

WAIKATO DISTRICT COUNCIL

DISTRICT GROWTH STRATEGY

Preparation of the Long Term Council Community Plan (LTCCP) for the period 2009- 2019 provides a timely opportunity to review the District's longer-term strategy for managing its growth.

The process coincides with a sub regional growth strategy being prepared through a partnership of Waikato District Council, Hamilton City Council, Waipa District Council, Environment Waikato and New Zealand Transport Agency. This strategy is known as Future Proof. Looking ahead to 2061, Future Proof projects a significant increase in the district's population (from around 44,000 today to 87,000 in 2061). When combined with a continuing trend of reducing household size, the expectation is that the district will need to more than double its supply of housing over the next 50 years. The social, financial and resource implications of such a scale of growth pose an enormous challenge.

Future Proof establishes principles that will guide investment and development decisions across the wider region. In terms of determining a future pattern of growth within the district these include:

- Protecting high quality farmland for productive purposes,
- Planning for alternatives to reliance on cars,
- Planning for efficient transport systems,
- Optimising use of existing infrastructure and planning for growth impacts,
- Protecting infrastructure and transport corridors,
- Providing housing choice and access to recreation, health and education services,
- Maintaining town and neighbourhood centres to support local communities, and providing a reliable supply of serviced industrial land.

The District's growth strategy needs to develop these further and determine how they should be applied within Waikato District to accommodate the scale of growth anticipated. In doing so the growth strategy needs to provide a vision for long term development, recognising the District's diversity, and the effects and development pressures that arise from having strong economic drivers located at both the north (south Auckland) and south (Hamilton City). It should recognise the effect that nationally important infrastructure such as State Highway 1 and the North Island Main Trunk Line has and will have on the district. Most importantly it should reflect the aspirations of the local community as expressed through the Community Outcomes process.

But why is a Strategy needed?

The District has lacked a specific strategy for growth for too long. The effects based approach of the Resource Management Act is embodied in a District Plan that is pro-growth but allows this to happen in an ad hoc manner. As a consequence developers, investors and service providers have little basis on which to make important decisions that affect the local

community. Growth has been driven solely by the market. The most active sector of the market has been for lifestyle development but, unlike its traditional form of hobby farms and relative self-sufficiency, the modern form has been for large executive housing set in expansive grounds, predominantly, but not solely around the fringes of Hamilton City.

Around 80% of the district's growth has been in this form. It has taken extensive areas of high quality land out of production, reducing the economic capacity of the district. The scale of development has seen the growth of a rural population that has no association with the local environment but is so loosely structured that it lacks the critical mass to support facilities and services that would strengthen and support community development. Householders remain largely reliant on Hamilton City for employment, education, retail and entertainment and consequently, the district's towns have lacked the continued investment they need to survive.

The introduction of urban values into a rural setting has put remaining traditional rural industries under pressure to reduce noise, dust, smell and other factors that are an unavoidable aspect of their activity if they are to continue to survive and operate efficiently. Cumulatively, such development is eroding the district's critical environmental and economic assets, is proving increasingly costly on the public purse and cannot be sustained.

Even without the scale of growth anticipated by Future Proof there is a need to address these issues. The prospect of significant growth brings added imperative to develop a coherent long-term strategy to manage growth and develop the district's economy.

Whilst there is clearly a strong market for lifestyle block development, it stems more from the lack of appropriate housing choice within the City's own land banks rather than from any particular driver within the district. The district's growth strategy needs to focus on what is needed to sustain the district and its critical natural, physical and economic resources into the future.

This focus begins with the district's existing townships and the revitalisation of its town and village centres. Around half of the district's population lives within the established townships and villages. The focussed approach of the strategy will mean that by 2061, around 80% of the district's population will be living in these settlements, the remainder being within the rural areas. The aim is to reverse the trend of 80% of development occurring within the rural areas and direct such growth towards sustaining and growing the district's townships and their services.

The district growth strategy will focus on developing its existing townships and larger villages. This is consistent with the draft Future Proof strategy that has been prepared on the basis of a blend of scenarios two and three.

