



Our Places

Eastern
Bay of Plenty
spatial plan

Part One: Introduction



Contents

Part 1: Introduction.....	3
About this Plan	5
Who are we planning for?	5
What the Spatial Plan is used for.....	6
Who has been involved in making the plan?	7
How does it align with the policy, planning, funding, and project delivery framework?.....	10
What process was undertaken to prepare the plan?.....	12
Enabling iwi visions for the future.....	13
Treaty Settlements.....	14
Visions for the future	16
The community's values and aspirations	17
What we want to achieve.....	18

Figures

Figure 1: Location	4
Figure 2: How the plan is implemented	6
Figure 3: Groups involved in making the plan	8
Figure 4: Project team structure	9
Figure 5: Process to prepare the plan	12
Figure 6: Iwi rohe in the eastern bay	15
Figure 7: Iwi engagement feedback	16
Figure 8: Themes of engagement feedback	17

Note:

Before the spatial plan is received by Council for adoption, minor changes will be made to the spatial plan document to improve communication and readability, provide Te Reo translation of headlines and corrections to spelling, and graphic design of the total document.

Part 1: Introduction

We have created a plan that helps us set a vision for the future growth of the Whakatāne, Kawerau and Ōpōtiki districts, within the rohe of the iwi and hapū of Eastern Bay of Plenty in the wider Bay of Plenty Region. Our Places – Eastern Bay Spatial Plan sets out where the Eastern Bay of Plenty wants to head and provides a roadmap for how to get there. Welcome to Our Places, Eastern Bay Spatial Plan

The eastern bay is renowned for its outstanding natural and cultural taonga, attracting people to our region over the centuries. We are all part of a continuum – there were those before us and there will be those after us. We have a responsibility to care for the taonga we have inherited, while meeting the needs of current and future generations. Those needs include ensuring that our people can continue to live, work, visit and play in the eastern bay, now and in future. It's about providing safe places for people to live, supporting the local economy, adapting to climate change and protecting our environment – ultimately, ensuring people and places can thrive.

The spatial plan is a collaboration between Whakatāne, Kawerau, and Ōpōtiki district councils, and Toi Moana Bay of Plenty Regional Council, working in partnership with iwi and Government agencies to respond to the challenges and opportunities facing the sub-region.

The spatial plan provides a framework to help our communities grow in a sustainable way. It focuses on improving our amenities, protecting our environment, offering better transport options, and providing housing that meets the needs of our diverse and growing population. The plan also emphasises the importance of safeguarding our natural, cultural, and historic resources, ensuring resilient communities, including managing climate change risks, and building strong partnerships with iwi and hapū.

By encouraging investment and economic development, the spatial plan aims to support the local economy. It also promotes community involvement, giving residents a chance to have their say in planning for the future. Overall, the spatial plan offers a long-term vision for coordinated planning, resource allocation, and decision-making across the eastern bay.

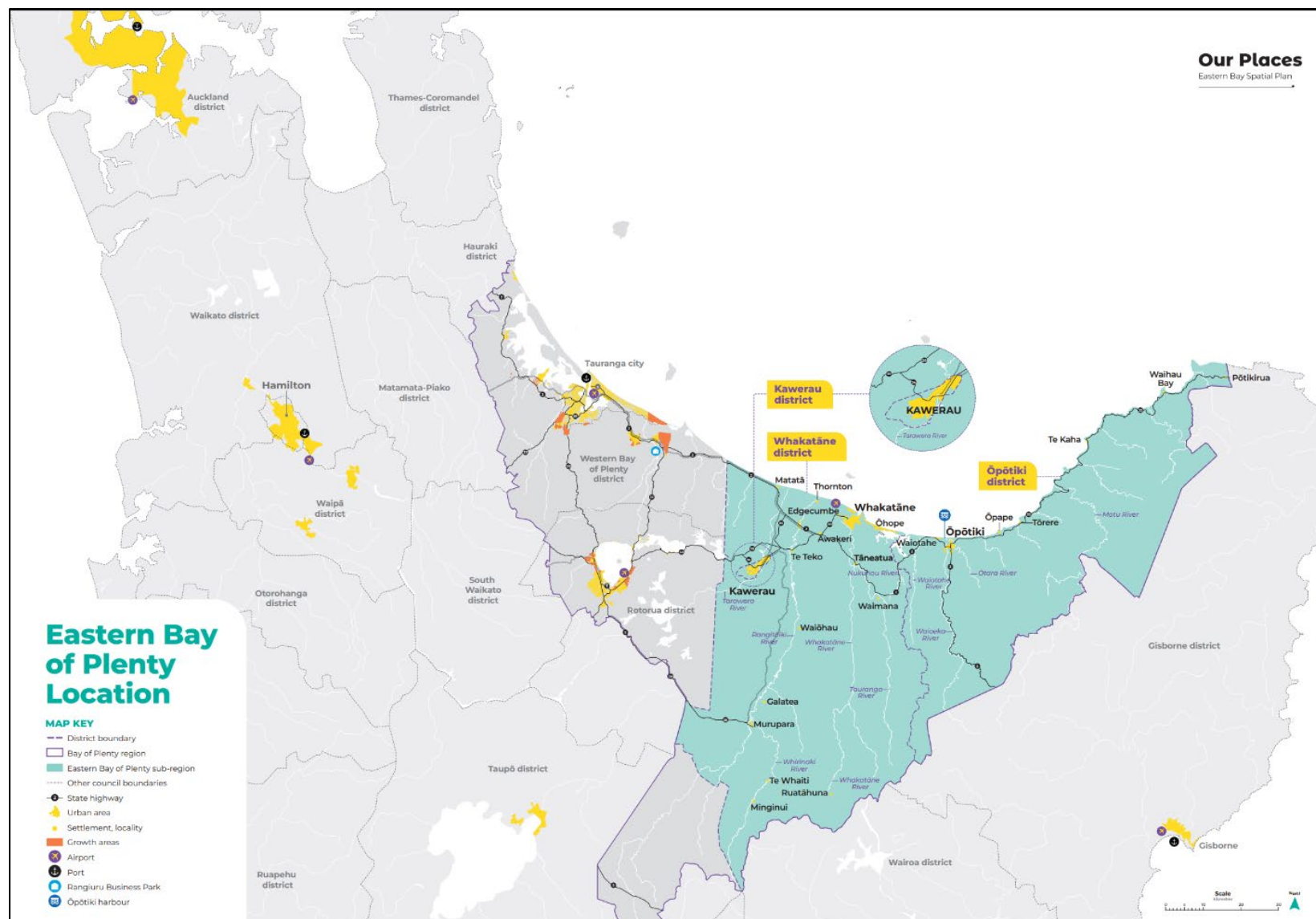


Figure 1: Location

About this Plan

Who are we planning for?

The plan has been developed for the people of the eastern bay, and for future generations.

The eastern bay has about 57,000 residents, and we need to plan for many more. Of these, 33,500 (59%) live in Kawerau, Ōpōtiki, and Whakatāne; 11,650 (20%) in Awakeri, Matatā, Murupara, Tāneatua, Te Teko, and Edgecumbe; and 11,850 (21%) in rural areas.

By 2055, the eastern bay's population could increase to 68,000. This growth means we will need more houses, business space, and supporting infrastructure.

Our population is ageing, alongside a youthful and growing Māori population. By 2055, people aged over 65 could make up almost one third of the population, up from 17% in 2018. Māori have a different age profile compared to the general population, with a median age about ten years younger. This demographic shift means that future housing in the eastern bay will need to support both a growing and ageing population, with particular attention to the needs of our young and vibrant Māori community.

Our region is unique with its significant Māori population, which stands out compared to other parts of the country. Over half of the eastern bay's population are Māori, comprising about two-thirds of the population in Kawerau district and Ōpōtiki district, while in the Whakatāne district, Māori represent almost half.

What the Spatial Plan is used for

This spatial plan captures our collective aspirations and goals for the sub-region. It outlines how we can tackle challenges and seize opportunities together. Here's how it will help:

Guiding growth and development: The plan outlines where we expect urban growth and development across the eastern bay, while ensuring communities are safe and resilient. It aligns strategies from various organisations, including local and Central Government agencies and iwi.

Informing priorities and decision making: The plan guides councils and Government agencies on where to invest in infrastructure and services to help our communities grow.

Building partnerships: The plan focuses on collaboration with different groups to address community needs through collective actions, joined up infrastructure delivery and advocacy.

Effective regulation: While this plan does not replace Council district plans or change zoning, it does guide detailed growth planning and will inform district plans and long-term plans, and align decision-making, helping us see the bigger picture. It will also place the eastern bay in a strong position to respond swiftly to implementing the upcoming reforms of the Resource Management Act (RMA), which are expected to require a regional spatial plan.

Integrating other plans: The plan considers other policies and programs influencing places. For areas facing changes, it shows how Councils can work collectively with each other, and for communities and landowners to understand impacts and plan together. The spatial plan will align with the Economic Development Strategy to achieve growth.

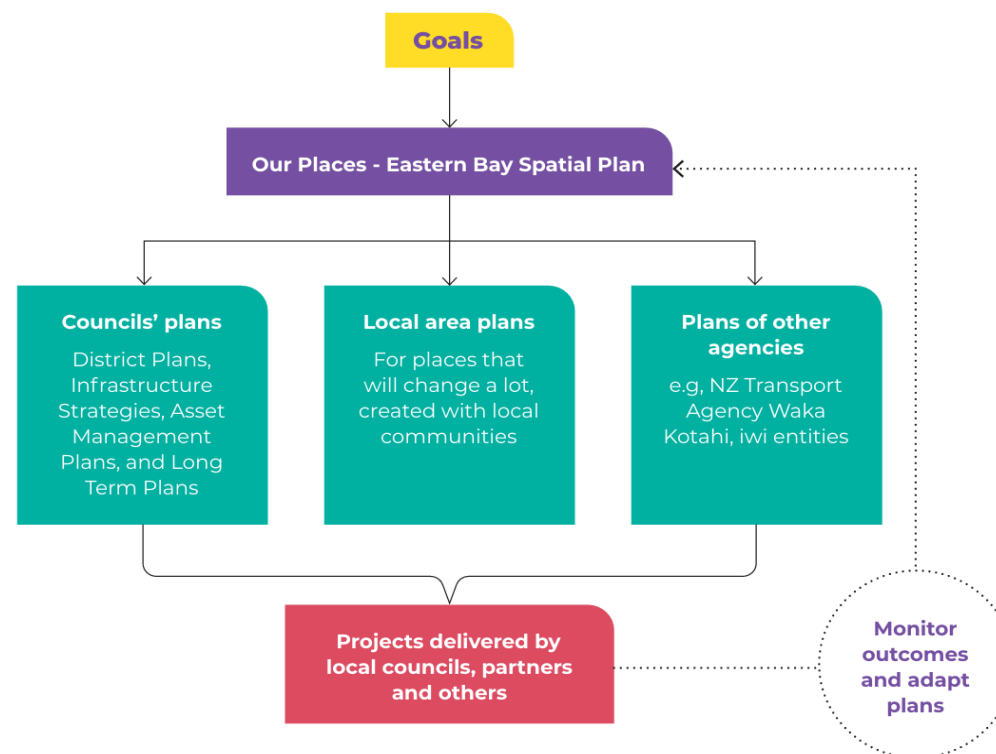


Figure 2: How the plan is implemented

Who has been involved in making the plan?

The spatial plan has been developed in partnership with Local, Regional and Central Government along with iwi partners from across the sub-region. The wellbeing of eastern bay communities is inextricably linked, and partners recognised the need to plan and implement outcomes together as a sub-region, rather than separate authorities, iwi and districts.

This partnership was initiated in 2022 when leaders in the eastern bay recognised the need to work together to positively shape the future of the sub-region. It brings together the people and organisations that have a significant role in managing growth. The partnership is also underpinned by Te Tiriti o Waitangi (Treaty of Waitangi) principles of partnership, making informed decisions and active participation. The spatial plan has been developed with tangata whenua and iwi representatives as part of the Project Governance Group.



