable product – it hasn’t been very well taken up by the market.”

“Saving a deposit is the hardest thing”

“It’s not the planners, it’s the asset managers that have no flexibility. We can’t even change the colour of concrete.”

“It is not really viable to deliver new market housing in places like Tokoroa, Huntly, Te Kuiti”

“There are too many consultants. They only care about getting paid. They’re not outcomes focussed. They don’t have skin in the game.”

“We rely on global sourced materials and an very un-integrated supply chain which adds cost and time”

Pockets of impressive success

- Bridge Housing Trust
- Living Systems
- Industry Collaboration across the Housing System
- Hamilton City Council
- Kainga Ora
- Habitat
- Trust Waikato
- And many more



**WAIKATO
HOUSING
INITIATIVE**



**bridge
housing**
CHARITABLE TRUST



waikato
community
lands trust

LAND
FOR
LIFE

Three Key Focus Areas

1

Delivering Affordable Homes is like ‘Death by a Thousand Cuts’

Simplify the regulatory process

Influence the Supply

- The development process is long, uncertain, and costly.
- It increases risk, drives up costs, ultimately reducing supply and worsening the affordability challenge.
- Every participant involved in the process feels the impact

Three Key Focus Areas

2

Affordability Means Building Smaller, Smarter Homes

Make it easy to build smaller

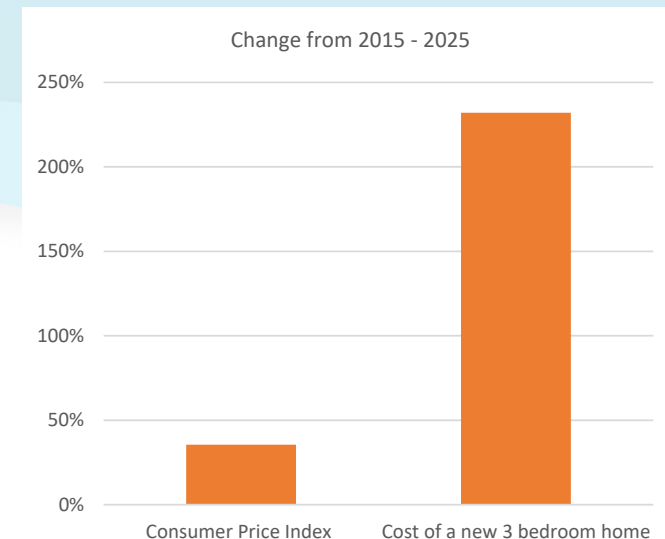
Influence the what is being delivered

- Over the past decade, the cost of a new home has increased dramatically.
- Reducing prices is extremely difficult.
- To deliver cheaper homes, we need to build more smaller homes.



2015: \$350,000

2025: \$815,000 - a 130% increase in 10 years



Three Key Focus Areas

3 Buyer Mindset & Market Demand Matter

Shift mindsets and create
demand for smaller new homes

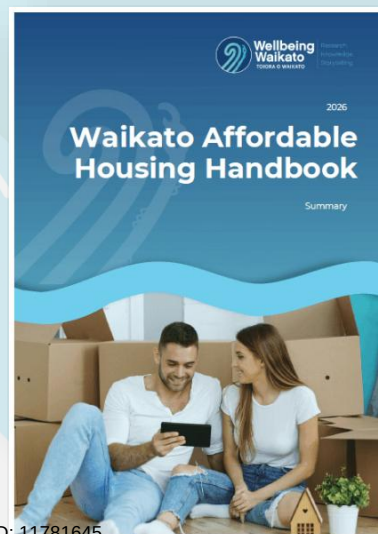
Influence the Demand

- **Part of the solution sits with the buyers choice and education. We need a willingness to embrace affordable, smaller, smarter.**
- **People need to want new homes and importantly understand how to buy them. Financial literacy and confidence in off-the-plan purchases will create the real demand developers need.**

Six Responses

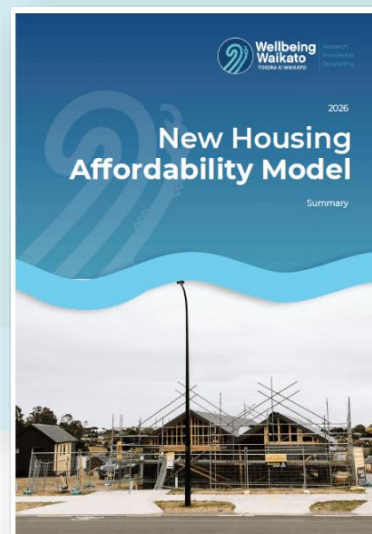
Affordable Housing Handbook

A non-technical guide providing Waikato-specific context on housing affordability and practical advice for anyone involved in shaping housing and land-use decisions.



New Housing Affordability Model

An interactive tool that uses real development and construction costs and market values to estimate new housing prices and then compares these with local incomes to show what's truly affordable.



Local Government Alignment

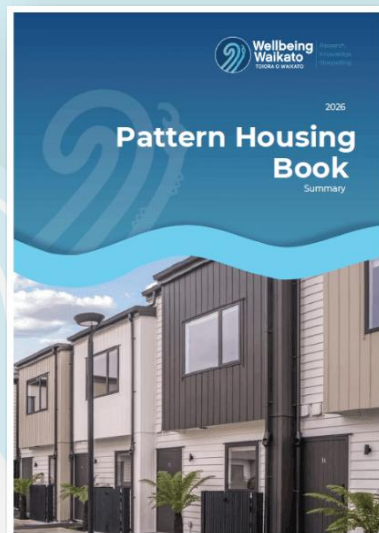
A shared commitment for more consistency, reduced complexity, and providing greater certainty. With Councils already partly aligned there is strong opportunity to streamline processes and improve affordability.



Six Responses

Pattern Housing Blueprint

Pre-approved plans that make it faster and cheaper to build good-quality affordable homes.



Waikato Housing Equity & Impact Fund

A long-term investment vehicle for community-minded funders to enable affordable homes that the market isn't providing enough of.



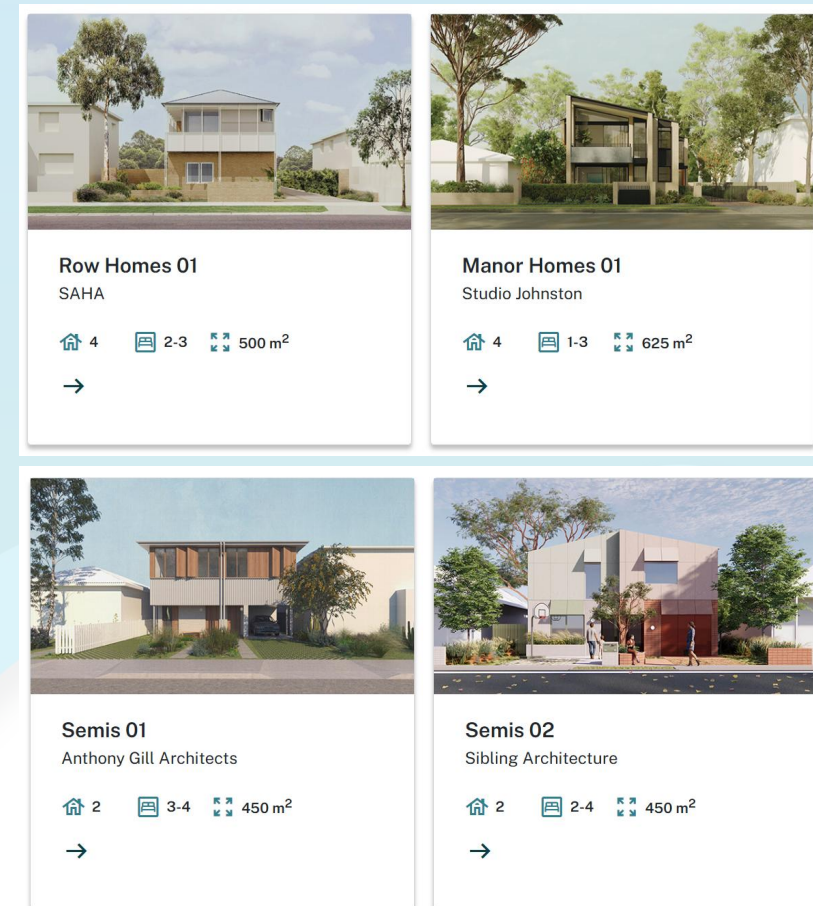
HouseMate Online Platform

A personalised platform that helps first-time buyers get on the ladder whilst supporting choosing smaller and more affordable homes.