The following Table illustrates what this might mean although it should be noted that it is indicative of the effect of the Strategy rather than being a projection of what will occur. Overall, the majority of growth (around 60%) will occur within the district's main towns. In addition to established towns, some areas, notably Tamahere, have reached a point where the concentration of modern lifestyle development has irreversibly changed the character of the area and there is now a need for the strategy to recognise these areas as emerging settlements. A smaller proportion (around 22%) will occur within the smaller villages within the rural area and the remainder (18%) will be within the rural area itself.

Towns	2061
Huntly	12,400
Ngaruawahia	16,000
Raglan & Settlements	5,300
Te Kauwhata	7,800
Total Major Towns	41,500
Glen Massey	275
Glen Afton	175
Pukemiro	300
Waikokowai & Renown	175
Matangi	1,400
Taupiri	900
Eureka	1,800
Gordonton	1,000
Tamahere	1,500
Tauwhare	300
Tauwhare Pa	200
Rangiriri	400
Maramarua	900
Meremere	700
Horotiu	1,600
Te Kowhai	1,750
Whatawhata	1,850
Lake Rotokauri	550
Total Rural Villages	15,775
Total Waikato Rural Areas	29,800
Total All Areas	87,075

**Population numbers are estimates only and subject to further assessment by the University of Waikato Population Studies Centre and public feedback*

The larger the township, generally the more services and facilities it provides and the more opportunities will be available in terms of employment, education, retail and recreation. These townships are service centres to the wider rural population. Continued public investment in these townships is needed to sustain existing services and facilities and meeting rising expectations regarding levels of service provided to local communities. Such investment is more efficient and effective when focussed on larger communities than it is if directed towards a more dispersed pattern of development.

So what principles should drive the development of the strategy?

Much is made of the “Golden Triangle”, referring to the relationship between Auckland, Hamilton and Tauranga, particularly the complementary port facilities that each provides and the transport and communication corridors between them. Waikato District sits at the heart of this triangle and is a generator of a significant amount of the raw materials and processed goods that support the port activities. The productive capacity of the district underpins the wealth, economic capacity and quality of life of the region as a whole.

Geographically the district straddles the northern part of the country’s economic spine formed by the **State Highway 1**, **North Island Main Trunk Railway** and the **Waikato River** corridor.

The **State Highway 1** corridor remains the principal corridor for the passage of trade and goods and services out of the Auckland region to the rest of the country. But the corridor is more than that. It is a lifeline for the Auckland Region to be served with the energy, both electricity and gas, that it needs to grow. The **National Grid** owned by Transpower has numerous lines in the District taking electricity from the Huntly thermal power station and from further afield with lines from Stratford and Whakamaru. **Vector** has a major pumping station at Waikokowai, close to Huntly and part of the gas pipeline network from New Plymouth to Manukau crosses the district.

The **Waikato River** bisects the district, providing water supply for district residents and support for the agricultural and energy production sectors. The district growth strategy will provide a clear context to reconcile competing demands on this critical resource, as well as ensure that its cultural significance is properly recognised in future management frameworks.

Continued improvement of the State Highway 1 and its supporting network of State Highways 1B, 2, 23, 26 and 39 corridor is reducing congestion and improving efficiencies. The progressive implementation of the Waikato Expressway is reaching deeper into the District and will ultimately bypass Huntly and Ngaruawahia, relieving them of through traffic and providing an opportunity to revitalise these towns.

On completion of the Expressway, State Highway 1B and part of State Highway 39 will revert to being local roads. State Highways 2 and 26 provide nationally important routes out to the east coast from Auckland and Hamilton respectively. State Highway 23 provides a strategic connection between Hamilton and Raglan. Both State Highways 2 and 23 face considerable pressure during the summer months as they provide vital conduits to the coast.

Improvements to the transport network and consequential reductions in congestion and travel times can be expected to increase interest from the transport and distribution sector around key transport interchanges for air, rail and road.