** Iwi authorities involved in the project at the time of this report; not all have chosen to actively participate in the project, but are being kept informed*

Figure 3: Groups involved in making the plan

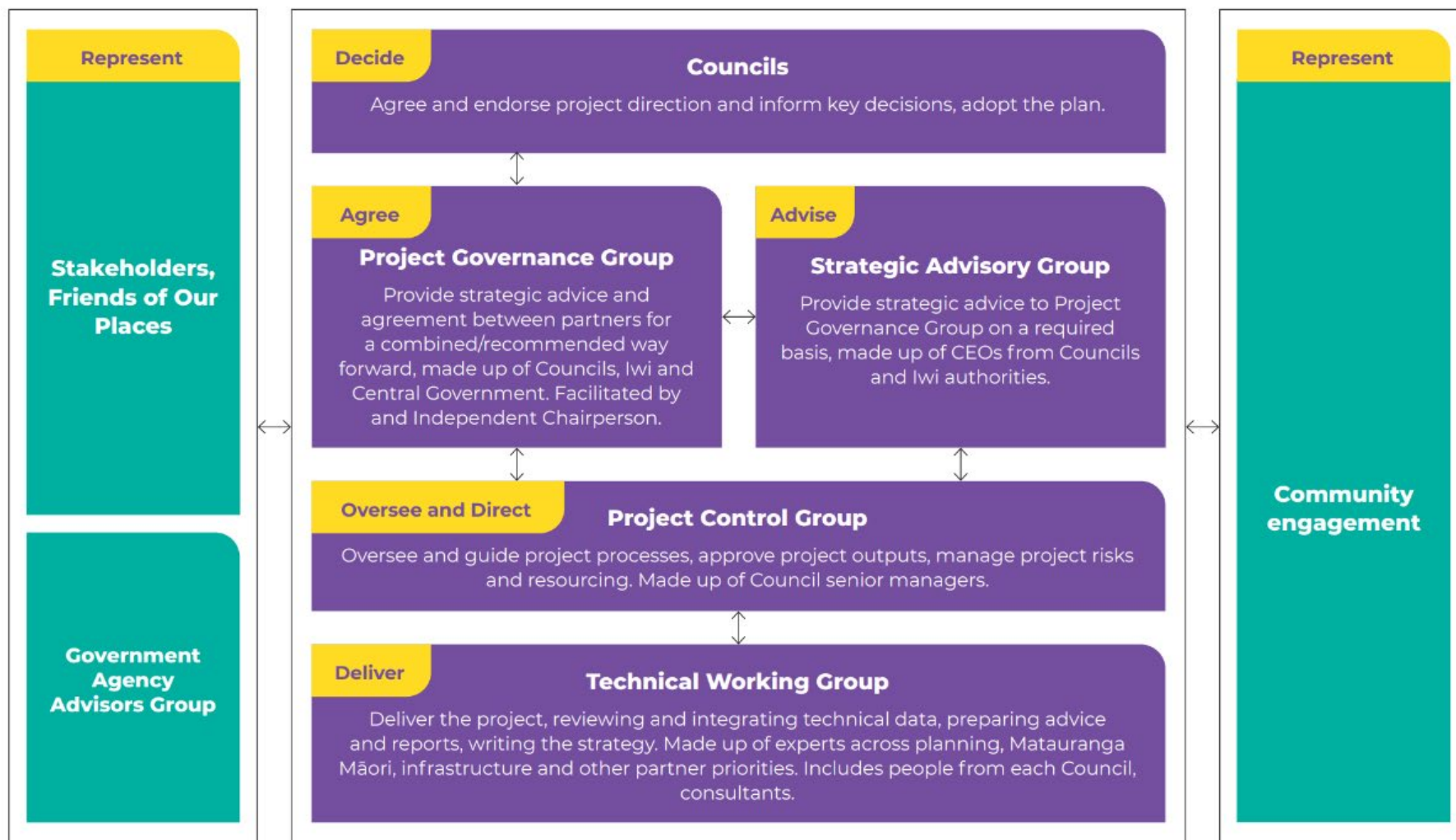


Figure 4: Project team structure

How does it align with the policy, planning, funding, and project delivery framework?

One of the primary objectives of the spatial plan is to integrate various policy directions and planning processes into a unified set of priorities. This single vision can then serve as the core of the broader framework of directives, strategies, policies, plans, and programmes at national, regional, and local levels to influence the growth and development of the eastern bay.

The spatial plan supports the purpose of the Local Government Act 2002 by enabling local decision making and by promoting social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing of the communities in the eastern bay. The spatial plan has also considered the Land Transport Management Act 2003 which requires the integration of land use and transport planning and the 2024 Government Policy Statement (GPS) on land transport which sets out the strategic priorities for land transport investment. The spatial plan has also been informed by the RMA and the suite of National Policy Statements (NPS) which provide direction on matters of national significance.

National direction for resource management and planning is in a period of significant transition. The spatial plan enables the eastern bay to proactively speak about what it holds important in these processes and can inform the development of pending regional spatial plans signalled in RMA reform announcements.

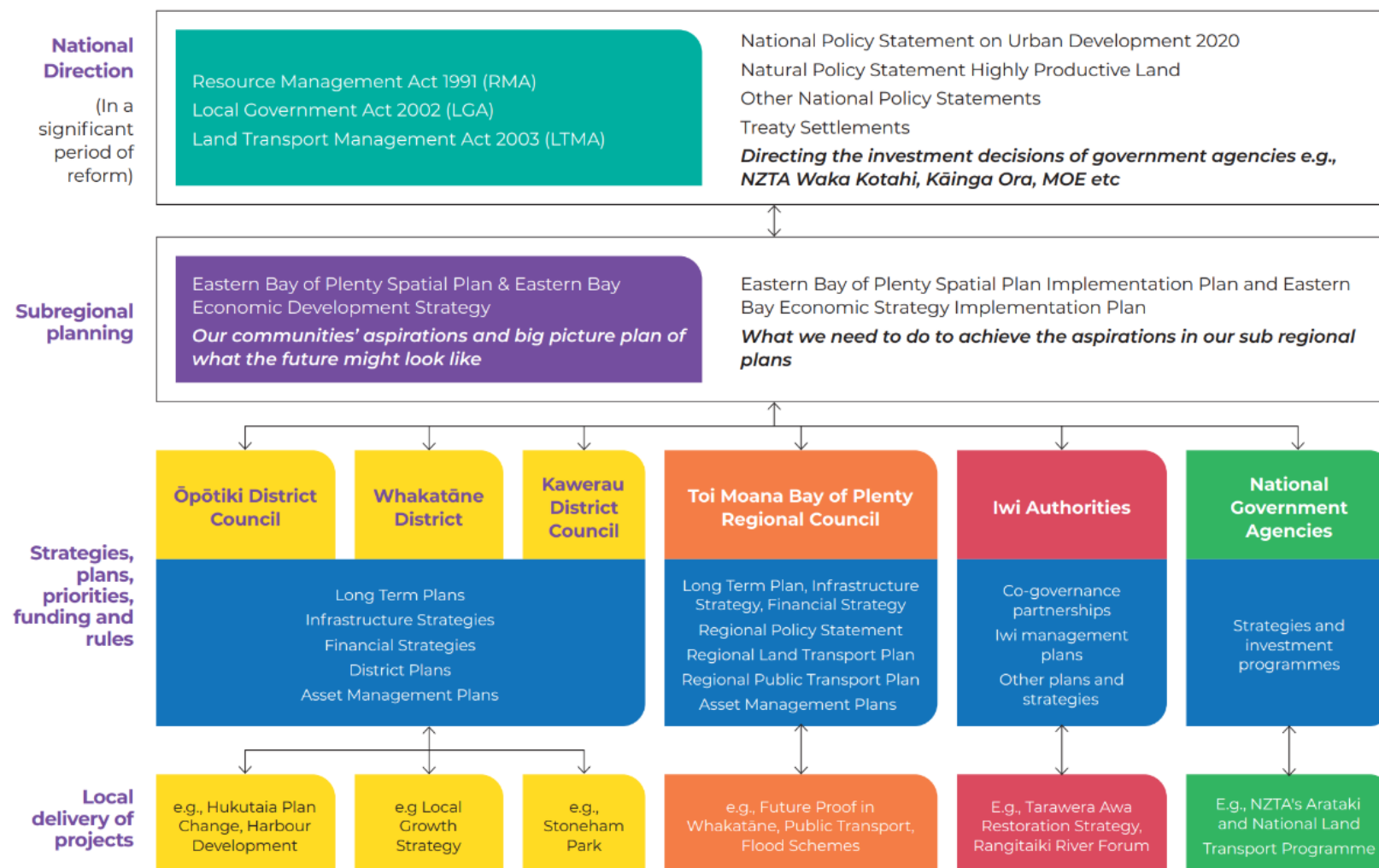


Figure 5: Planning and policy direction

What process was undertaken to prepare the plan?

A collaborative approach was taken to prepare the spatial plan, including community and stakeholder engagement, so that the people of the eastern bay have a say about what matters most about the places we live, work, play and invest, and all relevant agencies have a realistic understanding about future priorities, resourcing and funding needs.



Figure 6: Process to prepare the plan

Enabling iwi visions for the future

Iwi are key players in the eastern bay, with customary rights and obligations to use, develop and protect their ancestral taonga, including lands, water, and infrastructure. Such rights and obligations include providing healthy homes and sustainable employment for tribal members.

Iwi are emerging as major investment partners across aquaculture, horticulture, agriculture, tourism, forestry, and water resources and supply.

Grounded in deep and enduring connections to their kāinga, iwi and hapū demonstrate a unique resilience and ability to walk in both te ao Māori and te ao Pākehā. This strength, shaped by whakapapa and a fixed presence in the region, continues to inform and drive iwi-led aspirations for social, cultural, economic, and environmental wellbeing.

Iwi in the eastern bay

The iwi of the eastern bay are an enduring presence, grounded in whakapapa, whenua, and generations of connection to place. They have maintained an unbroken relationship with their rohe, upholding the values, tikanga, and identity of their people through centuries of change. Their presence is not just historical but living and resilient.

In the face of colonisation and Treaty breaches, these iwi have remained strong and adaptive. They continue to lead with purpose, restoring mana motuhake and revitalising their language, culture, and environmental stewardship. Their role in the region is central, not only as tangata whenua but as contributors to community wellbeing, education, and whānau resilience.

Economically, they are investors, employers, and innovators. Iwi governance entities drive sustainable development, partner with local and regional government, and support projects that reflect iwi aspirations. The iwi of the eastern bay are essential to the social, cultural, and economic fabric of the region, anchoring its identity and shaping a future that honours the past and uplifts generations to come.

Hapū, whānau, and Land Trusts play a vital role in sustaining the fabric of iwi life in the eastern bay. As the foundation of iwi identity and governance, hapū and whānau carry the responsibilities of ahi kā, ensuring the ongoing presence, protection, and use of whenua, awa, and maunga. Land Trusts and incorporations, often established to manage whenua Māori under collective ownership, are key vehicles for advancing local development, supporting marae, and providing opportunities for future generations. Together, these entities enable grounded decision-making, uphold intergenerational responsibilities, and ensure that the aspirations of whānau and hapū are reflected in the management and use of whenua and resources.

In the eastern bay, there are 11 iwi, 99 hapū and 92 marae. These iwi include:

- Te Whānau a Apanui
- Ngāti Porou
- Ngāi Tai
- Te Whakatōhea
- Ngāti Awa
- Ngāti Makino
- Ngāi Tūhoe
- Ngāti Rangitīhi
- Tūwharetoa ki Kawerau
- Ngāti Manawa
- Ngāti Whare

Twenty two percent (22%) of land in the eastern bay is Māori Freehold Land (168,987 ha) making iwi and Māori Land Trusts key parties in the development of the eastern bay. Māori-led housing and economic activities are inseparable from the eastern bay, and it is crucial that the wider spatial planning work acknowledges that each iwi and hapū have historical whakapapa over their places of interest, and that these are considered in decision-making.

Treaty Settlements

Treaty Settlements are formal agreements between the Crown and iwi that aim to address historical breaches of Te Tiriti o Waitangi. In the Eastern Bay of Plenty, iwi such as Ngāti Awa, Ngai Tūhoe, Ngāti Manawa, Ngāti Whare, Te Whakatōhea, Ngāti Rangitīhi, Ngāti Porou, Ngāti Makino, Tuwharetoa ki Kawerau (as part of the Ngāti Tūwharetoa settlement) have settled with the Crown through these processes. Ngāi Tai and Te Whānau a Apanui are still in negotiations. Settlements typically include financial and cultural redress, the return of specific lands or sites of significance, and formal apologies.

The settlements enable iwi to reassert rangatiratanga and require the establishment of Post-Settlement Governance Entities (PSGEs). They also support iwi participation in co-governance arrangements, environmental management, regional planning and strengthening iwi presence across social, cultural, economic, and political spheres.