Pattern Housing – Design once, build many

- **Pre-approved designs** and no or streamlined consenting. Reduce costs, increase certainty and speed.
- **Lower design and compliance** costs make architect-quality homes cheaper to deliver and more affordable.
- **Control and ensure quality through pre-approved designs.**
- **NSW and VIC have launched this** in less enabling regulatory environment than NZ.
- **Enable more people to deliver these outcomes.**



New Housing Affordability Model

Three-bedroom standalone in Matamata-Piako

Input Selector	
Location	Matamata Piako
Type of Home	Stand Alone
Number of Bedrooms	3
Multistorey Home	No
Garage	None
Second Bathroom/Ensuite	No
Extra Bedroom	No
Study/Office	No
Infill/Brownfield	Yes
Specification	Low
Land Size	Medium

Selected House and Land Value		
	Size	Value
Dwelling	85m ²	\$ 305,000
Land	189m ²	\$ 190,000
House & Land Value		\$ 495,000
Required Household Income		\$ 101,110
Matamata Pia Median Household Income		\$ 97,033

Four Bedroom standalone in Cambridge

Input Selector	
Location	Waipa
Type of Home	Stand Alone
Number of Bedrooms	4
Multistorey Home	No
Garage	Double
Second Bathroom/Ensuite	No
Extra Bedroom	No
Study/Office	No
Infill/Brownfield	Yes
Specification	Low
Land Size	Medium

Selected House and Land Value		
	Size	Value
Dwelling	138m ²	\$ 485,000
Land	307m ²	\$ 430,000
House & Land Value		\$ 915,000
Required Household Income		\$ 186,901
Waipa Median Household Income		\$ 106,053

Two-Bedroom Duplex in Hamilton

Input Selector	
Location	Hamilton City
Type of Home	Duplex
Number of Bedrooms	2
Multistorey Home	No
Garage	None
Second Bathroom/Ensuite	No
Extra Bedroom	No
Study/Office	No
Infill/Brownfield	Yes
Specification	Low
Land Size	Medium

Selected House and Land Value		
	Size	Value
Dwelling	65m ²	\$ 235,000
Land	137m ²	\$ 245,000
House & Land Value		\$ 480,000
Required Household Income		\$ 98,046
Hamilton City Median Household Income		\$ 102,657



Waikato Housing Equity & Impact Fund

- Invest directly in affordable projects where the private market is not providing.
- Leverage local capital for direct impact by pooling resources from councils, iwi, trusts, and investors to create scale and efficiency.
- An enduring perpetual fund, reinvesting returns to enable ongoing affordable housing development.
- Provide certainty by offering underwriting and financial backing to de-risk projects and attract additional investment.
- Enable, grow, support those wanting to take a step into this space, where the banks, the valuers, the buying off the plan holds them back.
- **This idea is not universally supported, but deserves proper investigation.**

"Can you help me create a fund that represents the voice of communities in small town New Zealand and measures success by beneficiary outcomes?"



**Bay of Plenty
Housing Equity Fund**

HouseMate Platform

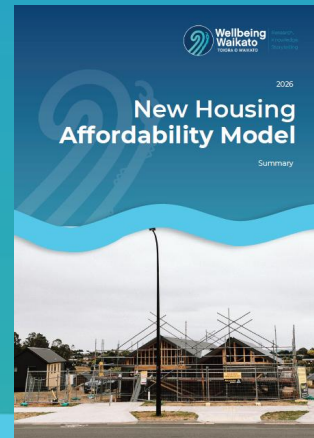
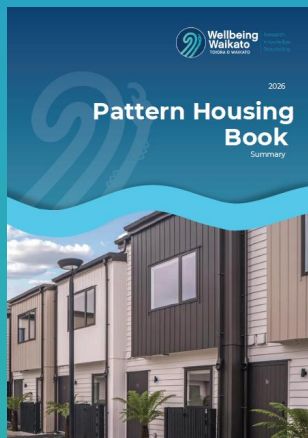
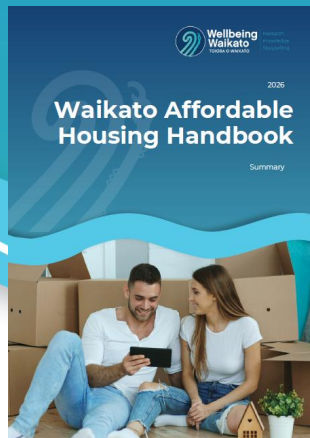
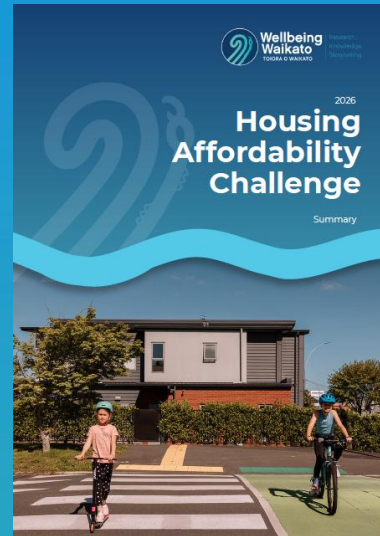
Built around four core principles:

1. Personalised guidance
2. Grounded in affordability with realistic scenarios, not generic advice
3. Full cost transparency – not just the purchase price
4. Trusted pathways and support

Concept Website:

<https://waikato-housing.replit.app/properties>

Online Now



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Thank you!

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COMMITTEE REPORT



INFORMATION ONLY

To: The Chairperson and Members of the Growth, Strategy and Planning Committee

From: Principal Sustainability and Climate Change Advisor

Subject: **Draft Climate Change Strategy Engagement Approach**

Meeting Date: 7 October 2026

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY – WHAKARĀPOPOTOTANGA MATUA

In April 2026, the Strategic Planning and Policy Committee approved the draft Climate Change Strategy and supporting information for public engagement. The timing of engagement was left open while broader recovery activities following recent weather events were considered.

Targeted community engagement on the draft strategy is planned during October and November 2026. Feedback received will be considered in finalising the strategy, which is intended to be presented to the Growth, Strategy and Planning Committee for consideration on 2 December 2026.

2 RECOMMENDATION – TŪTOHU Ā-KAIMAHI

That the Growth, Strategy and Planning Committee receives the report of Haven Walsh, Principal Sustainability and Climate Change Advisor, titled Draft Climate Change Strategy Engagement Approach [ECM 11781781].

3 COMMENTARY - KŌRERO

Background

The draft Climate Change Strategy sets out Council's proposed approach to responding to climate change. It has four goals:

- Understand and share climate risks and opportunities.
- Ensure the sustainability of Council services and assets.
- Work with the community to strengthen resilience.
- Reduce Council's emissions and support district-wide emissions reductions.

The draft strategy was developed using staff and elected member input, technical advice, previous community and mana whenua engagement, and findings from Council's organisational climate change risk assessment.

In April 2026, the Strategic Planning and Policy Committee approved the draft strategy, summary document and feedback form for public engagement. The timing was left open while broader recovery activities following the February weather event were considered.

Engagement approach

Engagement is planned during October and November 2026. Consistent with the approach previously approved by the Committee, this will be a targeted feedback process rather than a formal special consultative procedure.

The purpose is to check whether the overall direction of the draft strategy reflects community expectations and priorities. Engagement is expected to include:

- the draft strategy, summary document and feedback form being available through Council's Have Your Say platform;
- promotion through Council's communications channels; and
- targeted engagement with key stakeholders and mana whenua and iwi partners, where there is interest and capacity to participate. Opportunities for targeted youth engagement will also be explored.

A communications and engagement plan is being developed to guide the detailed approach, including relevant audiences, timing and engagement methods.

Feedback will be considered when finalising the Climate Change Strategy. The final strategy is intended to be presented to the Growth, Strategy and Planning Committee for consideration on 2 December 2026.



Haven Walsh

PRINCIPAL SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE ADVISOR



Approved by Katie Mayes

GROWTH, STRATEGY AND PLANNING DIRECTOR

COMMITTEE REPORT



INFORMATION ONLY

To: The Chairperson and Members of the Growth, Strategy and Planning Committee

From: Strategic Policy Advisor

Subject: **Growth, Strategy and Planning Committee 2026 – Work Programme Update**

Meeting Date: 7 October 2026

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY – WHAKARĀPOPOTOTANGA MATUA

The purpose of this report is to present, for information, the most up-to-date version of the Growth, Strategy and Planning (GS&P) Committee work programme for 2026.

2 RECOMMENDATION – TŪTOHU Ā-KAIMAHI

That the Growth, Strategy and Planning Committee receives the report of Daisy Wills, Strategic Policy Advisor, titled 'Growth, Strategy & Planning Committee – Work Programme Update [ECM number 11776488].

3 COMMENTARY - KŌRERO

The programme provides the Committee with an indication of upcoming items for the year ahead; however, it is a live document and not intended for monitoring purposes. As shown through the tracked changes, several updates have been made since the previous version, including changes to project timing, committee touchpoints, and programme descriptions. Further details on these are included below:

Anchor Institutions

This item was discussed at the August meeting. Recommendations A and B were approved; however, Recommendation C, seeking approval of the Anchor Institutions Implementation Plan, was deferred to the October meeting. This report brings back the Regional Economic Development Strategy for specific consideration, alongside a broader discussion on economic development. The implications of the HeadStart programme will also be considered to inform decisions on its future direction.