Paralleling parts of the State Highway network the **North Island Main Trunk** railway also runs through the District with connections at Hamilton to the East Coast Main Line to the Bay of Plenty and branch lines connecting major local businesses. The development of the Crawford Street Freight Village within Hamilton complements Auckland and Tauranga providing the choice of 3 rail connected port facilities for the handling of freight and significant landholdings alongside live lines provide the opportunity for significantly increasing rail related business as well as the development of transport related housing options in certain settlements.

Much of the district's existing industrial and economic base already has a strong, even critical relationship to these transport, energy and water resources. Industry within the District encompasses the key sectors of: agriculture, dairy produce, coal mining, aggregate extraction and electricity generation.

Fonterra's Te Rapa **dairy** factory is the flagship of the company's North Island operation, serviced by farms throughout the District and producing mainly milk powder for the export market. Historically, Fonterra's major facilities across the Waikato region were serviced by branch lines from the rail network. This legacy remains and with the growth in traffic volumes and transport costs, the opportunity may present itself for enabling reinvestment in this network for rail freight.

The district contains regionally and nationally significant mineral resources including **coal and gas**, notably but not solely around Huntly, where coal extraction is the mainstay of local employment within the town but also imposes physical constraints on the town's potential for expansion. Access to and utilisation of these resources needs to be managed to enable the community to provide for its social and economic wellbeing.

Growth can only be sustained through the supply of raw materials for the construction industry. Sustaining the levels of growth already occurring in the Auckland and Waikato region is leading to increased interest in the district's mineral resources. The scale of growth anticipated by Future Proof will see this level of interest increase significantly, particularly for **aggregate and sand extraction** for both the building industry and the roading industry. There are a number of both aggregate quarries and sand mines in the District and more are being investigated and consented.

The district's rich soils and productive pastoral land are the mainstay of the **agricultural, agricultural research** and dairying sectors and the significant volume of employment and regional wealth that they generate. They are a critical resource producing a significant amount of food resource to Auckland, Hamilton and the rest of New Zealand and providing direct employment to over 20% of the district's workforce. Reflecting the productive capacity of the soil resource the district is also home to AFFCO's meat **processing** facility at Horotiu, the principal processing facility in the Region. There is an increasing trend to create large-scale **horticultural** enterprises in the Waikato District including onions, potatoes and Asian vegetables.

Extensive areas of **forest** plantation are a distinctive element in the Districts outstanding upland landscapes, on the West Coast and at Maramarua. Some areas are into their fourth rotation and it can be expected that production forestry and its associated harvesting and trucking activity will remain an important element in the rural landscape.

The Waikato District is a key area for **electricity generation** as well as its transfer between regions. Increasingly, the extent and diversity of local resources is seeing the District develop as an energy centre for New Zealand. The Genesis Huntly Thermal Power Station provides electricity to the National Grid generated from both coal and natural gas; it is key to the National Network. Wind power is being seriously investigated in the Waikato District with one wind farm for WEL Energy having gone through a Lower Court resource consent hearing and a second having been applied for by Contact Energy.

Culturally the Waikato District is in the heart of the Kaitiaki. Ngaruawahia is the official residence of the Maori King and potentially the heart of cultural tourism in the future. A wider involvement and inclusiveness between Tangata Whenua, local government and the community will provide common direction. The signing of the Deed of Settlement between Waikato-Tainui and the Crown signals growing importance of the significance of the Waikato River development within the Waikato District.

So with these attributes and as travel times reduce, the district's northern settlements become increasingly attractive as a housing choice for the south Auckland market. Similarly, the district's largely congestion free environment offers a competitive advantage over alternative locations within Auckland for economic development. The availability of local housing choice will reinforce that advantage. But, whilst the Auckland effect is increasingly being felt deeper into the district, similar pressures are also arising from the growth of Hamilton as an economic focal point.