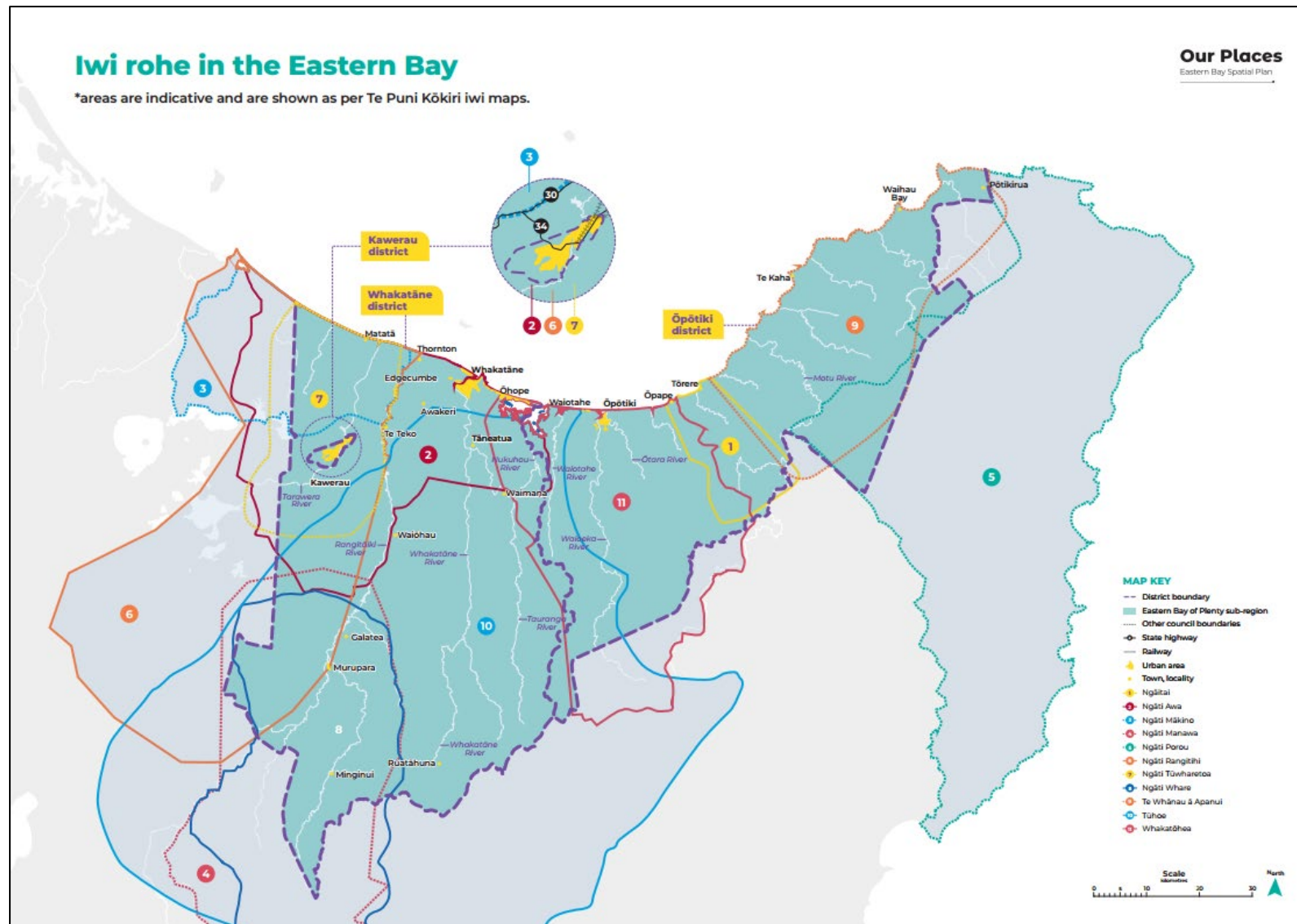


Figure 7: Iwi rohe in the eastern bay

Visions for the future

Aspirations and priorities have been documented from engagement on the spatial plan and from materials provided in prior consultation processes.

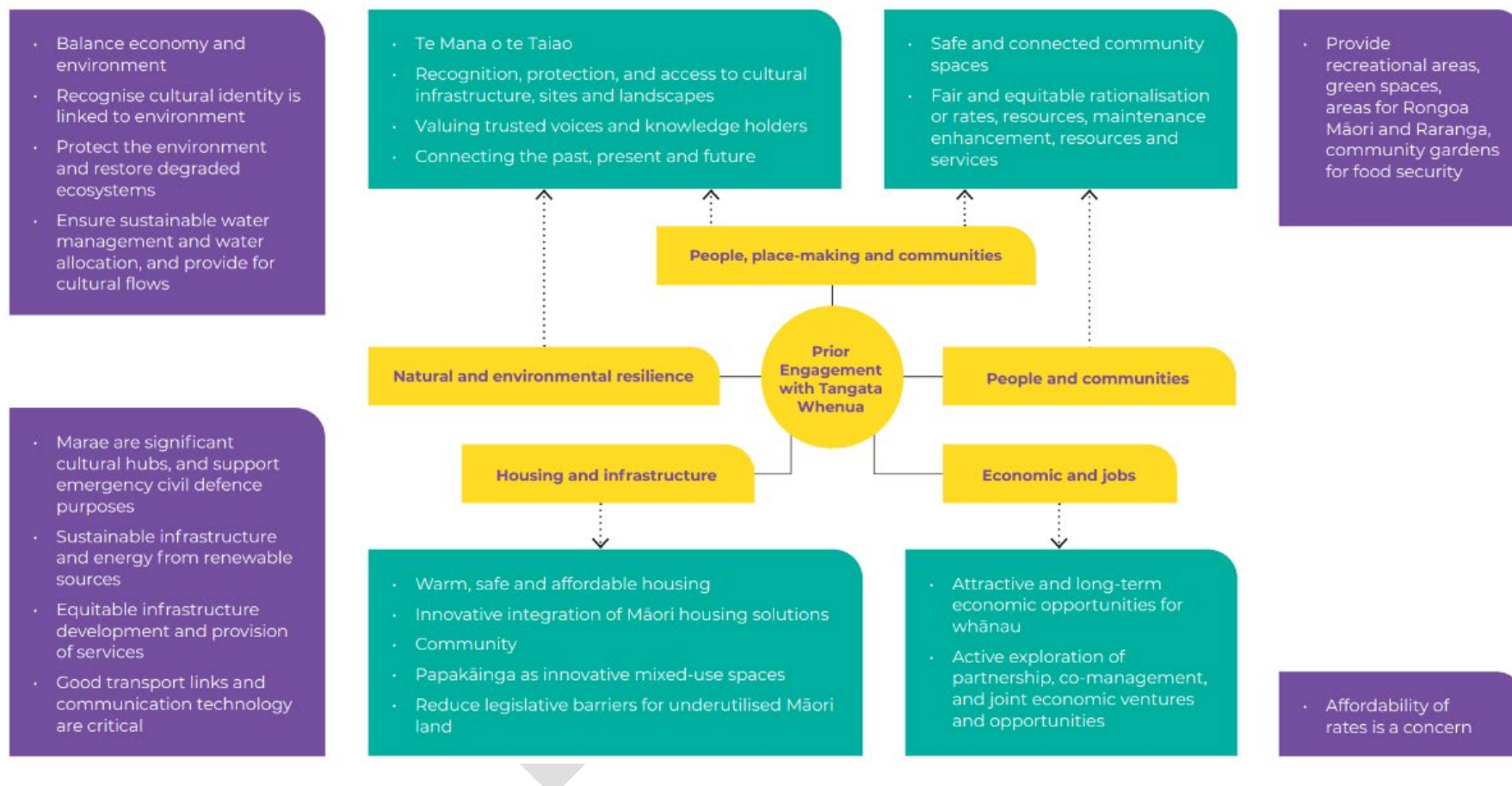


Figure 8: Iwi engagement feedback

The community's values and aspirations

The implementation priorities of the spatial plan respond to the interest and ambitions set out by the community through engagement, with emphasis on quality of life and the environment.

Infrastructure

- Transport infrastructure that is safe, efficient, and sustainable
- Water and wastewater services that are modern, efficient, and which protect the public health and environment
- Infrastructure resiliency to protect the community and ensure safety during natural disasters

Housing

- Housing development to meet demand, that is affordable, caters for a diverse (and ageing) population, and provides choices like rural residential development
- Sustainable practices for housing development are adopted, including building practices, materials and renewable energy
- Communities are resilient to natural hazards and the impacts of climate change
- Development of Māori land, including for papakāinga, is enabled and supported

Community and lifestyle

- Community character is maintained for lifestyle, relationships and reflect the individual characteristics of each community
- Recreational facilities enhance the quality of life for residents and connect people with nature

Environmental

- Protection of natural environment areas and culturally significant sites from development
- Sustainable management of productive land and water resources to ensure land and water remains healthy for future generations

Economic opportunities

- Create new employment opportunities by attracting business to support the local economy
- Support local businesses to create economic development and encourage entrepreneurship and innovation
- Commercial and industrial land supply is expanded to create job opportunities
- Economic development is balanced with environmental and social factors so development contributes positively to the community

Figure 9: Themes of engagement feedback

What we want to achieve

The Project Governance Group (PGG) developed goals to provide direction for the spatial plan in achieving long term wellbeing outcomes. These were developed to be in alignment with the Long-Term Plan visions and community outcomes across the sub-region, prior engagements and consultations, and considering iwi values and aspirations.

Goals

Whai hauora me te whakarauora

Healthy and healing

Ngā ohaoha toitū, kanorau hoki, e tuku ana i ngā mahi me ngā kaupapa mō te iwi whānui

Sustainable, diversified economy providing jobs and purpose for our people

Ngā tāngata, ngā haporī me ngā tauwāhi e hono ana, e tōnui ana, e manawaroa ana hei whakaata i te hītori me ngā tūmanako o tātou katoa

Connected, thriving, resilient people, communities & places that reflect our history and aspirations



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Part Two: Key Influences



Contents

Part 2: Key influences	5
Factors shaping the eastern bay's future	5
Strong connections create opportunities	6
Healthy and healing	8
Natural and Cultural Environment	8
Where are we now?	8
What is being done?	10
What does the future hold?	12
Sustainable, diversified economy	15
Economic wellbeing.....	15
Where are we now?	15
What does the future hold?	21
Population growth.....	23
Looking back at how the population has changed	23
Looking ahead at how the population could change	24
Employment growth.....	27
Connected and resilient people, places, and communities	28
Changing housing needs	28
An aging population needs accessible housing	28

A growing youthful Māori demographic needs larger homes, and more affordable homes	28
Affordability of housing continues to be a challenge for everyone	29
Natural hazards and climate resilience	33
Where are we now?	33
What is being done?.....	38
What does the future hold?	39
Rural Environment.....	41
Where are we now?	42
What does the future hold?	45

Figures

Figure 1: Regional and upper North Island Connections	7
Figure 2: Natural and cultural environment activities	11
Figure 3: Protecting and enhancing the environment	13
Figure 4: Protecting the cultural environment	14
Figure 5: Primary industries	17
Figure 6: Eastern bay's contribution to GDP	18
Figure 7: Economic structure by broad sector (% of total, year to March 2024)	19
Figure 8: Annual change in GDP over the past twenty years	20
Figure 9: Economic Development Strategy Summary	22
Figure 10: Number of children born on the eastern bay	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Figure 11: Birthplace of residents	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Figure 12: Eastern bay population projection range	25
Figure 13: Employee projections 2022-2053	27

Figure 14: Demand for business land 2022-2053 (ha)	27
Figure 15: Median age	30
Figure 16: Demographic change	30
Figure 17: Housing register	31
Figure 18: Household crowding	31
Figure 19: Housing register	31
Figure 20: House values	31
Figure 21: Climate change risks	37
Figure 22: Catchment locations	35
Figure 23: Natural hazards	36
Figure 24: Risk reduction roadmap	41
Figure 25: Rural environment	43

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Part 2: Key influences

Factors shaping the eastern bay's future

Part 2 – Key Influences describes the key influences that inform the decision-making process for the spatial plan, development of goals, and recommendations for key moves and what we need to focus on doing next.

Goal	Key influence topics	Overview statement
Whai hauora me te whakarauora Healthy and healing	Natural and cultural environment	There is an opportunity to prioritise the natural and cultural environment more highly within decision-making processes.
Ngā ohaoha toitū, kanorau hoki, e tuku ana i ngā mahi me ngā kaupapa mō te iwi whānui Sustainable, diversified economy providing jobs and purpose for our people	Economic wellbeing Population growth Employment growth	There is an opportunity to leverage investments and infrastructure projects to boost the local economy and create new job opportunities.
Ngā tāngata, ngā hāpori me ngā tauwāhi e hono ana, e tōnui ana, e manawaroa ana hei whakaata i te hītori me ngā tūmanako o tātou katoa Connected, thriving, resilient people, communities and places that reflect our history and aspirations	Changing housing needs Natural hazards and climate resilience Rural environment	The eastern bay's population is expected to, present an opportunity to plan for diverse housing types and business developments to accommodate this growth. This needs to be done in context of various natural hazards, presenting an opportunity to proactively address these risks, ensuring community safety and growth.

Strong connections create opportunities

The eastern bay is not an island and strong connections to the broader region are needed. For example, it is critical that freight can access the Port of Tauranga to reach export markets reliably, housing is located close to employment, and people can reach healthcare and other services in larger urban centres. These are some of the key intra-regional projects that have influenced our planning:

Rangiuru Business Park: a significant industrial development located near Te Puke in the Western Bay of Plenty. It spans 148 ha to accommodate large industrial facilities and is expected to provide up to 4000 jobs in the future. Quayside Holdings owns Stage 1 and 2, comprising 60 ha which is in development now. It provides easy access to major transport routes, including the Tauranga Eastern Link expressway and SH 2 within the junction of the western, eastern, and southern Bay of Plenty, making it highly accessible to the eastern bay.

Tauranga Port: is well-connected to all eastern bay of Plenty districts. Key transport routes, such as SH 2 and the Tauranga Eastern Link expressway, facilitate efficient movement of goods between the port and these areas.

Rotorua Future Development Strategy: outlines how Rotorua will grow and develop over the next 30 years. It focuses on creating a well-functioning urban environment that supports the social, economic, and cultural wellbeing of its people and acknowledges freight links to Kawerau and Whakatane.

Western Bay of Plenty SmartGrowth: a collaborative strategy for managing growth in the Western Bay of Plenty sub-region. The latest SmartGrowth Strategy (2024-2074) aims to build strong, resilient communities that are well-connected and sustainable, including planned growth in Te Tumu in the eastern corridor of the Western Bay sub-region. The SmartGrowth Strategy also identifies SH 2 as an important corridor that services rural production in the eastern bay to the Port of Tauranga.

Gisborne Region Tairāwhiti Future Development Strategy: a comprehensive plan outlining a 30-year vision. It identifies areas for future housing development to meet the demand for nearly 5,000 new homes, ensures necessary infrastructure upgrades, promotes urban intensification to prevent sprawl, and emphasises sustainable practices to benefit the community and environment.