Cambridge Connections

Two weeks has been added to the current phase of the project to ensure Elected Members have sufficient time to provide guidance about the draft Transport Plan before it is released for public feedback. Additional meetings and workshops have been added to schedule to accommodate this change.

Climate Change

A report will be presented on 7 October to seek approval to undertake targeted engagement on the Draft Climate Change Strategy. Following this engagement, the Strategy is expected to be brought back to the 2 December meeting for approval. A separate update on the sustainability and climate change work programme will also be provided to the Committee on 2 December.

Easter Trading Policy

Work has been initiated following a request from the Mayor and Deputy Mayor to revisit whether Waipā should consult on adopting a policy. While this work was previously paused as part of the policy and bylaw programme because it did not align with organisational priorities at the time, resourcing is now available to progress it. A workshop has been tentatively scheduled to test Elected Member appetite for developing a policy, with any subsequent consultation subject to Council approval.

Gambling Policy

With the HeadStart decisions deferred, this review will be considered in the 2027/28 financial year, as resourcing is not currently available.

Growth Strategy

A workshop has been scheduled for 8 October to seek direction on the Growth Strategy Refresh content. This will replace the regular Strategic Growth Management Programme update. Councillors will be asked at the 8 October workshop whether they wish to proceed with a further workshop on 9 November on the draft Strategy, which is currently tentatively booked.

Reform

An initiative is currently being set up to manage and implement the changes to legislation, ensuring a coordinated approach and improving organisational readiness. A reporting framework is yet to be confirmed however this work will be introduced at the Growth, Strategy and Planning meeting on 7 October.

2027-37 LTP

Since the last update, the LTP work programme has been refined and remains subject to change as planning progresses. The current programme includes a Budgeting

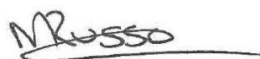
workshop on 22 October and a tentative Performance Management Framework workshop on 11 November. Approval of the Performance Management Framework has been deferred to the December meeting. Planning for November and December is still being developed and was not confirmed at the time of writing.

4 APPENDIX – ĀPITITANGA

No:	Appendix Title
1	GS&P 12-month Work Programme (ECM 11776484)



Daisy Wills
STRATEGIC POLICY ADVISOR



Reviewed/presented by Melissa Russo
MANAGER STRATEGY



Approved by Katie Mayes
GROWTH, STRATEGY AND PLANNING DIRECTOR

APPENDIX 1

GS&P 12-month Work Programme (ECM 11776484)

Strategic Planning and Policy Growth, Strategy and Planning Committee 2026 Work programme

All dates provided in this work programme are indicative only and based on current project planning. Timeframes are subject to change as projects progress, and some dates remain to be confirmed. Updates will be provided as more accurate information becomes available.

2026 Work programme – By Workstream

Workstream	Description	Date	Group
Affordable Housing	Workshop – Affordable housing in Waipā	7 October	Harvey Brookes – Wellbeing Waikato
Ahu Ake Implementation	<i>Ahu Ake will be implemented through multiple initiatives. In the short term, this includes reviewing the Growth Strategy and developing a Climate Change Strategy. Progress will be monitored over time by incorporating Ahu Ake into the Performance Management Framework as part of the 2027–37 Long Term Plan.</i>		
Anchor Institutions	Year end report on 25/26 implementation plan achievements; draft 26/27 implementation plan for approval Framework review	5 August <u>7 October</u>	Growth, Strategy and Planning
Cambridge Connections	<u>Workshop – Draft Transport Plan</u>	<u>7 October</u>	<u>Growth, Strategy and Planning</u>
	<u>*Receive and approve draft plan for consultation</u>	<u>7</u> 22 October	Growth, Strategy and Planning
	<u>Workshop – Summary of key themes, direction on actions to update draft Transport Plan</u>	<u>Mid November (TBC)</u>	<u>Growth, Strategy and Planning</u>
	Receive feedback and receive and approve final plan <u>Workshop – Amended Draft Transport Plan</u>	2 December	Growth, Strategy and Planning
	<u>*Receive and approve final Transport Plan</u>	<u>16 December</u>	<u>Growth, Strategy and Planning</u>

* Indicates an Elected Member touchpoint (where known). These items are not intended for consideration by the SP&P Committee and may instead be reported to Council or another committee. They have been included for visibility and to provide context for related decision points and milestones.

Workstream	Description	Date	Group
Climate Change	<u>Draft Climate Change Strategy engagement</u>	<u>7 October</u>	<u>Sustainability and Climate Change</u>
	Sustainability and climate change work programme update	7 October <u>2 December</u>	Sustainability and Climate Change
	<u>Approval of Draft Climate Change Strategy</u>	<u>2 December</u>	<u>Sustainability and Climate Change</u>
Community Boards reporting	6 Monthly Report	7 October	Governance
<u>Easter Trading Policy</u>	<u>Workshop – Testing appetite to progress an Easter Sunday Trading Policy</u>	<u>8 October</u>	<u>Strategy</u>
	<u>*Approval of draft Policy for consultation</u>	<u>28 October</u>	<u>Strategy</u>
Fast-track Approvals	Applications update	7 October	District Plan & Growth
<u>Gambling Policy</u>	<u>Consider whether the Gambling Policy review will proceed in 2026. If confirmed, indicative steps may include approval for consultation, hearings and deliberations, and adoption. This will be considered in the 27/28 financial year as resourcing is currently not available.</u>	<u>TBC</u>	<u>Compliance</u>
Growth Strategy	<u>Workshop – Seeking direction on the Growth Strategy Refresh content</u>	<u>8 October</u>	<u>Strategic Growth Management</u>
	<u>*Workshop – Draft Strategy</u>	<u>9 November</u> TBC	Strategic Growth Management
	Approval of draft for consultation	2 December	Strategic Growth Management

* Indicates an Elected Member touchpoint (where known). These items are not intended for consideration by the SP&P Committee and may instead be reported to Council or another committee. They have been included for visibility and to provide context for related decision points and milestones.

Workstream	Description	Date	Group
Reform	<u>Legislative reform programme introduction</u>	<u>7 October</u>	<u>Strategy</u>
	<u>Resource Management reform</u>	<u>7 October</u>	<u>District Plan & Growth</u>
Strategic Growth Management Programme	<u>Programme update</u>	<u>7 October</u>	<u>Strategic Growth Management</u>
	Programme update	2 December	Strategic Growth Management
2027-37 Long Term Plan	<u>Approval of Levels of Service</u>	<u>7 October</u>	<u>Strategy</u>
	Project update	7 October	<u>Organisational Excellence</u> <u>Strategy</u>
	<u>Workshop – Performance Management Framework</u>	<u>8 October</u>	<u>Organisational Excellence</u>
	<u>Workshop – Present draft Infrastructure Strategy</u>	<u>8 October</u>	<u>Asset Management</u>
	<u>Workshop – Development Contributions Policy</u>	<u>8 October</u>	<u>Growth</u>
	<u>*Workshop – Fees and charges</u>	<u>22 October</u>	<u>Finance</u>
	*Workshop - Budget	22 October	Finance
	<u>Workshop – Performance Management Framework</u>	<u>11 November</u>	<u>Organisational Excellence</u>
	<u>Workshop – Present draft Infrastructure Strategy</u>	<u>11 November</u>	<u>Asset Management</u>
	<u>Workshop – Draft Significance and Engagement Policy</u>	<u>11 November</u>	<u>Strategy</u>

* Indicates an Elected Member touchpoint (where known). These items are not intended for consideration by the SP&P Committee and may instead be reported to Council or another committee. They have been included for visibility and to provide context for related decision points and milestones.

Workstream	Description	Date	Group
	Workshop – Transitional Development Contributions Policy and insights into development levies	11 November	Growth
	Workshop – Key issues for consultation	11 November	Communications and Engagement
	*Workshop – Budget	12 November	Finance
	Project update	2 December	Organisational Excellence Strategy
	*Workshop – Performance measures	December TBC	Organisational Excellence
	<u>Performance Management Framework approval</u>	<u>December TBC</u>	<u>Organisational Excellence</u>

* Indicates an Elected Member touchpoint (where known). These items are not intended for consideration by the SP&P Committee and may instead be reported to Council or another committee. They have been included for visibility and to provide context for related decision points and milestones.