The growth strategy needs to recognise the district's existing strengths, its critical resources and its relationship to the Auckland Region and Hamilton City. Within the context of Future Proof it needs to:

- provide for the continued productive capacity of the district,
- safeguard the efficiency of key transport corridors,
- provide opportunities for new economic development,
- provide quality environments for new housing development,
- protect critical environmental features,
- provide for the growth of local communities, and
- recognise the strategic significance of the district's energy resources and key industries.

There is a strong relationship between all the factors and the strategy must aim to address them together. The strategy needs to provide an attractive alternative to the current market preference for urban periphery development.

What does this mean?

The strategy needs to enable the development of places where existing and future residents will choose to live, work, be educated, shop and play. It needs to identify land for economic development and it needs to safeguard the potential of the countryside as a productive and recreational resource.

The district's existing townships will anchor that growth; some will have features that will make them more capable of growth than others. To achieve this Council will need to provide more certainty to the market by identifying key locations for growth and supporting this by directing its investment into new infrastructure, services and facilities that will meet the needs of existing and future residents.

A clearer, more interventionist approach is necessary.

Where will development take place?

The growth strategy promotes 4 distinct areas as the focus for future investment and growth:

- the Northern State Highway 1 Corridor, (mainly Hampton Downs/Te Kauwhata, Meremere and Huntly)
- the Southern State Highway 1 Corridor, (mainly Taupiri, Ngaruawahia and Horotiu)
- the Hamilton Periphery, (mainly Gordonton, Tamahere, Tauwhare, Eureka, Newstead, Te Kowhai, Whatawhata and Matangi)
- Raglan and the West Coast.

Given the scale of growth anticipated to 2061 it is also necessary that the growth strategy identifies critical environmental resources that will become increasingly important to the district's economy and identity and will require protection. These are essentially the district's versatile soils, productive lands and environmental assets.

The State Highway 1 Corridor

The district's growth will rely heavily on the continued economic growth of the region as a whole. Whilst the district generally is highly productive, the key economic drivers are currently situated at either end of the district, in Auckland and Hamilton, largely as a consequence of industrial land supply, the concentration of processing industries and services, and the availability of labour markets.

The district itself currently has relatively little available zoned industrial land to capture economic investment but given its strong relationship to the nationally and regionally important State Highway 1 and NIMTR corridor, the likelihood is that increasing the supply within the district would add significantly to the economic strength of the region. Moreover, the district is increasingly being seen as a suitable location for energy generation to sustain Auckland regional growth. That resource is equally capable of supporting local growth within the district itself.

The relative advantages of an increased land supply fall away quickly with increased distance from the state highway network but providing that locations can be found with good access to that network, they will add to the qualitative supply of land within the region. Locations that also have good access to the rail network will add significantly to the overall supply as they offer the prospect of reaching markets much further afield. A diverse industrial land supply is a key requirement for sustainable economic growth.

These locational requirements support the identification of industrial growth nodes along the State Highway 1 corridor.

The Northern State Highway 1 Corridor

At the northern end of the corridor the market is already beginning to identify opportunities in the **Te Kauwhata/Hampton Downs area**. The advantages of short travel times to and from South Auckland, proximity to road and rail, the planned expansion of Pokeno within Franklin District all add to the competitive advantage that this area can offer. Some development has already occurred. The establishment of the Springhill corrections facility, the equestrian centre and the establishment of the Hampton Downs Motorsports Park are all

responding to these advantages and contributing to the critical factors that will support the further development of this area as a major employment node. With the introduction of such high order activities will come the prospect of employment growth in related or supporting activities. For instance the existing landfill operation brings the potential for further employment in the research and development of waste minimisation and recycling technologies.

But such growth will be limited and perceived as a rural alternative rather than a mainstream supply until it establishes a strong relationship with locally based labour supply, support services and infrastructure that will cater for the expanding demands of the business community. Local population growth is a critical requirement for the long-term success of this area as an employment centre.

Longer term and more sustainable growth will be supported by the development of Te Kauwhata as the principal service centre. The village is already experiencing residential growth pressures arising from the development of the Spring Hill Corrections Facility and Hampton Downs Motorsports Park. Structure planning is underway that will help to define a framework for longer term development of the village. In the context of a district wide growth strategy Te Kauwhata is strategically important as a growth node for further residential development.