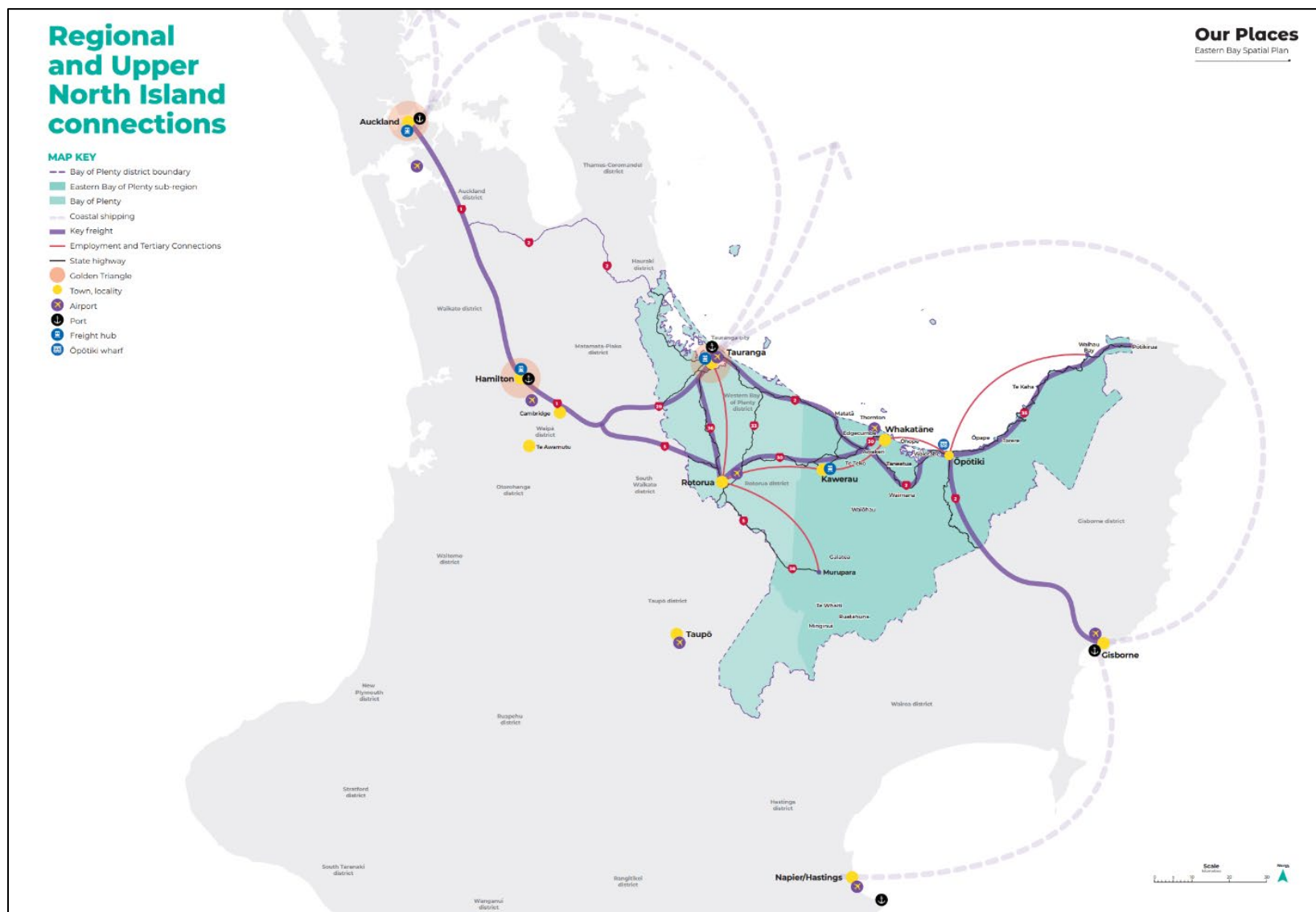


Figure 1: Regional and upper North Island Connections

Healthy and healing

Natural and Cultural Environment

To be better guardians, we need to prioritise the natural and cultural environment more highly within our decision-making. This includes focusing on:

- **Designing sites sensitively by incorporating green infrastructure into urban design, maintaining and developing ecological corridors, and implementing habitat restoration projects in impacted areas.**
- **Upgrading water management systems to meet higher standards.**
- **Continuing to prioritise an integrated catchment management approach, reflecting the Māori concept of "ki uta ki tai" (from the mountains to the sea).**
- **Continuing to recognise, protect and enhance cultural landscapes, customary activities, wāhi tapu, wāhi taonga, wāhi tupuna, and mahinga kai.**

Where are we now?

Whenua

The tangata whenua of the eastern bay whakapapa to the natural world, including their ancestral whenua. The eastern bay has a diverse natural landscape. The ranges of Huiarau and Ikawhenua, with the high point of Maungapōhatu running through to the wilderness treasure of Te Urewera which is the north island's largest native forest. The steep Raukūmara Ranges taper away at the East Cape. Te Urewera and other forested areas such as Whirinaki Te Pua-a-Tane and Raukūmara Conservation Parks provide numerous benefits for the environment, including biodiversity protection, climate regulation, soil stability, and maintaining water quality and supply. Other landscapes such as Ōhiwa Harbour, Waiōtahe and Waioweka Estuaries, and the Matatā wetlands hold significant natural and cultural value and are sensitive to change.

Residential, industrial and agricultural development has modified the landscape. This has had harmful effects on the landform, and the ecological and indigenous biodiversity components of the environment. Many natural landscapes, features and sites are now protected through regional and district planning from inappropriate development.

Awa

The main rivers in the eastern bay (Rangitāiki, Whirinaki, Whakatāne, Waimana-Tauranga, Tarawera, Waiōtahe, Waioweka, Ōtara, Mōtū, and Raukōkore) have shaped the land by depositing sediments, creating fertile soils in areas like the Rangitāiki Plains and around Ōpōtiki.

For Māori, fresh water is a taonga considered essential to life and identity. Fresh water (rivers, lakes, streams, wetlands, groundwater and geothermal resources) is a precious resource and used for residential, commercial and industrial uses, for horticultural irrigation and agriculture, stormwater management, to generate electricity in hydroelectric power generation schemes, and for recreation and tourism purposes. Freshwater habitats also offer the opportunity for wildlife, recreation and amenity, and connections between the places we live.

The catchment areas surrounding the rivers affect the biodiversity and ecology of the water and activities on the land in these catchments can harm the rivers. Risks can include pollution from factories, farms, and towns, increased water use reducing river flow, extreme weather causing floods, landslides, and droughts, and poor land practices leading to sediment build-up in rivers. To address these risks, integrated catchment management practices are being undertaken to protect the natural character, indigenous biodiversity and ecosystems, alongside community involvement in conservation.

The Rangitāiki River, Tarawera River and Ōhiwa Harbour have co-governance or co-management arrangements with tāngata whenua to restore the cultural, environmental and spiritual health and wellbeing of the catchments, rivers and harbour for the benefit of present and future generations.

Moana

The eastern bay has the longest coastline in the Bay of Plenty region and includes several rural coastal communities. From Matatā to Ōpape, the coast is lined with sand dunes, interrupted by river mouths, harbours, volcanic features, and rocky headlands. East of Ōpape, the landscape becomes steep and rugged with rocky headlands and long gravel beaches. This 125 km coastline supports active boating and aquaculture industries, with many aquaculture projects in Ōpōtiki District led by iwi, benefiting future generations. The coastal marine area offers many values, including ecological, cultural, spiritual, recreational, and economic benefits for communities. However, activities like farming, forestry, transportation, and urban growth have polluted and changed many coastal ecosystems. It's important to understand these impacts to manage and reduce them effectively.

Cultural Heritage

Te Taiao, the natural world, holds deep significance to tangata whenua. There are many sites and areas of cultural significance in the eastern bay, which include urupā (burial site), pā (fortified settlement), kaingā (village) maunga tapu (sacred mountain) and places where taonga have been found. These sites may be wāhi tapu (culturally and spiritually significant sites and places) or wāhi tupuna (ancestral sites) and wāhi taonga (treasure places that have high intrinsic value). Adverse effects on sites and areas of cultural significance, cultural landscape values, culturally sensitive ecology, as well as important waterways and marine environments have occurred and continue to occur. This leads to cultural disconnection and loss of land, cultural practices and identity. The relationship of Māori and their culture and traditions with their ancestral lands, water, sites, and other taonga is a matter of national importance. Many sites and areas are protected through regional and district planning to ensure the sacred nature is respected.

What is being done?

A lot of work has already been done or is in progress to recognise and manage elements of our natural and cultural environment. Overarching legislation, plans, projects, agreements and initiatives are currently in place to ensure actions are taken to restore and protect areas and sites. The existing work is a mix of local or site-specific projects (e.g., community care groups), infrastructure and reserve management planning, regional and district-wide policies and plans, catchment-based programs, and implementation of national policy direction.

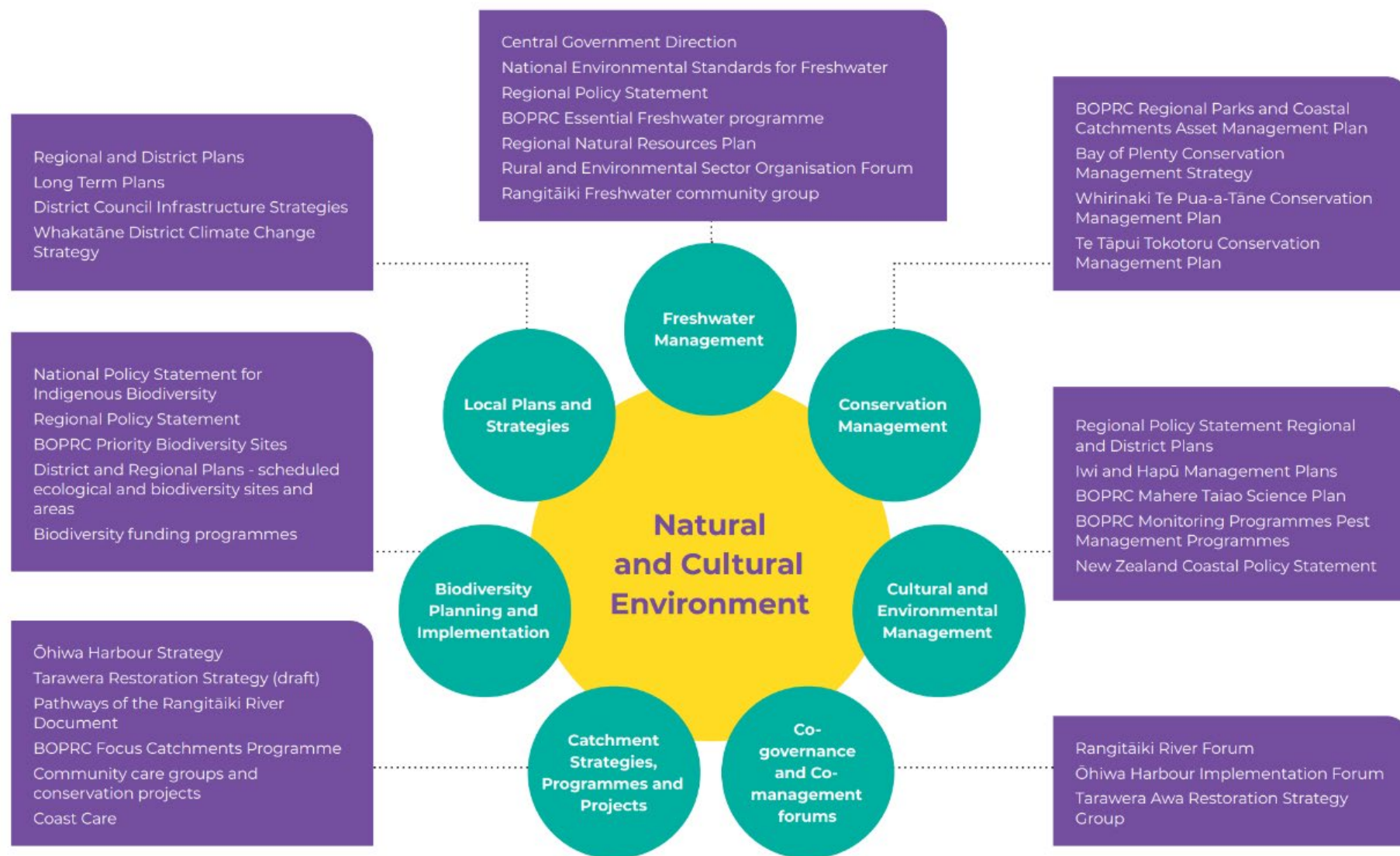


Figure 2: Natural and cultural environment activities

What does the future hold?

First and foremost, we need to continue to look after our taonga, now and into the future. We need to continue to make sure we make space for nature and create the right conditions for people to live healthy lives and for the mauri of te taiao to thrive and support our wellbeing.

We need to enhance the resiliency of our environment by increasing the quantity and quality of our nature and biodiversity. Protecting, restoring and enhancing biodiversity ensures that our taonga will be present for future generations to enjoy. Prioritising the health and wellbeing of our waterbodies is very important and we need to reduce the impact of land uses.