2026 Work programme - By meeting/workshop date

Date	Description	Group
7 October	Committee meeting	
	SP&P work programme - Update	Strategy
	2027-37 Long Term Plan - Project update	Organisational Excellence
	2027-37 Long Term Plan – Approval of Levels of Service	Strategy
	Strategic Growth Management update (including Growth Strategy)	Strategic Growth Management
	Community Boards 6 Monthly Report	Governance
	Fast-track Approvals Act applications update	District Plan & Growth
	Cambridge Connections – Draft plan for consultation	Growth, Strategy and Planning
	Sustainability and climate change work programme update	Strategy
	Reform – Central government reform programme	Strategy
	Reform - Resource management reform	District Plan & Growth
	Anchor Institutions – Framework review	Growth, Strategy & Planning
	Affordable housing in Waipā	Harvey Brookes – Wellbeing Waikato
	Workshops	
	Affordable housing in Waipā	Harvey Brookes – Wellbeing Waikato
	Cambridge Connections – Draft Transport Plan	Growth, Strategy & Planning
8 October	Workshops	
	2027-37 Long Term Plan – Performance Management Framework	Organisational Excellence
	2027-37 Long Term Plan – Draft Infrastructure Strategy	Asset Management
	2027-37 Long Term Plan – Development Contributions Policy	Growth
	Easter Trading Policy – Testing appetite to progress an Easter Trading Policy	Strategy
	Growth Strategy – Seeking direction on the Growth Strategy Refresh content	Strategic Growth Management

Date	Description	Group
11 November	Workshops	
	2027-37 Long Term Plan – Present draft Infrastructure Strategy	Asset Management
	2027-37 Long Term Plan – Significance and Engagement Policy	Strategy
	2027-37 Long Term Plan – Transitional Development Contributions Policy and insights into development levies	Growth
	2027-37 Long Term Plan – Key issues for consultation	Communications and Engagement
	Growth Strategy – review of first draft	Strategic Growth Management
2 December	Committee meeting	
	SP&P work programme - Update	Strategy
	2027-37 Long Term Plan - Project update	Organisational Excellence Strategy
	Cambridge Connections – Present feedback and finalise plan	Growth, Strategy and Planning
	Strategic Growth Management update (including Growth Strategy)	Strategic Growth Management
	Growth Strategy – Approval of draft for consultation	Strategic Growth Management
	Reform – Resource Management reform update	District Plan & Growth
	Sustainability and climate change work programme update	Strategy
	Workshops	
	Cambridge Connections – Amended Draft Transport Plan	Growth, Strategy and Planning

COMMITTEE REPORT



INFORMATION ONLY

To: The Chairperson and Members of the Growth, Strategy and Planning Committee

From: Strategic Policy Advisor

Subject: **2027-37 Long Term Plan project update**

Meeting Date: 7 October 2026

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY – WHAKARĀPOPOTOTANGA MATUA

This report provides Elected Members with an update on progress of the 2027-37 Long Term Plan (LTP) project.

2 RECOMMENDATION – TŪTOHU Ā-KAIMAHI

That the Growth, Strategy and Planning Committee receives the report of Daisy Wills, Strategic Policy Advisor, titled '2027-37 Long Term Plan project update,' [ECM number 11776904].

3 COMMENTARY – KŌRERO

Project interactions with Elected Members

Since the last update to the Committee in August, there have been three LTP workshops with Elected Members.

The final Levels of Service (LOS) workshop was held on 12 August and resulted in seven proposed increases and seven proposed decreases progressing through to the budgeting process for further assessment.

The workshop on 13 August focussed on financial policy matters. Elected Member feedback confirmed that the Rates Remission Policy and Treasury Risk Management Policy are largely fit for purpose, with minor updates and refinements progressing. Discussion also covered the Development Contributions Policy and a review of funds and grants.

On 16 September, Elected Member guidance was sought to inform the development of the Property Strategy, the Infrastructure Strategy, and early community engagement for the LTP. Discussion on the Property Strategy was held in a public excluded setting.

We heard broad support for the direction of the Infrastructure Strategy, with a stronger focus needed on affordability, deliverability, value for money, intergenerational equity, and the risks associated with reliance on external infrastructure providers. We also heard that the strategy needs clearer links between growth, funding, resilience and LTP trade-offs.

For early community engagement, we heard support for meeting people where they already are, with simple explanations of how Council manages money, funds infrastructure and makes investment decisions. Elected Members emphasised reaching people who do not usually engage with Council, while continuing to work with groups we already engage with that provide useful feedback.

Staff have commenced the budgeting process for the LTP. The aim is to present budget information in a way that helps Elected Members identify what Council must fund, what it should fund, and what it could leave unfunded. Simple maps will also be prepared to show where projects are located.

Alongside this work, staff are preparing development activity maps to support growth investment decisions. These maps will help show where development is expected and where related investment may be needed.

The LTP Monthly Status report is attached to this report as Appendix 1. It provides:

- High-level project description and objectives
- The monthly project summary, including comparison against the previous months
- A summary of overall workstream status and key commentary for each workstream
- Upcoming key milestones and deliverables for the next month
- Measures of success for the project

Elected Member satisfaction

The next survey is scheduled to be sent to Elected Members in October to seek feedback on the project.

Milestones

Key milestones completed include:

- Workshops on Levels of Service, financial policies, Development Contributions Policy and funds and grants review – 12 and 13 August

- Workshop on Property Strategy, Infrastructure Strategy and early community engagement – 16 September

Key upcoming milestones:

- LTP budgeting workshop – 22 October

4 APPENDIX – ĀPITITANGA

No:	Appendix title
1	2027-37 Long Term Plan Monthly Status Report Aug 26 (ECM 11778503)



Authored by Daisy Wills
STRATEGIC POLICY ADVISOR



Presented by Gemma Brooks
LTP PROJECT LEAD



Approved by Katie Mayes
GROWTH, STRATEGY AND PLANNING DIRECTOR

APPENDIX 1

2027-37 Long Term Plan Monthly Status Report Aug 26 (ECM 11778503)

Monthly status report (full report for screen viewing)

2027-2037 LTP Project - Status Report

Project Objectives:

- 1) Deliver an LTP that complies with LGA requirements and receives an unqualified audit.
- 2) Give effect to Council's new strategic direction - focussing on: a) responsible financial management, b) well-planned communities, c) fostering partnerships, d) strengthening trust & confidence, and e) building community resilience, and our short term priorities - driving a lean organisation, managing the district's growth and broadening our funding base to reduce reliance on rates over time.
- 3) Deliver to agreed time, budget and scope specifications, while supporting an engaged project team with a sustainable workload.

Project Manager	Bridget Maclean / Gemma Brooks	Business Owners	Katie Mayes
Period Covered	Aug/Sept-26	Projected Date of Completion	Jul-27

Overall Project Status & Update				
	-1 Month	Current Month		
	At Risk	At Risk		
Good progress is being made across the LTP programme. The Levels of Service review is complete, with seven proposed increases and seven proposed decreases progressing to budgeting. Strategic Direction and Significant Forecasting Assumptions have been incorporated into the budgeting pack; Activity Management Plans and the Infrastructure Strategy are progressing; and a draft Audit Engagement Letter has been received, enabling planning for a progressive audit and assurance over key inputs. Finance is preparing budget guidance and drafting the Financial Strategy, while financial policies are moving through minor refinements. Early community, iwi and mana whenua engagement is being planned, supported by internal communications, and place-based capital programme planning is under way. The project timeline remains At Risk because October engagement dates are critical, and some work depends on legislative change and coordinated cross-organisational input.				
Monthly Summary				
Factor	-2 Months	-1 Month	Current Month	Commentary
Time	At Risk	At Risk	At Risk	Earlier delays have compressed delivery timeframes, particularly for funding proposals and Oct engagement.
Cost	On Track	On Track	On Track	The project remains on budget
Scope	At Risk	On Track	On Track	Workstream scope remains on-track with some reviews now scheduled for later in the project schedule
Issues	At Risk	At Risk	On Track	No material issues currently require escalation
Risks	At Risk	At Risk	At Risk	Timely delivery depends on coordinated staff input from across the organisation.