Future planning for the village and the surrounding area will strengthen the relationship between growth and further economic development in the Hampton Downs area. Local transportation links between areas of development will be critical to ensuring that the strategic advantages of being alongside the state highway network do not impinge on the performance of this route. The development of links with the rail network will reinforce the strategic significance of this location for future growth.

It will be important to balance the growth with retaining the character and feel of Te Kauwhata. The Te Kauwhata Community Plan (called “Our Village – Our Future”) outlines a future built around lifestyle choice, emphasising the importance of history and culture and the promotion of regional and national events. Structure planning will recognise these important community aspirations.

On the back of such growth, and in combination with additional potentially developable land between the Waikato River and State Highway 1, the prospects for the revitalisation of **Meremere** will increase significantly.

Further south, **Huntly** will continue to be a focus for mineral extraction and power generation as well as providing tourism and recreation opportunities associated with the river, lakes and Hakarimata ranges. Whilst being nationally important, such activities also place a constraint on future expansion of the township. As a consequence, future development will largely be achieved through the redevelopment of existing underutilised sites within the town, particularly where they will help to bridge the gap between the town centre and the residential areas. Completion of the Huntly Bypass will remove through traffic and greatly improve amenity levels within the town, providing a stimulus for new investment. The development of new industrial activities (including heavy industry) will diversify and increase employment opportunities within the town, help to sustain steady population growth and support its role as a service centre for a wider rural community.

The Southern State Highway 1 Corridor

Taupiri will continue to be constrained by the expressway development but there will be scope for further small scale residential growth towards the south and east. Completion of the Huntly and Ngaruawahia Bypass components of the Expressway will create opportunities for new industrial investment, potentially in logistics development, taking advantage of the towns positioning on a north-south/east-west intersection and its proximity to Hamilton to the south and Huntly to the north.

Ngaruawahia is similarly constrained in terms of the effects of through traffic on the town. Whilst the town hosts many of the facilities that could support a much larger population, through traffic volumes severely limit their accessibility and convenience. As a consequence the town lacks cohesion as an urban area and underperforms in terms of being a service centre. The proximity and convenience of access to facilities and services in north Hamilton means that the surrounding rural area has a stronger association with the City than with the town.

The removal of through traffic by the construction of the Ngaruawahia Bypass is the key to unlocking the town's potential. With more convenient access to and within the town, the prospects for attracting new residential growth will greatly enhance. A particular opportunity exists within the central area where access to the river, the town centre and the rail network provide all the key components that would enable the creation of a residential neighbourhood specifically designed to relate to its setting and of a density that will support viable public transport services. The intensification will be supported by appropriate urban design standards for high quality and mid-density developments and with an increased local catchment population the prospects for increased investment and an expansion of the range of services and facilities within the centre will improve significantly.

Improved access onto the road network and the availability of an increased labour supply will create the right conditions for locally based industrial and business development.

The town is the official residence of the Maori King. Revitalisation of the town will draw strength from its location and significance at the heart of Kingitanga and through Council's partnership with Tangata Whenua, opportunities will be explored to see how these unique attributes can be translated into tourism, education and business development. The town should rightfully claim title as the cultural capital of the Waikato region.

A greenbelt will be developed between Horotiu and Ngaruawahia in order to protect the separate identity of the two towns and promote the cultural significance of Ngaruawahia.

Horotiu benefits from what will become a strategically significant interchange on State Highway 1, linking the proposed Ngaruawahia and Te Rapa Bypasses at the northern entrance to the city and coinciding with opportunities to link to the North Island Main Trunk Railway.

The local area already provides a home to nationally and regionally significant industry that requires access to a reliable labour supply and this is reflected in the wide diversity of housing in the area and the extent of local facilities. There is considerable pressure for further residential and industrial development. The growth strategy needs to give direction to such market pressure and provide a context for further investment in necessary infrastructure.