A strong emphasis is needed on site sensitive design, incorporating green infrastructure into urban design, maintaining and developing ecological corridors and implementing habitat restoration projects in impacted areas. This will likely involve using methods like water-sensitive urban design and low-impact water design to address climate change, increase biodiversity, and make our towns healthier and more liveable. We will need to upgrade water management systems, including stormwater, water supply, and wastewater, to meet higher standards.

While land, freshwater, coastal and marine are often dealt with separately, it is critical to recognise that they are interconnected and that an activity in one area has effects in another. We need to continue to prioritise an integrated catchment management approach which means managing natural resources on a catchment scale, reflecting the Māori concept of "ki uta ki tai" (from the mountains to the sea).

We highly value the sub-region's rich and diverse cultural heritage. Cultural landscapes, customary activities, wāhi tapu, wāhi taonga, wāhi tupuna, and mahinga kai will continue to be recognised, protected and enhanced. Careful consideration and collaboration are needed to uphold our cultural heritage. Respecting the integrity of mātauranga Māori and recognising the value of mātauranga to inform decision making processes, will enable a more productive and meaningful relationship with tangata whenua and Māori communities throughout our region.

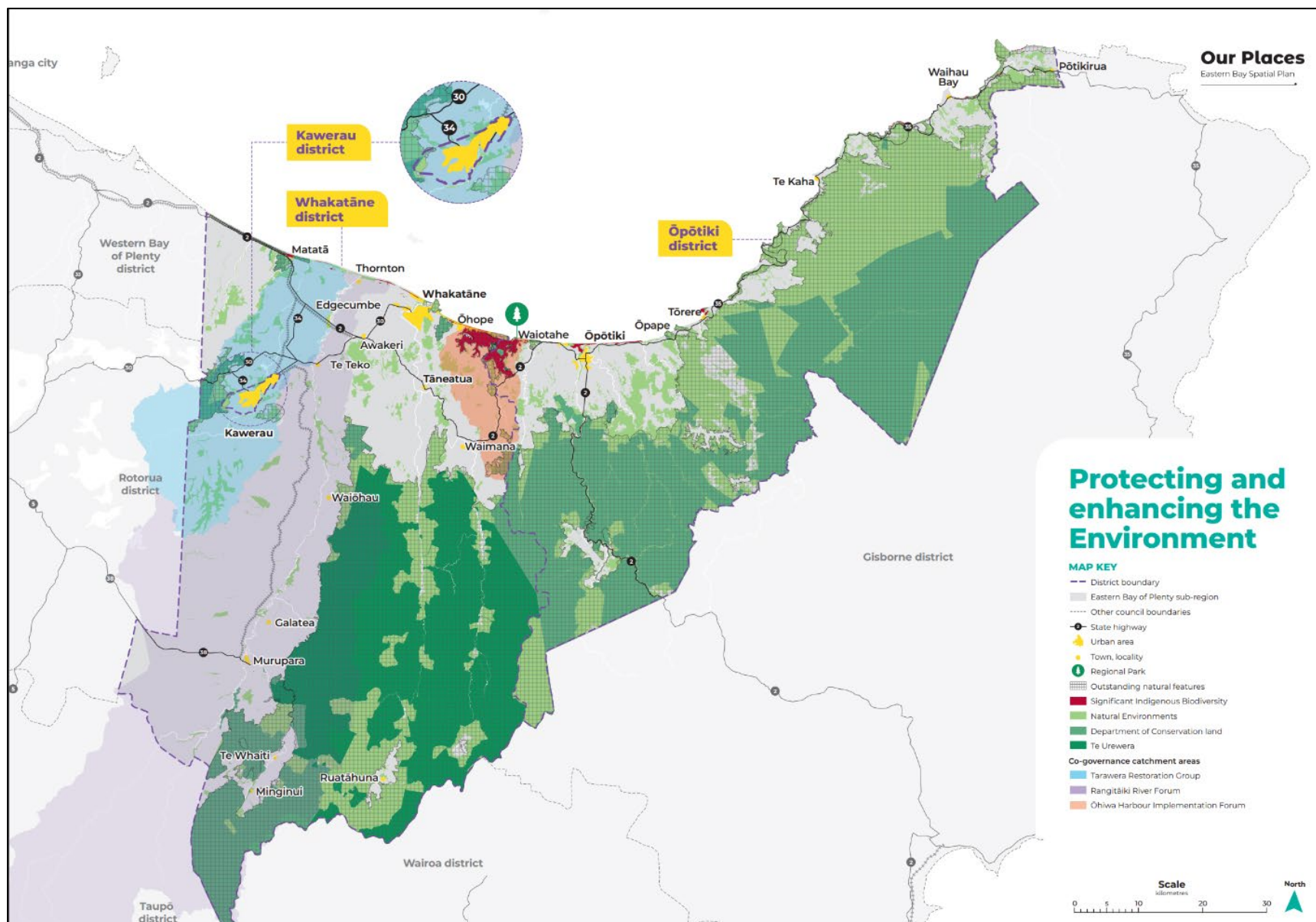
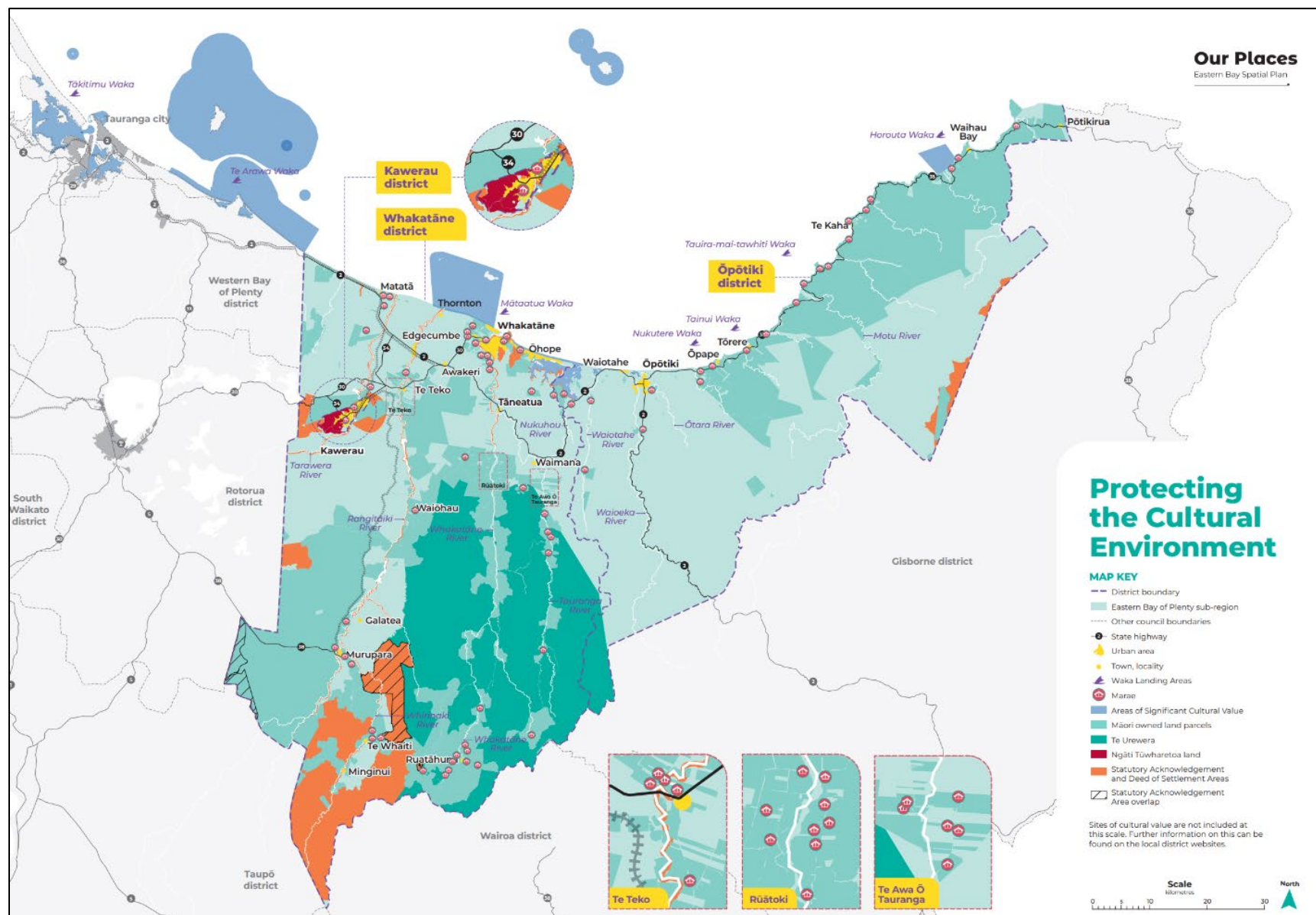


Figure 3: Protecting and enhancing the environment



Sustainable, diversified economy

Economic wellbeing

Economic development is crucial to change the socio-economic deprivation of many people across the eastern bay. Without changes, a lack of suitable housing and infrastructure are a handbrake on the economy. By leveraging key economic drivers and ensuring housing, transport, workforce development, and capital investments, we can unlock growth to benefit the people of the eastern bay.

Where are we now?

The three districts in the eastern bay are all strongly connected, creating economic resilience and a strong foundation for further development. The sub-region enjoys a favourable climate, fertile soils and rich natural resources, including fishery and forestry stocks. There is a diverse and robust industrial base – including nationally and internationally competitive players in horticulture, manufacturing, forestry and wood processing, tourism, energy, aquaculture, and many others.

The eastern bay faces economic challenges including lower GDP growth and median incomes and higher unemployment compared to the national average and has significant potential for growth. This is evidenced through recent Government investments aimed at boosting the local economy. Four key catalytic infrastructure projects are in delivery or completed including the Ōpōtiki harbour / aquaculture cluster, high value horticulture on Māori-owned land, the Kawerau-Putauaki Industrial Development and the Whakatāne wharf / tourism cluster.

The eastern bay faces a range of interconnected challenges – like industrial decline, ageing or absent infrastructure, and socio-economic deprivation. The eastern bay remains one of the nation's most deprived areas, with an average deprivation score of 8.5/10 versus a national average of 5.6, when considering education and healthcare, employment and income, housing, crime, and access to services. In 2023, unemployment rates were more than twice the national average (7.4% versus 3.3%), and close to one quarter (23.1%) of working-age people were receiving a benefit.

A significant Māori-owned land and assets base. Continued development of Māori-owned land and economic activities can help to build resiliency and job security through further diversifying the economy. There is no Māori asset base figure for the Eastern Bay of Plenty, but the Bay of Plenty figure provides some insights. The Māori asset base in the Bay of Plenty totals over \$17.5 billion¹ with diverse portfolios covering agriculture, forestry, horticulture, aquaculture, geothermal energy, tourism and hospitality. This significant contribution and the capacity for expansion will have a substantial bearing on the direction of economic growth in the eastern bay.

Aquaculture is a significant contributor to the economy. Ōpōtiki district has a large opportunity to develop the aquaculture industry with a multi-million-dollar annual income potential. According to the Sub-Regional Economic Development Strategy, the estimated growth in the aquaculture industry for the Bay of Plenty will be \$3 billion by 2035, serving local and international markets. Leveraging the \$200 million + investments already made in harbour and processing facilities, this industry will create jobs and boost the local economy.

The eastern bay has a strong focus on primary industries, commercial services and industrial processing, and offers some of the country's most loved domestic tourism destinations. The region contributes significantly to both the regional and national economies. Whakatāne is the main commercial and residential hub, offering a wide range of services and facilities, while Kawerau is known for its industrial activities. Ōpōtiki serves as a secondary centre, especially for areas to the east, with a focus on horticulture, agriculture and an emerging aquaculture industry. There is a high flow of commuters and economic inter-connection between the districts, with goods transported from across the districts to their manufacturing and processing facilities and to the Port of Tauranga.

Primary industries - due to fertile land and favourable climate, the eastern bay is a powerhouse for agriculture, horticulture, dairy farming and forestry. The sub-region helps ensure there is enough food for local use and export, which benefits all of New Zealand, producing high-quality kiwifruit, avocados, and dairy products. The major dairy processing factory in Edgecumbe has a milk collection catchment across almost the whole region. The sub-region's employment landscape is characterised by distinct industry clusters: 37% of jobs in Kawerau are related to manufacturing; 31% of jobs in Ōpōtiki district are related to agriculture, forestry and fishing; and Whakatāne district jobs are mainly a mix of agriculture, forestry, fishing, healthcare, training and education and retail.

The eastern bay is a major forestry region, home to over 20% of the Central North Island's exotic forests, with approximately one-third of this land owned by the Central North Island Iwi Collective. Large plantations, sustainable practices, and efficient timber processing and transportation from Kawerau ensure the forestry industry's long-term success. Many of the sub-region's remote communities are dependent on the forestry sector.

The rivers of the eastern bay of Plenty, particularly the Waioweka and Otara Rivers in Ōpōtiki, are vital sources of industrial aggregate, including shingle and sand, which hold significant commercial value and provides essential materials for construction and infrastructure projects.