Workstream Summary					
Factor	Foundations	Finance	Activity Planning	Comms/Eng	Commentary
Time	On Track	On Track	At Risk	At Risk	Compressed funding proposals and community engagement dates at risk
Cost	On Track	On Track	On Track	On Track	
Scope	On Track	On Track	On Track	On Track	
Issues	On Track	On Track	On Track	On Track	
Risks	On Track	On Track	At Risk	On Track	Funding proposals being delivered

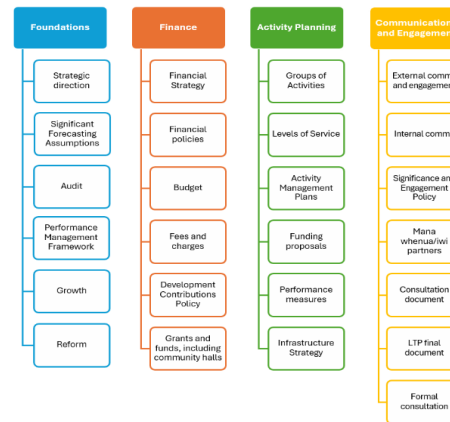
Workstream Commentary:		
On Track		At Risk
Foundations: Legislative change continues to be monitored. Strategic Direction and Significant Forecasting Assumptions are included in the budgeting pack, draft Performance Management Framework is out for staff feedback, and draft Audit Engagement Letter enables progressive-audit planning and assurance discussions. Activity Planning: The Levels of Service review is complete, with seven proposed increases and seven decreases moving to budgeting. Asset Management Plans are being updated after peer review, infrastructure challenges have been drafted, budget codes are mapped to the mandated groups-of-activities structure, and performance-measure review has begun. Finance: Financial Strategy drafting has started; a comprehensive opex and capex budgeting pack and wider staff guidance has been prepared; and the Rates Remission and Treasury Management policies require only minor refinements. Communications and Engagement: October early-engagement planning, iwi and mana whenua engagement, internal budget communications, and place-based capital programme planning are progressing.		Funding proposals are operating within a compressed delivery window following earlier project delays, creating a risk to timely completion and increasing reliance on coordinated input from managers and workstream teams. October community-engagement dates are critical so feedback can meaningfully inform LTP decisions. Further work on the mandated groups-of-activities structure depends on enactment of the Local Government (Systems Improvement) Bill, while progressive-audit arrangements and assurance over growth assumptions still need to be finalised. Capital-project information must also be consolidated by the end of September.

Milestone update			
Description	Planned Date	Actual Date	Status
Workshop - Finance Strategy, Revenue and Financing Policy and Introduction to Infrastructure Strategy	27/05/2026	27/05/2026	Complete
Approval of first draft of Significant Forecasting Assumptions	24/06/2026	24/06/2026	Complete
Workshop - Levels of Service pt 1	Late May	25/06/2026	Complete
Workshop - Levels of Service pt 2	Early June	2/07/2026	Complete
Workshop - Levels of Service pt 3	Mid-August	12/08/2026	Complete
Workshop - Financial policies, Development Contributions Policy and grants and funds, including community halls	13/08/2026	13/08/2026	Complete
Significance and Engagement Policy	August		Delayed
Workshop - Property Strategy, Infrastructure Strategy and community engagement	16/09/2026	16/09/2026	Complete

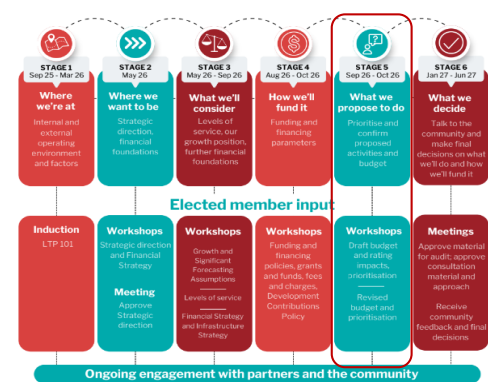
2027-37 LTP project description

The LTP is the key strategic planning document setting out Council's community outcomes, strategic priorities, financial and infrastructure strategies, funding and financial policies, levels of service, work plans and budgets for the next ten years. This LTP Project must respond to significant change, uncertainty and challenges, including international/national volatility, wide-ranging reforms & local government changes, digital transformation, significant financial pressure, and growing inequity in our communities. With Future Us (organisational transformation) underway, and local government amalgamation expected during the first 3 years of this LTP, we must focus on a smart, responsive & fiscally prudent approach. In this challenging & fast-moving environment, we must stay close to our Co-sponsors, our CEO and Mayor, and Exec. and Elected Members (EMs), to keep aligned on project scope and quality expectations. Excellent communication, both top down and bottom up will be essential, to keep alignment and to best manage resourcing and workload across the life of the project.

2027-37 LTP workstreams



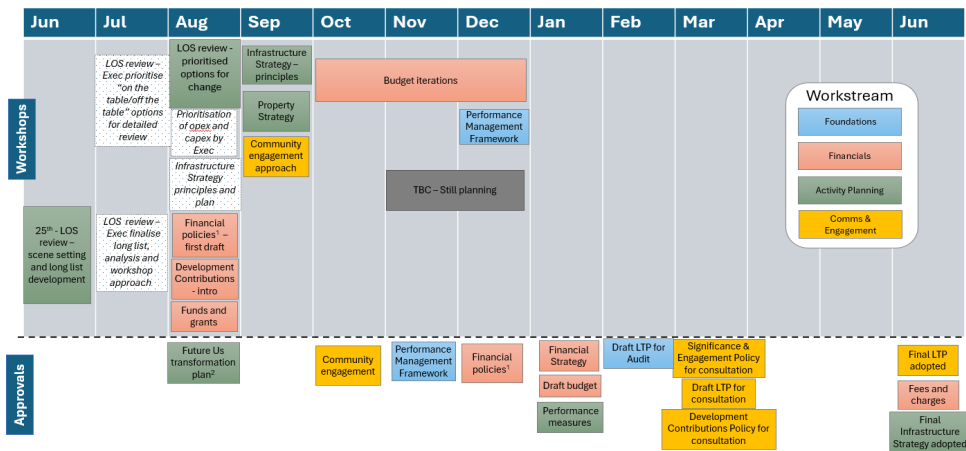
2027-37 LTP roadmap



2027-37 LTP Elected Member high level calendar

High level calendar

Proposed timelines as of 16 Sept 26.
Indicative only.

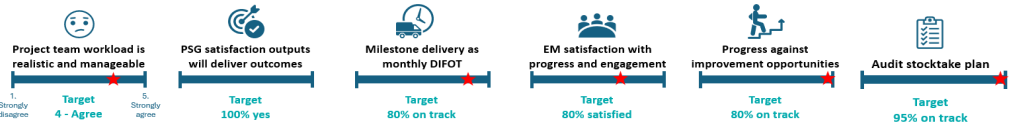


¹ Treasury Risk Management Policy and Rates Remission Policy ² Business support LOS replaced by this ³ Required programme as per AMPs and alongside financial envelope (starting picture)

Monthly status report (full report for screen viewing)

Early community engagement	October	On track
Measures of Success		
Description	Status	
Monthly project team wellbeing check in - Q - Is my LTP workload realistic and manageable most weeks? (1-5 scale) - target average of 4	Target Met	
Monthly check in with PSG - Q - Are planned outputs likely to deliver desired outcomes? Target 100% say Yes	Not Yet Measured	
Milestone delivery as monthly DIFOT (Delivered in full and on time) - target 80%	Target Met	
EM satisfaction with project progress and engagement measured via 3-month quick survey - target 80% satisfied	Not Achieved	
Progress made against LTP project improvement opportunities - 80% on track measured by quarterly check ins at PSG	Target Met	
Audit stocktake plan on track - 95% on track measured by quarterly check in at PSG	Target Met	

2027-37 LTP project success measures



Monthly status report (enlarged without images for reading)

2027-2037 LTP Project - Status Report			
Project Objectives:			
1) Deliver an LTP that complies with LGA requirements and receives an unqualified audit, 2) Give effect to Council's new strategic direction - focussing on: a) responsible financial management, b) well-planned communities, c) fostering partnerships, d) strengthening trust & confidence, and e) building community resilience, and our short term priorities - driving a lean organisation, managing the district's growth and broadening our funding base to reduce reliance on rates over time. 3) Deliver to agreed time, budget and scope specifications, while supporting an engaged project team with a sustainable workload.			
Project Manager	Bridget Maclean / Gemma Brooks	Business Owners	Katie Mayes
Period Covered	Aug/Sept-26	Projected Date of Completion	Jul-27

				-1 Month	Current Month
Overall Project Status & Update				At Risk	At Risk
Good progress is being made across the LTP programme. The Levels of Service review is complete, with seven proposed increases and seven proposed decreases progressing to budgeting. Strategic Direction and Significant Forecasting Assumptions have been incorporated into the budgeting pack; Activity Management Plans and the Infrastructure Strategy are progressing; and a draft Audit Engagement Letter has been received, enabling planning for a progressive audit and assurance over key inputs. Finance is preparing budget guidance and drafting the Financial Strategy, while financial policies are moving through minor refinements. Early community, iwi and mana whenua engagement is being planned, supported by internal communications, and place-based capital programme planning is under way. The project timeline remains At Risk because October engagement dates are critical, and some work depends on legislative change and coordinated cross-organisational input.					
Monthly Summary					
Factor	-2 Months	-1 Month	Current Month	Commentary	
Time	At Risk	At Risk	At Risk	Earlier delays have compressed delivery timeframes, particularly for funding proposals and Oct engagement.	
Cost	On Track	On Track	On Track	The project remains on budget	
Scope	At Risk	On Track	On Track	Workstream scope remains on-track with some reviews now scheduled for later in the project schedule	
Issues	At Risk	At Risk	On Track	No material issues currently require escalation	
Risks	At Risk	At Risk	At Risk	Timely delivery depends on coordinated staff input from across the organisation.	