Geographically the area is ideally positioned to enable the establishment of a major employment spine extending through to the Te Rapa and Rotokauri areas of Hamilton city, strengthening the economic potential of the city and optimising the benefits of such an important transport interchange. This growth will be largely through light industrial and commercial development. Large scale retail facilities in Hamilton city, at the Base and Te Rapa Road generally, will continue to provide the principal shopping facilities for residents around the city's northern periphery but neighbourhood scale facilities will still be provided close to Horotiu village to meet local needs and support the daily needs of a growing business community.

Expansion of Horotiu village, particularly to take advantage of proximity to the river, will contribute towards increasing the local labour supply. It will help to retain locally based services including Horotiu School and will benefit from any new facilities provided through development of new employment activities.

The Hamilton Periphery

The interface between the city and the district is a critically important economic asset. Longer term, thinking generations ahead, it will likely form a land bank for further city expansion. In the interim the area is characterised by versatile soils supporting farming and other rural activities that underpin the wealth of the Waikato region as a whole. Their continued viability is essential.

Further depletion of this resource and further pressure on continuing rural industry and agricultural activity needs to be halted. The corollary to such a strategy is that adequate provision is made for the housing market in appropriate locations. Where it can, the city can be expected to meet its own housing needs for a population that expects urban standards of amenity and facilities. Within the District, the strategy aims to focus growth around towns and villages to create the critical mass that will enable infrastructure and services to be provided in a timely and cost effective manner.

Tamahere has established itself as a thriving residential community with its own sense of identity. Some education and employment opportunities are available locally and further employment opportunities are expected to emerge locally through the development of land around Hamilton Airport and optimising development opportunities around the state highway interchange. The diversity of land use in this vicinity and the growth in events within Hamilton and Mystery Creek suggests that future employment growth in this area could develop a strong tourism based sector, in addition to more traditional sectors.

The existence of the interchange on such a high volume commuter route between Hamilton and Cambridge, and its proximity to major travel generators such as the Airport and the Events Centre indicate potential for the development of new transport initiatives such as Park and Ride to ensure that traffic growth does not become a limiting factor on future development.

The neighbourhood has potential for further residential development and the expansion of community facilities could be supported by a consolidation of development at a higher density. Specialist and neighbourhood shops will develop to meet the needs of a diverse community seeking alternative retail options to those available within the City.

Te Kowhai village provides an alternative housing choice in a location that will be relieved of through traffic following the completion of the Ngaruawahia and Te Rapa Bypasses and the potential realignment of State Highway 39. Following these works future development will have the potential to consolidate and enhance the village core and will be situated centrally between significant employment opportunities at Horotiu and Whatawhata. A neighbourhood shopping centre will add to the range of local amenities and will meet day-to-day shopping needs of residents.

Whatawhata itself is situated at the intersection of state highways 39 and 23 and will continue to experience continued traffic growth on these routes. High traffic volumes and the necessary access controls onto the arterial routes will impact on the amenity and convenience of the village but opportunities will still exist for the redevelopment of sites and for further service provision and industrial development.

Gordonton to the north east of Hamilton will develop as a boutique specialist retail area focussing on a growing local Arts and Crafts industry, serving passing motorists and supported by a growing local residential population as well as in the northern suburbs of Hamilton. The area will retain its rural look and feel to enable it to provide alternative but complementary facilities to those available within the City. Infrastructure constraints such as the availability of water and wastewater will need to be addressed if the area is to grow and thrive but residential development opportunities exist to the north of Gordonton Road where they are supported by existing facilities and schools provision.

Elsewhere around the City, **Matangi, Eureka, Newstead, Tauwhare** and **Horsham Downs** have potential for smaller scale growth reflecting the extent of service provision within these villages and the priority to protect the rural land resource. Development in these areas will consolidate existing villages and strengthen local communities rather than follow the pattern of dispersed development that has occurred in recent years.