¹ [Te Ohanga Māori 2023 report](#)

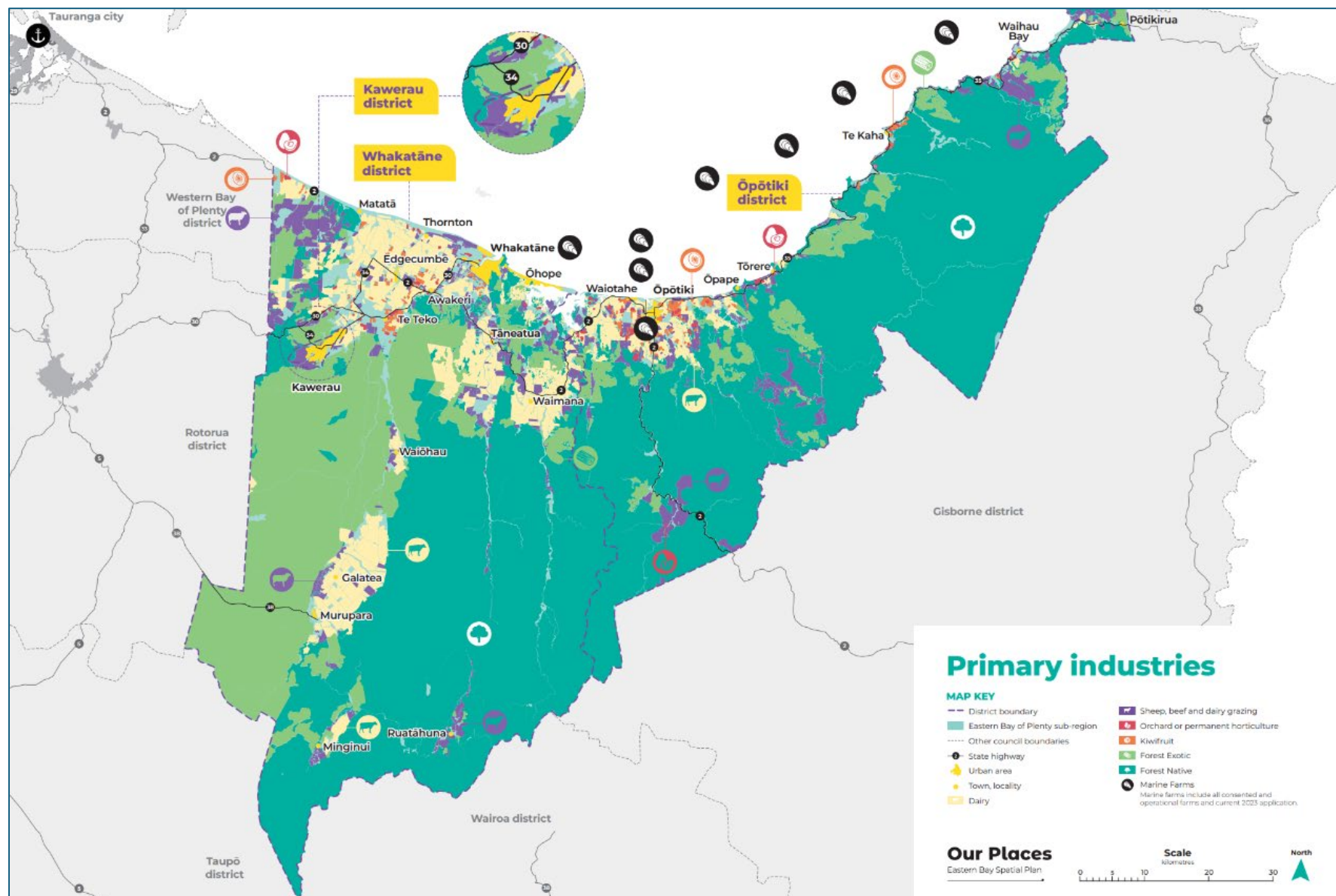


Figure 5: Primary industries

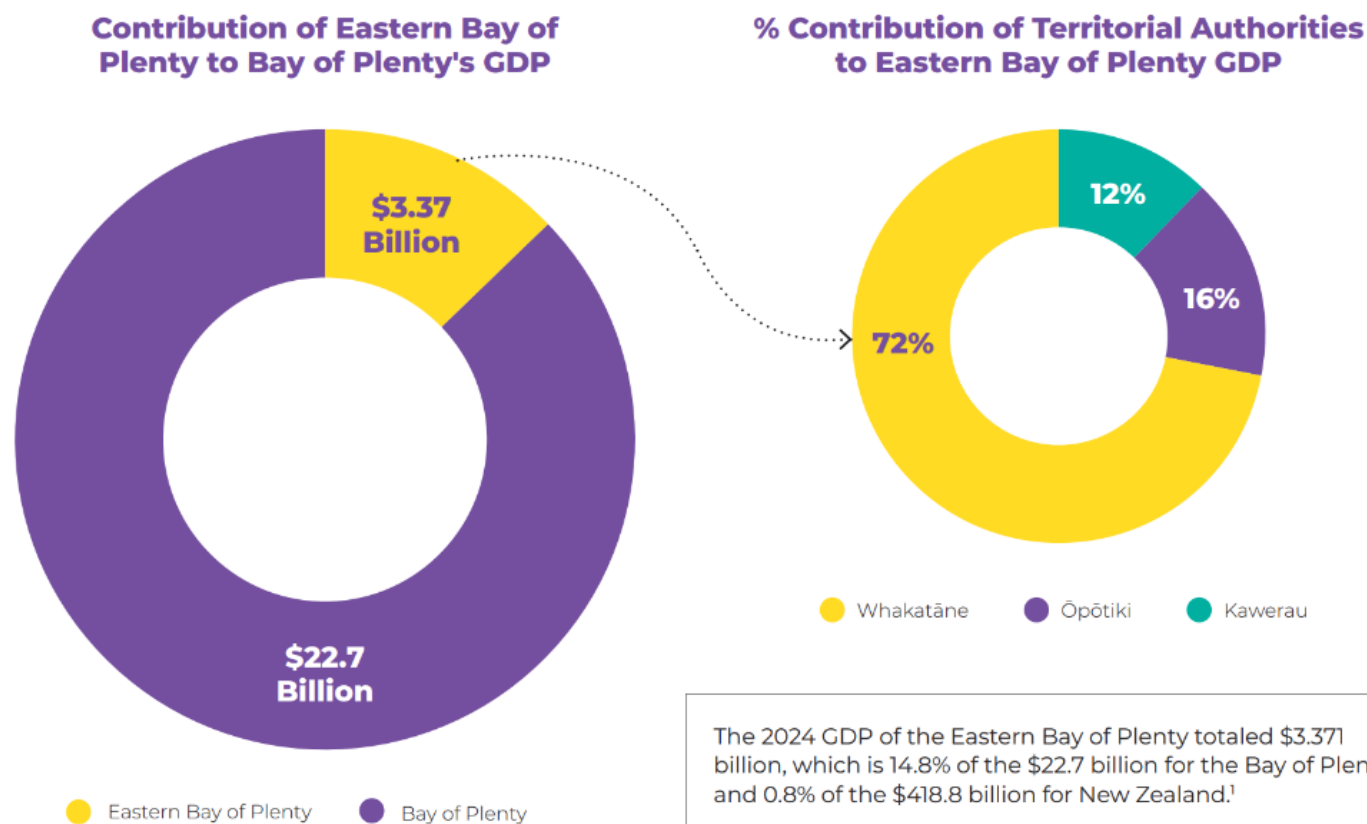
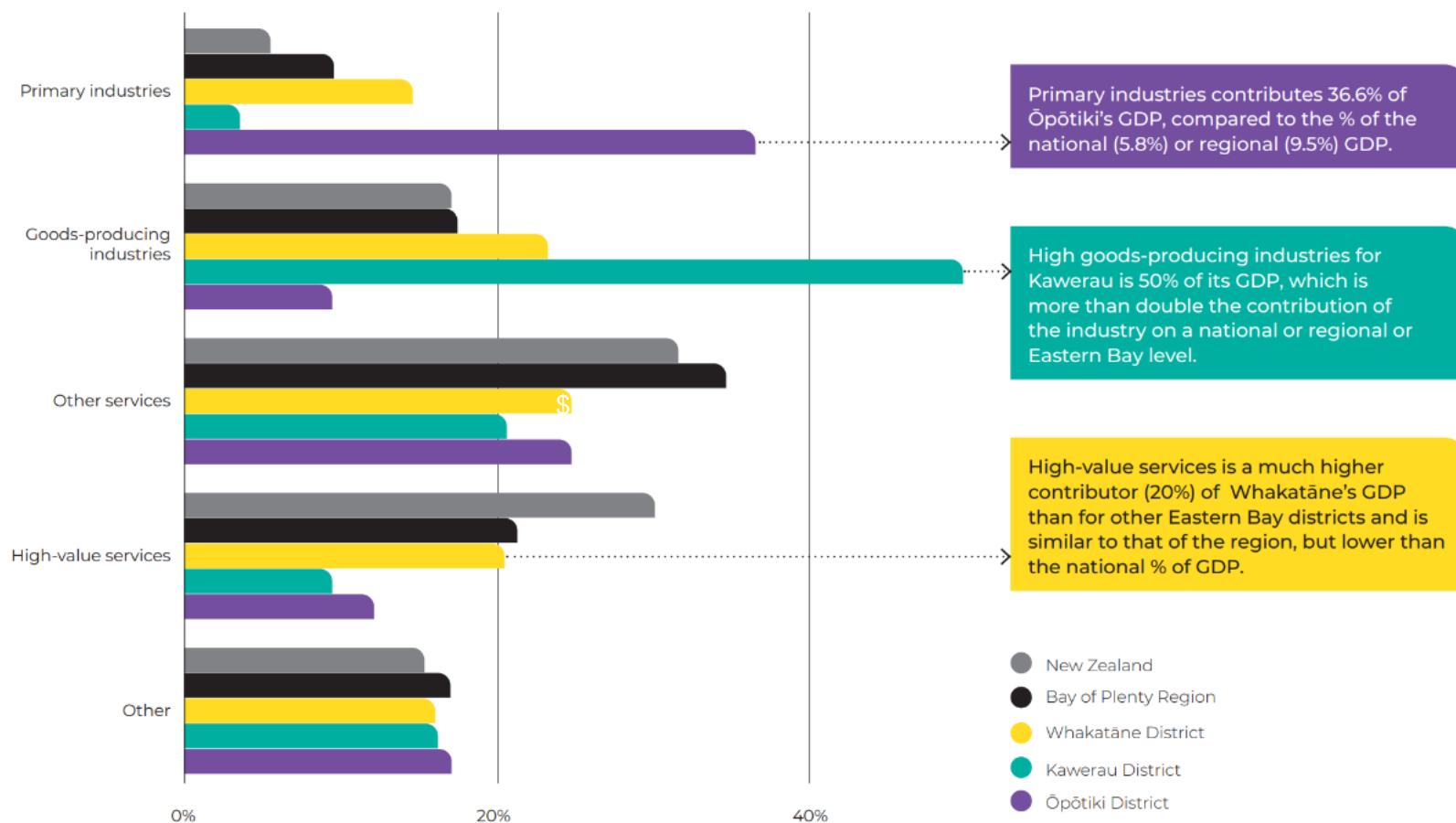
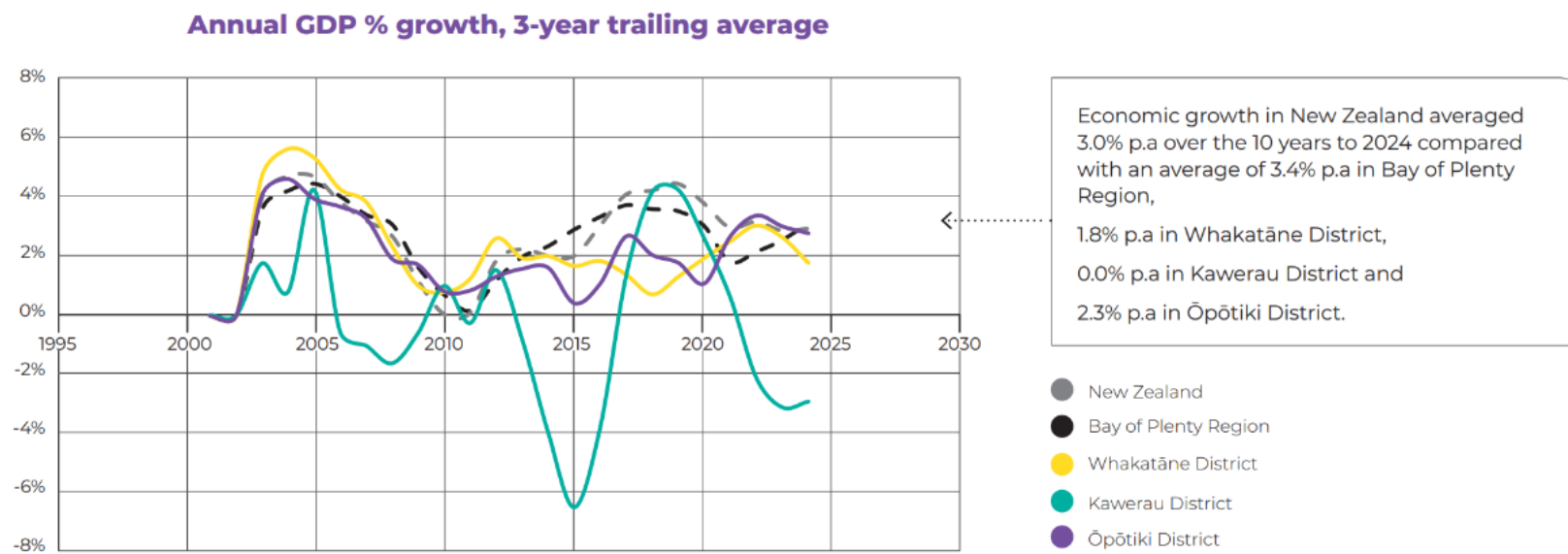


Figure 6: Eastern bay's contribution to GDP



Source: Infometrics; Regional Economic Structure – Industry Structure; April 2025

Figure 7: Economic structure by broad sector (% of total, year to March 2024)



Source: Infometrics; Regional Economy – Economic Growth; April 2025

Figure 8: Annual change in GDP over the past twenty years

What does the future hold?