Workstream Summary					
Factor	Foundations	Finance	Activity Planning	Comms/Eng	Commentary
Time	On Track	On Track	At Risk	At Risk	Compressed funding proposals and community engagement dates at risk
Cost	On Track	On Track	On Track	On Track	
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Risks	On Track	On Track	At Risk	On Track	Funding proposals being delivered

Workstream Commentary:	
On Track	At Risk
Foundations: Legislative change continues to be monitored. Strategic Direction and Significant Forecasting Assumptions are included in the budgeting pack, draft Performance Management Framework is out for staff feedback, and draft Audit Engagement Letter enables progressive-audit planning and assurance discussions. Activity Planning: The Levels of Service review is complete, with seven proposed increases and seven decreases moving to budgeting. Asset Management Plans are being updated after peer review, infrastructure challenges have been drafted, budget codes are mapped to the mandated groups-of-activities structure, and performance-measure review has begun. Finance: Financial Strategy drafting has started; a comprehensive opex and capex budgeting pack and wider staff guidance has been prepared; and the Rates Remission and Treasury Management policies require only minor refinements. Communications and Engagement: October early-engagement planning, iwi and mana whenua engagement, internal budget communications, and place-based capital programme planning are progressing.	Funding proposals are operating within a compressed delivery window following earlier project delays, creating a risk to timely completion and increasing reliance on coordinated input from managers and workstream teams. October community-engagement dates are critical so feedback can meaningfully inform LTP decisions. Further work on the mandated groups-of-activities structure depends on enactment of the Local Government (Systems Improvement) Bill, while progressive-audit arrangements and assurance over growth assumptions still need to be finalised. Capital-project information must also be consolidated by the end of September.

Milestone update			
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Workshop - Levels of Service pt 2	Early June	2/07/2026	Complete
Workshop - Levels of Service pt 3	Mid-August	12/08/2026	Complete
Workshop - Financial policies, Development Contributions Policy and grants and funds, including community halls	13/08/2026	13/08/2026	Complete

Monthly status report (enlarged without images for reading)

Significance and Engagement Policy	August		Delayed
Workshop - Property Strategy, Infrastructure Strategy and community engagement	16/09/2026	16/09/2026	Complete
Early community engagement	October		On track

Measures of Success	
Description	Status
Monthly project team wellbeing check in - Q - Is my LTP workload realistic and manageable most weeks? (1-5 scale) - target average of 4	Target Met
Monthly check in with PSG - Q - Are planned outputs likely to deliver desired outcomes? Target 100% say Yes	Not Yet Measured
Milestone delivery as monthly DIFOT (Delivered in full and on time) - target 80%	Target Met
EM satisfaction with project progress and engagement measured via 3-month quick survey - target 80% satisfied	Not Achieved
Progress made against LTP project improvement opportunities - 80% on track measured by quarterly check ins at PSG	Target Met
Audit stocktake plan on track - 95% on track measured by quarterly check in at PSG	Target Met

COMMITTEE REPORT



INFORMATION ONLY

To: The Chairperson and Members of the Growth, Strategy and Planning Committee

From: Manager Strategy

Subject: **Legislative Reform**

Meeting Date: 7 October

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY – WHAKARĀPOPOTOTANGA MATUA

The purpose of this report is to update Elected Members about the pipeline of legislative reforms facing local government.

Given the scale of legislative changes and potential effect on the organisation, a Legislative Reform workstream is included in the draft Future Us Roadmap. This will support alignment with the wider Future Us programme by identifying synergies across workstreams, reducing duplication, and ensuring reform activity is coordinated alongside broader organisational change.

2 RECOMMENDATION – TŪTOHU Ā-KAIMAHI

That the Growth, Strategy and Planning Committee receives the report of Melissa Russo, Manager Strategy titled Legislative reform [ECM 11777249].

3 COMMENTARY - KŌRERO

Local government is facing a coordinated package of reforms that converge on the same decisions about where growth occurs, who pays for infrastructure, how risk is managed, and what local government will look like in the future.

The Government is reshaping the entire local government operating model, moving from a council-led, largely locally funded system toward a more nationally directed, regionally coordinated, growth-focused framework with tighter financial constraints and stronger accountability requirements.

The biggest strategic issue is not any single reform. Rather, it is the timing and cumulative effect of the combined set of changes and the broad reaching

implications they will have on the way we operate, conduct our planning and fund infrastructure and services.

The government's reform programme is built around six major legislative changes:

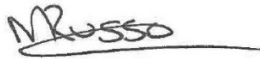
- **Resource Management Reform** - replacing the RMA with a new planning system focused on enabling housing, infrastructure and economic growth while providing clearer national direction. This will require significant changes to our planning documents, consenting processes and growth planning. The Bill went through its third reading on 22 September 2026 and is awaiting Royal Assent.
- **Systems improvement** - refocuses councils on delivering core infrastructure and services, with increased requirements around efficiency, financial management, transparency and performance reporting. The reforms may require changes to how we plan, report and deliver services, in alignment with rating limits. The Bill received Royal Assent on 18 September 2026.
- **Infrastructure funding reform** - provides additional funding and financing tools to support infrastructure investment and growth. The reforms may create new opportunities for us to fund and deliver growth-enabling infrastructure. The Bill received Royal Assent on 5 August 2026.
- **Development levy reform** - replaces Development Contributions with a new Development Levy framework designed to improve how growth-related infrastructure costs are recovered from development. We will need to review growth funding approaches and charging mechanisms. The Bill is expected to be introduced in the first quarter of 2027.
- **Simplifying Local Government** - seeks to reduce duplication between local government entities and improve regional decision-making and service delivery. The reforms could result in changes to governance structures and how we collaborate with neighbouring councils. The sector is awaiting decisions on Headstart proposals. These have been deferred until after the elections.
- **Climate change response bill** - aims to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of existing legislation by introducing targeted policy changes to climate adaptation planning, market governance of the New Zealand Emissions Trading Scheme market, industrial allocation, and carbon removal activities. The Bill was introduced in July 2026 and is awaiting its first reading.

The immediate priority is on the Resource Management reform. Once the Planning Act receives royal assent, we will have 30 days to give effect to the new consenting requirements.

A paper will be provided on 7 October to provide further information on the details and implications of the Resource Management reform. A verbal update will be provided about other legislative changes.

Next steps

- Immediate focus on implementing the changes required once the Planning Act receives Royal Assent.
- Elected Members will be kept updated on the changes to legislation and the implications through the relevant Committee/s.
- Coordinate implementation of legislative reforms via the Future Us programme to:
 - Coordinate organisational responses to legislative change.
 - Improve visibility of reform impacts across Council.
 - Provide clear governance and reporting arrangements.
 - Ensure reform activities are prioritised and appropriately resourced.
 - Reduce duplication and improve collaboration across Council functions.
 - Support organisational readiness for implementation of new legislative requirements.



Melissa Russo

MANAGER STRATEGY



Approved by Katie Mayes

GROWTH, STRATEGY AND PLANNING DIRECTOR

COMMITTEE REPORT



INFORMATION ONLY

To: The Chairperson and Members of the Growth, Strategy and Planning Committee

From: Manager District Plan & Growth, Wendy Robinson

Subject: **Fast-track Approvals Act Update on Applications**

Meeting Date: 7 October 2026

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY – WHAKARĀPOPOTOTANGA MATUA

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the application of the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 as it pertains to Waipā. This is particularly relevant as the first substantive application has been lodged, for Southern Links 1 (SL1) (also known as SL1 Mexted / Industrial North).

2 RECOMMENDATION – TŪTOHU Ā-KAIMAHI

That the Growth, Strategy and Planning Committee receives the report of Wendy Robinson, Manager District Plan & Growth titled Fast-track Approvals Act Update on Applications [ECM 11780380].

3 COMMENTARY - KŌRERO

This is a regular update report providing an update on the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 (the Act) and follows a number of quarterly updates presented at the Strategic Planning and Policy Committee or On the Radar updates.

As a reminder, the Act establishes a fast-track approval framework for considering and determining resource consents and notices of requirement for regionally or nationally significant projects that would otherwise be considered under the Resource Management Act 1991. The Act applies to seven other statutes such as the Reserves Act 1977 and Conservation Act 1987. The Act is administered by the Fast-track team of the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA).

Council has no decision-making powers under the Act but must be consulted and must provide comments at various stages throughout the application process. Table 1 shows the overview steps involved in the substantive application process.