Raglan and West Coast

Raglan and the **Whaanga Coast** more generally has experienced significant development pressure arising from its outstanding natural environment and accessibility from larger population centres. However, resident population increase has occurred at a slower rate. Seasonal population increases of 300-400% of the resident population dominate the town. Whilst this enables the town to support some facilities that would normally be found only in larger settlements, it brings with it a range of issues that are not found elsewhere.

Infrastructure and services need to be capable of supporting peak seasonal population levels. Council investment in infrastructure and community facilities is essentially servicing a non-resident population but greater efficiencies can be gained by expanding the permanent residential base. To achieve this, the town needs to create new residential development options and diversify from its traditional tourism employment base.

Eco-tourism is a potential growth area. The establishment of a light industrial area close to Raglan will provide and promote local employment and reduce reliance on long distance commuting for employment purposes. Further outward expansion of the residential areas could erode the environmental and landscape qualities that underpin the town's attraction. The redevelopment of land around the town centre provides an opportunity to broaden the range of housing options within the town by promoting areas of more intensive, smaller sections.

Future development close to the centre will provide the stimulus for further investment in a wider range of services within the centre.

An alternative access to Raglan will allow quicker access to the west coast beaches and Wainui Reserve and reduce the pressure points of peak traffic flows. With a more efficient transport network the area will have increased capacity to absorb visitors, enabling consideration of the promotion of the Wainui Reserve as a Regional Park. The potential for increased visitor numbers, an increased local population and a more efficient network will create the right conditions for the establishment of public transport facilities that could be further.

Proximity to natural areas being examined for renewable energy generation provide an opportunity to resource the growth of local business and reinforce Raglan's identity as a "green" alternative lifestyle location.

So what happens elsewhere?

The vast majority of the district is productive farmland, largely on versatile soils and complemented by coastlines and outstanding landscapes of national significance. Recognition and protection of these resources is critically important to the district's long-term economic performance.

An essential part of the strategy for protecting this resource is to halt the explosion of residential development into the countryside and direct this into the district's townships. Safeguarding the countryside against the economic and social pressures that arise from uncontrolled development will provide certainty for the continued operation and investment in rural businesses, both in terms of traditional production industries and new opportunities that will be created by the growth of the district's towns.

That is not to say that no further development will occur. Many of the district's smaller settlements sit comfortably within their rural surroundings without creating conflict. Further development within and adjoining such settlements will be appropriate to sustain local facilities but it will be limited to a scale that will retain and protect the dominance of surrounding rural activity and protect against pressures that would threaten its operational efficiency.

The district benefits from some exceptional and dramatic landscape features, some of which have a value beyond their aesthetic appeal such as providing opportunities for mineral extraction, power generation or recreational development. Sites that are significant for their ecological or biodiversity interest require protection of their intrinsic qualities, recognising that these qualities also have an economic value in supporting recreation, tourism, research and education. Geographically the Hakarimata Range has the potential to provide recreational opportunities capable of serving the majority of the district's townships and reinforcing the Waikato River and Ngaruawahia locality as a cultural focal point. Such a coincidence of natural and cultural features has significant economic potential.

Along the State Highway 2 corridor, the growing volume of Coromandel bound traffic brings a need to consider whether alternative or complementary tourism or recreational facilities could be established to capture the economic value of passing trade and reduce pressure on the

coast. The possibility of coal extraction and the need for subsequent site restoration in the **Maramarua** area could potentially provide such an opportunity through the creation of a freshwater lake capable of being developed as a water sports facility. The potential for such a development is currently being assessed.

Around Hamilton the continued existence of agricultural research facilities at Ruakura and the growth of the associated business cluster based on the Waikato University and Innovation Park will depend on the retention and protection of extensive land areas for field trials on the Hamilton periphery.

On the Coast, the development of the Raglan Township will attract further facilities that will widen its appeal. The surrounding countryside is outstanding and is already experiencing growth in small-scale tourism ventures including accommodation. Such growth would be sustained by the availability of access to other beaches along the coast, providing opportunities to absorb increased visitor numbers without overwhelming Raglan itself.

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