The Sub-Regional Economic Development Strategy (“SREDS”) was refreshed in 2025 and provides direction for economic development opportunities across the Eastern Bay of Plenty at a sub-regional scale.

Economic growth vision

The spatial plan supports the vision of SREDS, including three focus areas to create jobs and accelerate economic growth, by leveraging existing industry specialisations and the unique strengths of each district.

- Aquaculture in Ōpōtiki
- Green industry in Kawerau
- Commercial and residential development in Whakatāne

The SREDS guides and shapes priorities and next steps, including:

- Development of local economic development plans, enabling economic development to be a powerful lever for delivering social, cultural and environmental wellbeing.
- Ameliorating constraints to growth — housing, transport and connectivity, workforce development, and capital. The spatial plan addresses two of these constraints by factoring in population growth, housing and infrastructure needs for the next 30 years.
- Collaboration with central and local government, iwi, and key industry sectors, we can build on our successes and create new opportunities.

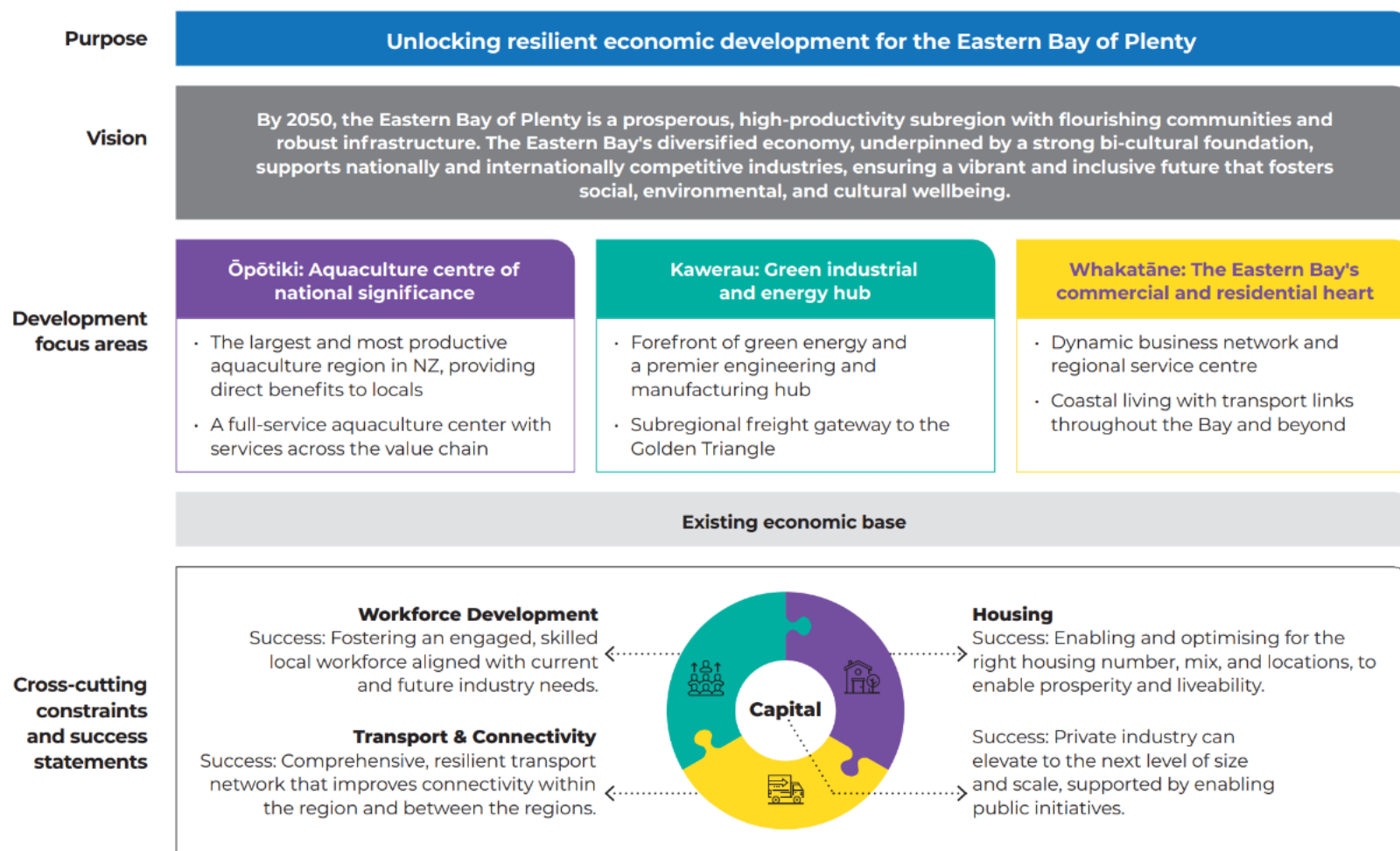


Figure 9: Economic Development Strategy Summary

Population growth

By 2055, the eastern bay's population is expected to increase from 56,500 in 2022 to 68,000. This growth could mean we will need more houses and business spaces. The National Policy Statement on Urban Development requires local authorities to always have enough land available for housing and businesses. If we don't plan for growth, we might not have enough land ready for new developments, making housing and infrastructure more expensive.

By 2053, we will likely need between 1,150 and 8,200 new households, with the most likely number being around 5,500. The range reflects variable population outcomes and also a declining household size as the population ages meaning we expect to need more houses for the same number of people. Population change depends on many factors, and we will have to monitor it closely to adjust our planning.

We need to plan for more affordable housing to meet the demand. Over the past decade, housing affordability has decreased significantly, especially in the eastern bay. By enabling more housing options and ensuring there is enough supply, we can help make housing more affordable for more people.

Looking back at how the population has changed

Between 2013 and 2023, our total population grew by more than 9,000 people. Whakatāne district grew by 17%, Kawerau district by 22% and Ōpōtiki district by 24%.

From 2013 to 2018, net migration was a significant driver of population growth in each of our districts, accounting for around 70% of the total increase. During this period, more people moved into our districts than left, reversing the trend of negative net migration from 2001 to 2013.

New Zealand's national immigration policies influence growth in the eastern bay. In the year ending August 2023, New Zealand saw a record net migration gain of 110,200 people. Migration will continue to be a primary driver of population growth for New Zealand, and a main influence impacting the growth and development of the eastern bay. Looking ahead, New Zealand's population, which was 5.13 million in 2022, is projected to be between 5.55 and 6.65 million by 2048, and between 5.62 and 7.86 million by 2073.

Children born to each female 2006 & 2023

Eastern Bay of Plenty sub-region

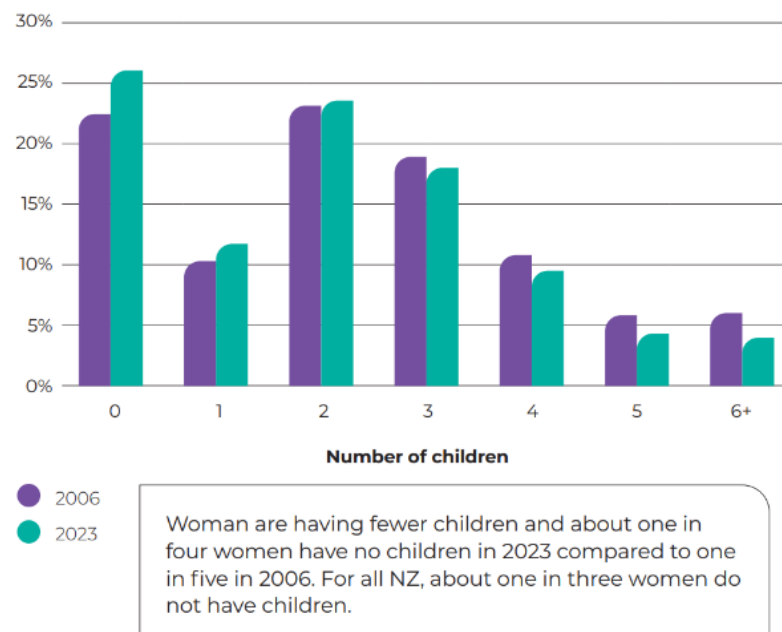


Figure 10: Number of children born in the Eastern Bay

Birthplace: Overseas born 2006 & 2023

Since 2006 the proportion of residents born overseas has increased by 2 percentage points, compared to 6 for NZ

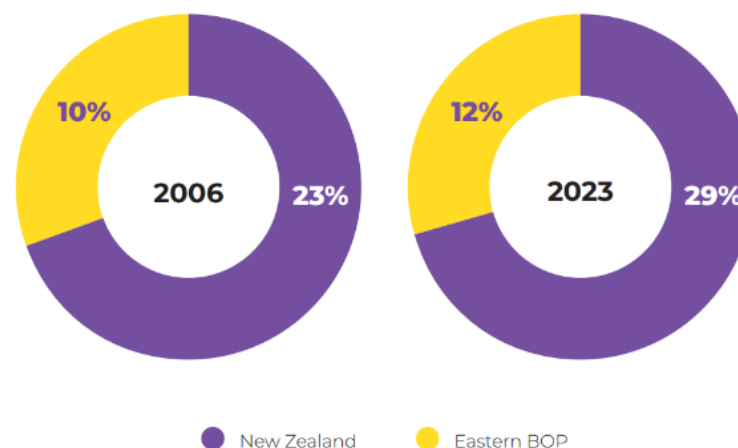


Figure 11: Birthplace of residents

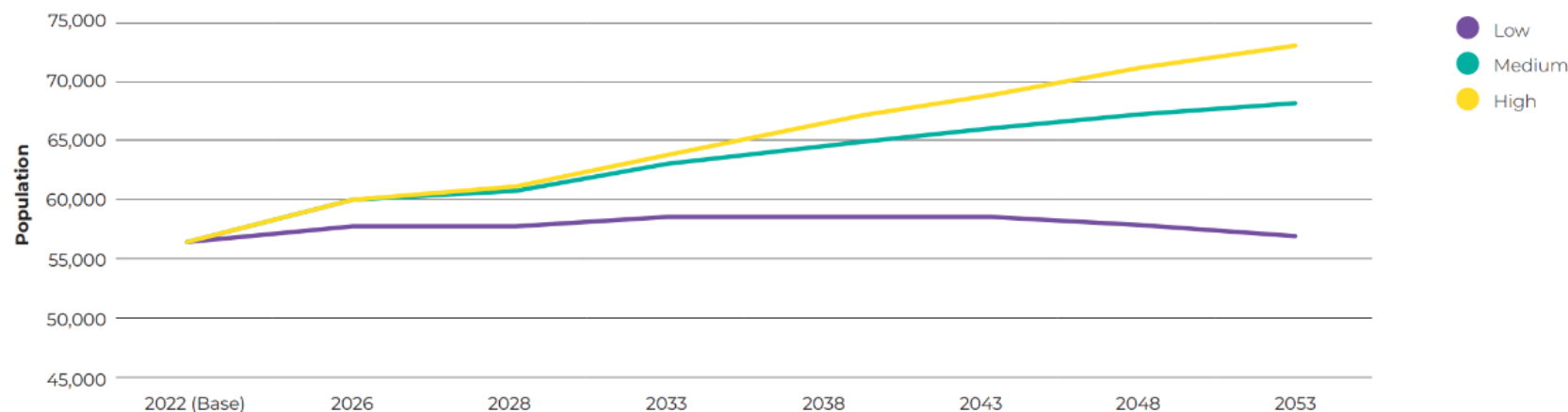
Looking ahead at how the population could change

Population projections are estimates of future population size and composition based on current data and trends. They help us understand how our community might grow and change over time, but they are uncertain and will be different from what we expect now. Regular monitoring and reporting on population changes through Councils' Long-Term plans and other work programs will inform decisions on how we cater to growing communities and changing rates of growth.

A range of population projections were developed for the spatial plan. Looking ahead at the next thirty years, we expect that population change in the eastern bay will most likely be similar to the medium projection.² The medium projection prepared for the spatial plan is the same as Statistics NZ high projection.

Planning based on higher population growth will ensure we are ready if the growth trend we experienced during the early to late 2010's continues over the long term. In case population change is lower or higher than expected, we need to be able to proactively manage investments into new growth areas and be sure not to lock-in large upfront investments that are funded by growth without a way to manage the risk that the pace of growth slows over time.

Similarly, some areas could experience higher growth than projected. For example, Ōpōtiki District Council is aware of growth potentially being closer to 2,300 dwellings in the coming decades based on building consent and resource consent trends which is much higher than the 1,400 dwellings indicated by the Statistics NZ high projection.