Table 1 - Application Process

Step	Description
1. Substantive Application	A substantive application is submitted through the Fast-track application portal.
2. Completeness and Eligibility Check	The Fast-track team checks the application for completeness and eligibility. ▪ Waipā DC has 5 days to comment
3. Referral to Expert Panel	If the application is deemed complete and eligible, it's referred to an expert panel for consideration. ▪ Waipā DC is invited to a Convener's Conference to help the Panel Convener understand the issues and support decision making for setting up the panel
4. Panel Receives Application	The panel receives the application and must obtain advice or reports.
5. Panel Invites Comments	The panel invites comments from specified parties. ▪ Waipā DC will be invited to comment on topics with tight timeframes
6. Applicant Response	Applicants can respond to comments.
7. Panel Consideration and Decision	The panel considers the application, comments, advice and reports and makes a decision. ▪ Draft decisions are issued for condition discussion (if approved)
8. Decision Notification	Parties are notified of the decision, and specified parties may appeal.

The first substantive application within Waipā district has now been received and a couple more are not far away.

Southern Links 1 (SL1) (also known as SL1 Mexted / Industrial North) was lodged on 9 September 2026. This is the first of three likely applications within the Strategic Land Area 1 on the northern boundary of Waipā to Hamilton City. The proposal is broken into 60ha of Industrial North and 46ha of Residential South (aka Mexted block). Further detail is included in Figure 1 with details taken from the application.

- (a) **Residential development:** subdivision of 938 residential lots and associated residential development enabled through a mix of vacant lots and superlots,⁶ underpinned by comprehensive bulk and location controls, a design guide, and a varied mix of housing typologies;
- (b) **Commercial node:** An approximately 1,000m² (433m² Gross Floor Area) local convenience commercial node within the residential development supporting three small retail tenancies (café, food and beverage, and small retail);
- (c) **Industrial development:** Subdivision and site development of 22 industrial lots of varying sizes across approximately 60ha, associated industrial buildings subject to comprehensive controls, and a small 0.46ha food and beverage node;
- (d) **Open space network:** An integrated open space network encompassing stormwater ponds, a neighbourhood park, riparian planting, ecological restoration, and wider ecological and recreational connectivity to the existing Mangakōtukutuku Gully; and
- (e) **Infrastructure and utilities:** Supporting transport, utilities, and three-waters infrastructure. The Project will be serviced by extensions to the public wastewater and water supply networks, with onsite public stormwater management implemented and connected to the existing Hamilton City stormwater network.

Figure 1 details of application as detailed by application legal submission

The first step of involvement for Waipā has occurred with the completeness check and it is expected that the next step will be a Convener's Conference. This conference is an informal gathering of parties involved to answer questions to the Panel Convener to enable an initial understanding of the application and issues so as to support the appointment of panel members and required timeframes.

While the Act is intended to provide a significantly faster decision-making pathway than conventional resource consent processes, the timing of a final decision will depend on matters such as technical review requirements, panel processes and any requests for additional information. Even with the added detail of summer holidays, it would be plausible for a decision to be reached by March 2027.

Key issues anticipated for the panel are the infrastructure capacity and servicing arrangements between IAWAI and Waikato Waters Ltd as well as the impact by Hamilton Southern Links (the NZTA state highway project) being delayed.

Collaborative work continues with SL1 regarding the commercial terms and any future private development agreement, but there has been no agreement in principle reached. It is noted that the delegation to negotiate, finalise and approve commercial terms and agreements in relation to the provision, timing and funding of public infrastructure and associated matters (but not committing Council to unplanned or unbudgeted expenditure) was provided to the Chief Executive, the Mayor, the Chair

of the Growth, Strategy and Planning Committee, and Councillor Aidhean Camson. Delegation was provided at the 3 June 2026 Strategic Planning and Policy Committee Meeting (ECM 11682313).

Table 2 shows an update on fast-track projects in Waipā district. Harlow Lifestyle Village and Waikato Thoroughbred Racing Greenfield Hub are expecting to lodge their substantive applications imminently, with SL1 Rogerson Block not far behind.

Table 2 – Fast-track Projects in Waipā

PROJECT	STATUS	COMMENTS
The Southern Links 1 (SL1) consortium	- Listed in Schedule 2 - Substantive application lodged 09 September 2026	The Southern Links 1 consortium has been in discussions with Future Proof partners, including Hamilton City Council (HCC) infrastructure teams because it will impact HCC roading networks and piped services, as opposed to Waipā District Council. The Southern Links 1 consortium area is located in the Priority Area 1 of the Strategic Boundary Agreement between Waipā District Council and HCC (see Figure 1).
Harlow Lifestyle Village	Minister for Infrastructure referred project to Fast-track on 27 October 2025	Located at 2025 Ōhaupō Road, Te Awamutu, the project is to construct a senior living lifestyle village on 25.7ha of Rural Zone land. The same project was lodged with Waipā District Council on 18 January 2023 as Private Plan Change 29. The private plan change has been on-hold at the applicant's request since 24 April 2023.
Waikato Thoroughbred Racing Greenfield Hub	Minister for Infrastructure referred project to Fast-track on 5 July 2026	This application is within Waikato District not Waipā. Located over ~164ha of land across Hooker Road, Duncan Road and Pencarrow Road the proposal is for thoroughbred racing and associated activities, harness racing, a retirement village, rural-residential lots, and other commercial activities. Proximity to Hooker Road and Cambridge Road intersection provides opportunity for a more limited involvement in the process for Waipā.
SL1 Rogerson Block	Minister for Infrastructure referred	Located at 183 and 293 Tuhikaramea Road, Hamilton. The proposal is to

PROJECT	STATUS	COMMENTS
	project to Fast-track on 15 October 2025	construct a residential and industrial development on 43ha of Rural Zone land. The northern parcel (183 Tuhikaramea Road) is located within the north-western portion of the Priority 1 Area (<i>see Figure 1</i>). The southern parcel (293 Tuhikaramea Road) is not located in the Strategic Boundary Agreement Area.
SL1 Houchens Development	Minister for Infrastructure referred project to Fast-track on 25 May 2026	Located at 3102 and 3134 Ōhaupō Road, Hamilton, the project would be to construct a residential, retirement/aged care and industrial development on 145ha of Large Lot Residential and Rural Zone land in the Waipā District Plan. Several parcels included in the project area are located in the Houchens Road Structure Plan area. The land is also located within the south-eastern portion of Priority Area 1.
NZTA Waka Kotahi Hamilton Southern Links state highway project	- Listed in Schedule 2 - Paused due to funding	Work on planning and investigations was underway but there is no definitive date to submit a substantive application due to funding availability.

Future Proof partners continue to collaborate with projects that have cross boundary issues. It remains critical for work alongside the applicants to ensure fast-track projects are in alignment with the strategic priorities for the sub-region.



Prepared by Wendy Robinson
MANAGER DISTRICT PLAN & GROWTH



Reviewed and approved by Katie Mayes
GROWTH, STRATEGY & PLANNING DIRECTOR

COMMITTEE REPORT



INFORMATION ONLY

To: The Chairperson and Members of the Growth, Strategy and Planning Committee

From: Manager District Plan & Growth

Subject: **Reform Update: The Planning Act**

Meeting Date: 7 October 2026

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY – WHAKARĀPOPOTOTANGA MATUA

The Planning Act forms part of the Government's replacement of the Resource Management Act 1991. It is expected to shift New Zealand's planning system towards greater national consistency, stronger support for growth and infrastructure, and more streamlined decision-making.

For Waipā, the main focus will be understanding what the changes mean for growth planning, infrastructure coordination, future planning documents and consenting processes.

This report is for information. A verbal update will be provided the committee on 7 October as further implementation and transition detail becomes available.

2 RECOMMENDATION – TŪTOHU Ā-KAIMAHI

That the Growth, Strategy and Planning Committee receives the report of Wendy Robinson, Manager District Plan & Growth titled Reform Update: The Planning Act [ECM 11780361].

3 COMMENTARY - KŌRERO

The Planning Act must receive its third reading and Royal Assent before Parliament rises on the 24 September 2026. This update is therefore a high-level background with a more detailed verbal presentation to be provided to the committee on 7 October.

The Planning Act and Natural Environment Act represent a significant milestone in the Government's programme to replace the Resource Management Act 1991. The

Planning Act will be the focus of this update as it relates to district planning, growth management, infrastructure coordination, and consenting processes.

The Planning Act is intended to provide a more enabling framework for housing, infrastructure, economic development and growth while maintaining appropriate environmental protections. Key changes include a stronger emphasis on growth and infrastructure delivery, greater national consistency, regional spatial planning, and a reduction in the matters that can be considered through planning and consenting processes. The reforms also establish a pathway for replacing existing district and regional plans with a new generation of planning instruments supported by national direction.

Staff have commenced implementation planning to assess the impacts of the new legislation, identify and undertake transition requirements, and prepare the organisation for future changes to planning and regulatory processes.

A substantial programme of national direction and implementation guidance is still required before many aspects of the new system become operational. Staff will continue to monitor developments and will provide further updates as implementation milestones and transition requirements become clearer.



Wendy Robinson

MANAGER DISTRICT PLAN & GROWTH



Reviewed and approved by Katie Mayes

GROWTH, STRATEGY & PLANNING DIRECTOR

APPENDIX 1

Presentation – Reform Update: The Planning Act (ECM 11785842)

Reform update: The Planning Act

Growth, Strategy and Planning Workshop
7 October 2026



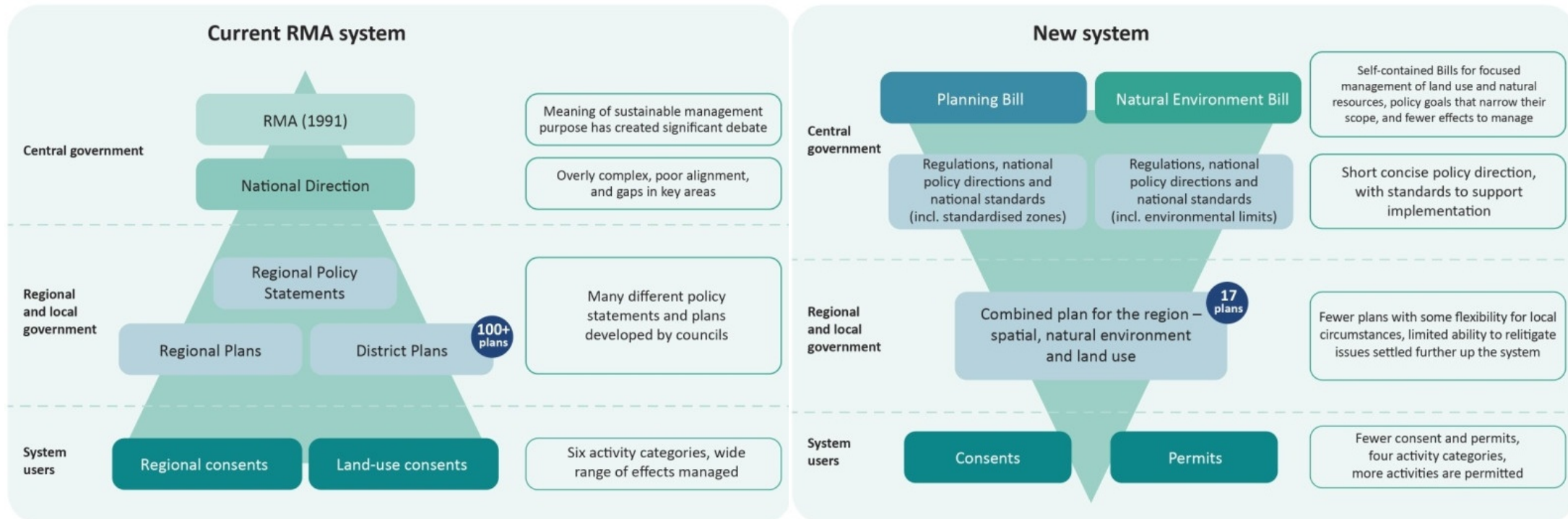
The RMA is *almost* gone!

The Planning Act and Natural Environment Act are now in law

- ✓ Biggest planning system change in 35 years
- ✓ Aims to support housing, infrastructure and economic growth
- ✓ Introduces greater national consistency
- ✓ Changes how we plan and process consent applications

The next few years will be a transition to the new regime

What is changing?



What it means for Waipā



Prepare a **Regional Spatial Plan**

Current region
boundary

Collaborative approach



Prepare a **Land Use Plan**

Standardised zoning with
bespoke provisions



Implement **Transitional consenting** processes

Some effects disregarded

Procedural principles

Regional Spatial Plan

Strategic direction setting – 30 years of change

Notify by Jun 2028
Adopt by Mar 2029

Identify and coordinate
competing demands for space

Directs alignment of land use,
infrastructure and
environmental outcomes

Investment through intentional
place shaping over reactive
regulations

The Land Use Plan will be the regulatory document that follows

Regional Spatial Plan continued...



Process
agreement as
operating spine



RSP Committee
with ToR as
governance



Secretariat as
regional
programme
office



Includes Iwi/Māori
partners, Govt reps,
agencies and other
partners



Land Use Plan

Implements the spatial plan

Notify by Dec 2029
Decide by Dec 2030

Land development, housing,
infrastructure and private
property rights

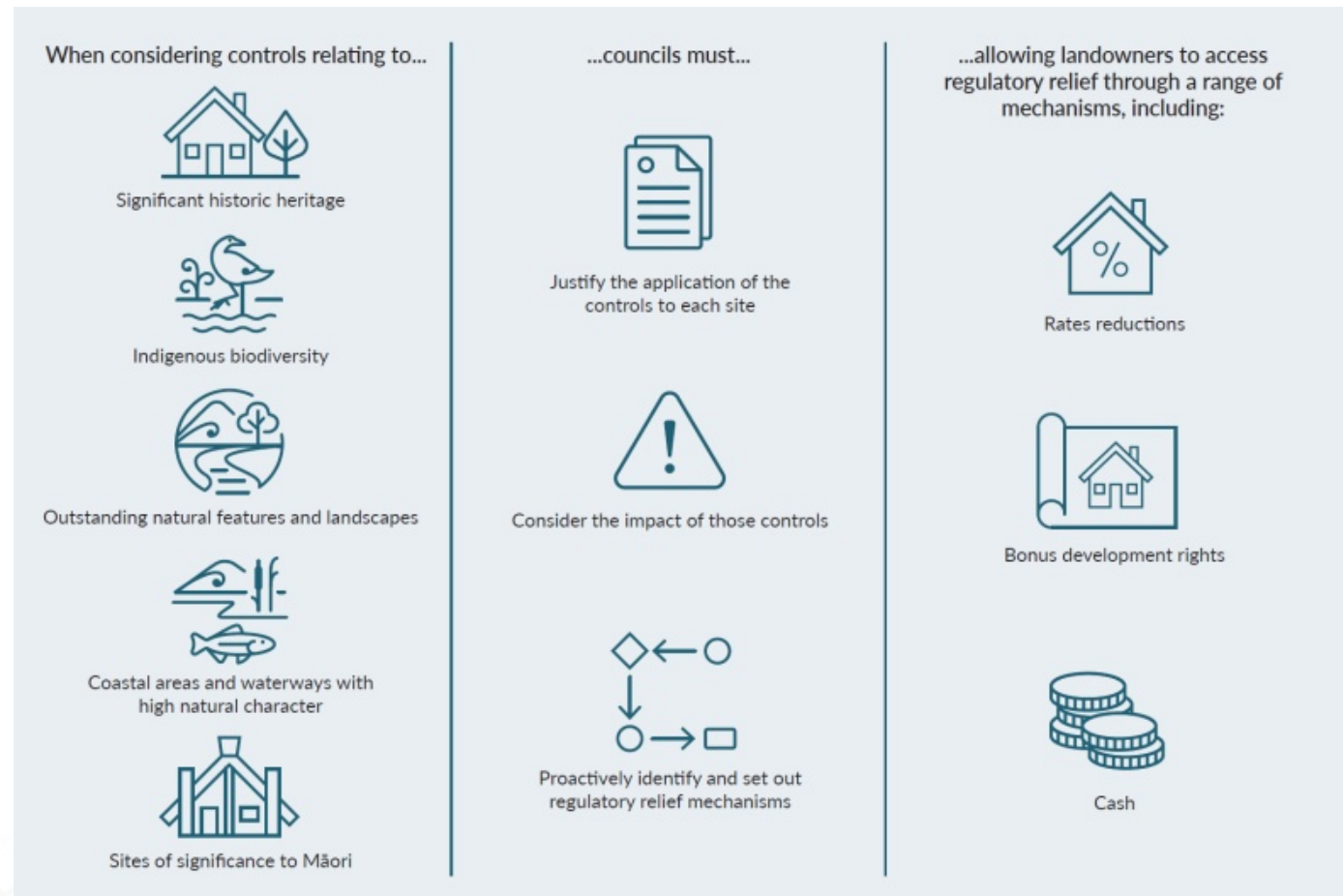
National Direction will come
with standardised zones

New digital platform

Replacement for Waipā District Plan

Land Use Plan continued...

Regulatory relief



Transitional consenting

How we operate changes

One month after
Royal Assent > full
cessation of RMA

Effects we consider are reduced

Alternative permitted pathway
or plan change to achieve

We must:

- Be easier to understand
- More consistent & predictable
- More pragmatic & solutions focused

Replacement for Waipā District Plan

Next steps:

- ✓ Programme approach
- ✓ Central Government are supporting to educate our community
- ✓ Lots of work and collaboration!

Any questions?

HE KARAKIA WHAKAMUTUNGA

Puritia te rangimārie.

Hold fast to peace,

Puritia te aroha.

Hold fast to love

Puritia te ngākau pai.

Hold fast to sincerity,

Puritia ngā wawata.

Hold fast to our hopes,

Kia kore e ngaro.

May these things never be lost.

Haumi e, hui e, **tāiki e!**

Joined in unity – it is done!