Source: Eastern Bay of Plenty Housing and Business Needs Research Report, MRCagney 2023

Figure 12: Eastern bay population projection range

² The details for this can be found in the Eastern Bay of Plenty Spatial Plan - Scenarios and Development Options Report and the Eastern Bay of Plenty Housing and Business Needs Research report (MRCagney, 2022)

Growth projection	Description
High +16,500	Predicts rapid population increase due to high birth rates, low death rates, and significant migration. Greater demand for housing, infrastructure, and services, requiring proactive planning.
Medium - +11,500 people by 2055	Reflects moderate population growth with balanced birth, death, and migration rates. Allows for manageable development and aligns with recent trends while being flexible. <i>(the same as Statistics NZ high projection, and the one we are using for planning purposes)</i>
Low, nearly no change	Anticipates slow population growth due to low birth rates, high death rates, or reduced migration. Gradual population increase, easing resource and infrastructure pressures and ensuring quality services.

Employment growth

The Sub-Regional Economic Development Strategy identifies housing and infrastructure as two of the main handbrakes slowing down economic development. As our community grows and changes, more jobs and more business land are needed. The Scenarios and Development Options report, in addition to the Housing and Business Needs Research report provide details of how much land is needed and when.

The Sub-Regional Economic Development Strategy identifies housing and infrastructure as two of the main handbrakes slowing down economic development. The strategy brings together the districts of the Eastern Bay to focus on shared economic goals. By working together, we can better plan and prioritise projects that will boost our local economy, create new jobs, and attract investments. This collaborative approach is key to attracting further investments and supporting regional development.

The number of jobs in the Eastern Bay is expected to grow by 8% over the next 30 years, which means an average increase of 0.3% per year. With more people living in the Eastern Bay, more jobs are needed which means we need more land for businesses to grow. Based on population projections, we see an increase in employee projections over the next 30 years.

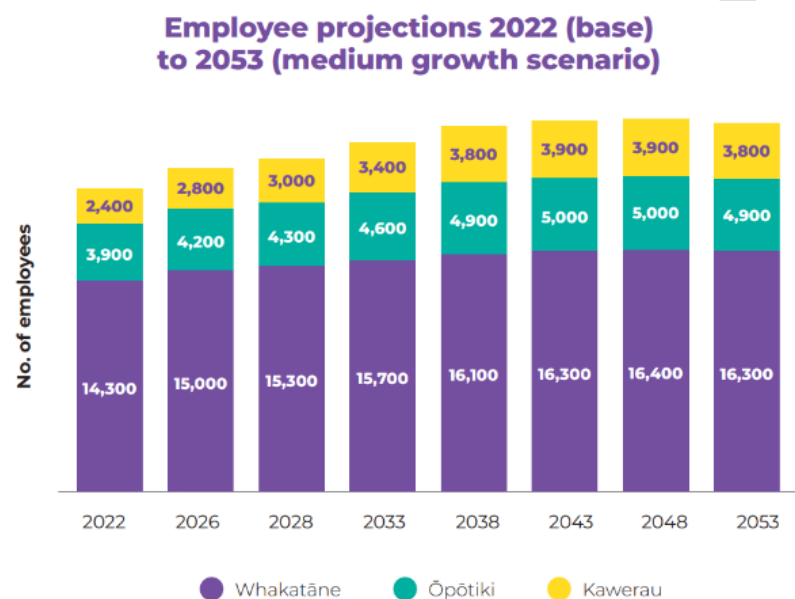


Figure 13: Employee projections 2022-2053

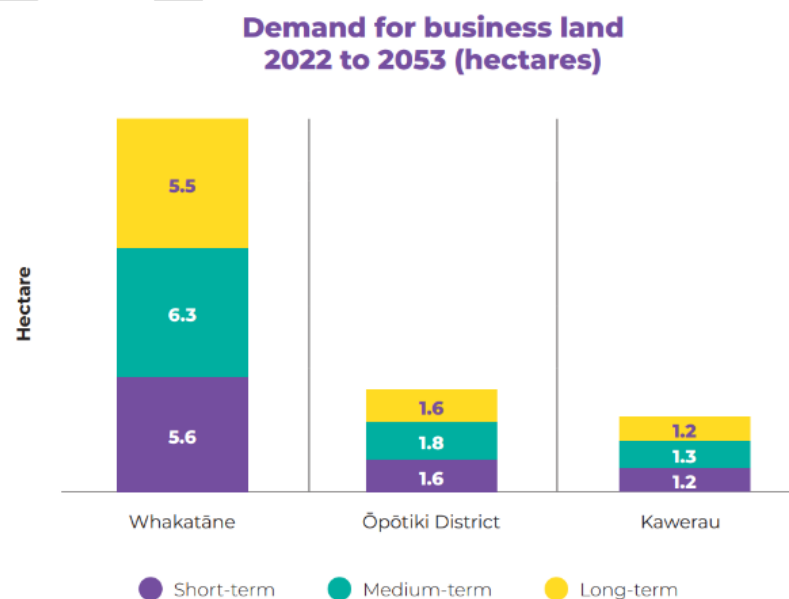


Figure 14: Demand for business land 2022-2053 (ha)

Connected and resilient people, places, and communities

Changing housing needs

An ageing population will require changes in services such as healthcare, but also different housing that is more accessible and enables people to age-in-place in their existing communities.

The growth in a younger Māori population segment means that we will need to plan for a range of different types of housing to support both a growing and ageing population, including papakāinga and other types of Māori-led housing.

Planning for future housing developments will need to factor in affordability as a critical consideration alongside connections to employment opportunities.

An aging population needs accessible housing

The eastern bay is experiencing an ageing population, with a growing proportion of residents aged 65 and older. The median age in the region has increased, reflecting this demographic shift. The median age for all New Zealanders is 38.1, compared to Whakatāne being 40.2, Ōpōtiki 40.1 and Kawerau 38.6.³ By 2053, people aged 65 and older will make up 30% of our community.

This trend has several implications for the community. There will be a higher demand for healthcare services, including hospitals, clinics, and aged care facilities, to support the health and wellbeing of older residents. Housing needs will also change, with a greater demand for accessible and age-friendly homes. The local workforce may experience changes as more people retire, potentially leading to shortages in certain sectors and an increased need for workers in healthcare and aged care. Enhanced community services and activities that promote social interaction and wellbeing for older residents will become increasingly important. Understanding these trends helps us plan for a future that supports and values our older residents, ensuring the eastern bay remains a great place to live for people of all ages.

A growing youthful Māori demographic needs larger homes, and more affordable homes

The eastern bay has a youthful and growing Māori population. Māori make up just over half of the sub-region's population, expected to increase to 60% by 2053. Comparatively, to the Eastern Bay's ageing population, the demographic of the Māori population is much younger.

³ StatsNZ Census 2023, (Usual Resident Population).

Due to their different age profile and cultural practices, many Māori households need larger houses or multiple houses close to each other. Many rural and remote communities are predominantly Māori and are based around whānau, hapū, and marae. Māori in the Eastern Bay have different housing experiences compared to the general population.

- Māori homes reflect traditional whānau structures with multi-generational living. On average, 2.2 generations live in a Māori household. A recent survey in the Whakatāne District showed that 28% of the Māori population wanted larger homes with five to six bedrooms to accommodate multi-generational living.
- 30.3% of Māori own their own home, compared to 64.5% of the general population. 25.2% of Māori live with whānau, at their whānau homestead, or on whānau land.
- Other research shows that Māori households spend about 20% of their income on rent, compared to about 14% for the average household. There is a greater need for affordable housing.

The spatial plan recognises the need for a strategic and culturally responsive approach to Māori housing, highlighting opportunities to support diverse living arrangements, enable papakāinga development, and foster partnerships with iwi. It outlines high-level direction for councils to work collaboratively with Māori to unlock housing potential, improve infrastructure alignment, and ensure planning frameworks are enabling of Māori-led housing solutions.

Affordability of housing continues to be a challenge for everyone

Rising housing prices, high rental costs, high demand for social housing and low home ownership rates are indicators of the affordability challenges in the housing system for the Eastern Bay. In response, household crowding remains a challenge for Eastern Bay communities and the number of applicants for social housing increases over time.

We want everyone in the Eastern Bay has access to safe, affordable, and suitable housing. By planning for more housing options and addressing affordability issues, the spatial plan can help prevent overcrowding and reduce financial stress for residents. New development areas should be planned to create diverse housing types to meet the needs of both a growing and ageing population.

Addressing these challenges through the spatial plan fosters a more inclusive and supportive community, where everyone can thrive and enjoy a high quality of life.

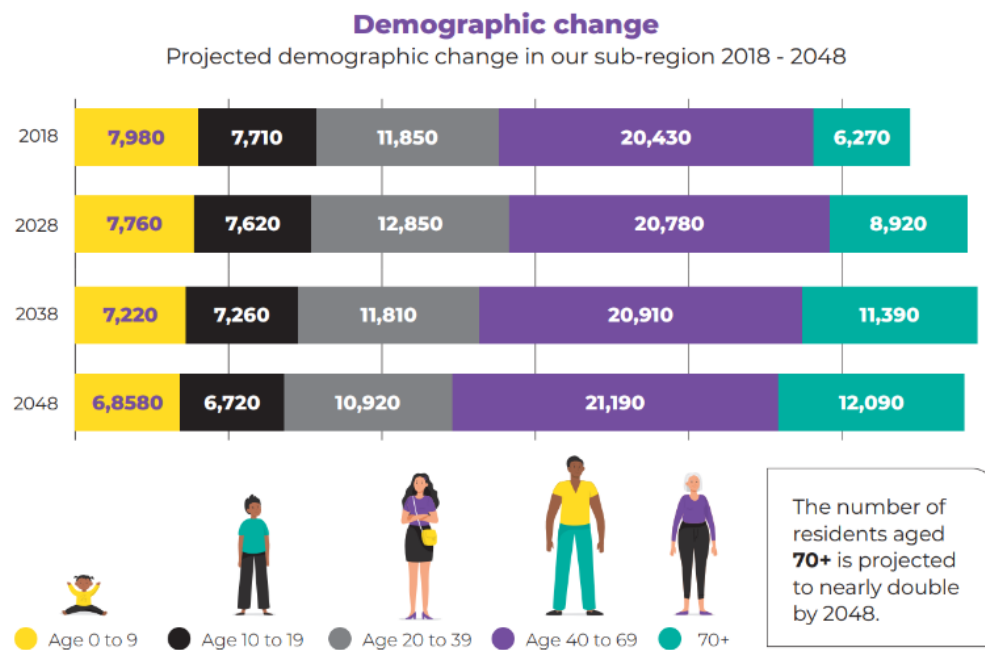


Figure 15: Demographic change

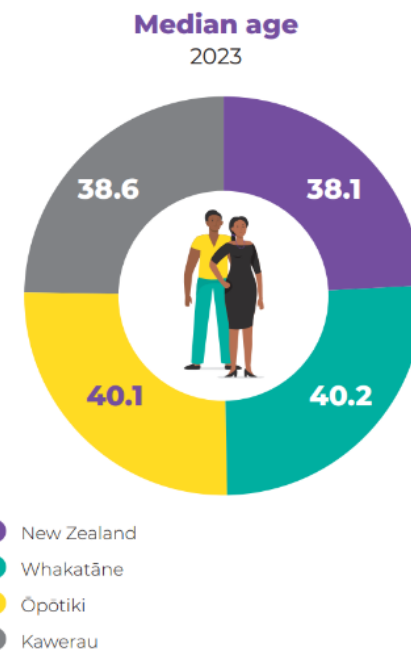


Figure 16: Median age

Household crowding 2023

Percentage of households requiring one or more additional bedrooms

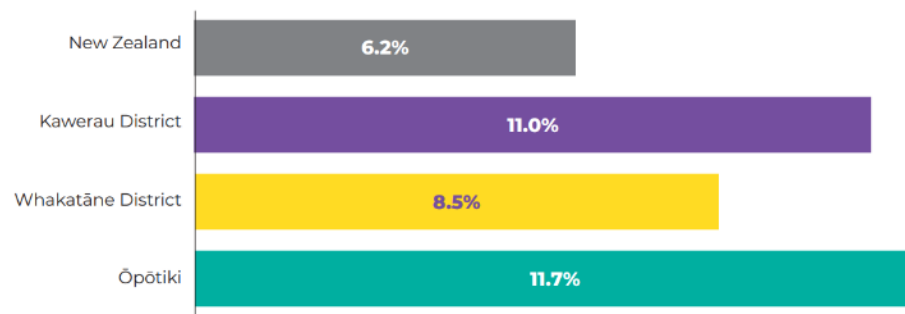


Figure 17: Household crowding

House values 2024

Region	Sep-19	Sep-24
Kawerau	\$218,000	\$398,000
Ōpōtiki	\$304,000	\$509,000
Whakatāne	\$434,000	\$716,000
New Zealand	\$664,000	\$908,000

Between March 2018 and September 2024, average house values have increased by 82% for Kawerau, 67% for Ōpōtiki and 65% for Whakatāne. For all NZ, the increase was 37%



Figure 19: House values

Figure 19: House values

Housing register 2024

Number of applicants on the register for social housing

Region	Sep-19	Sep-24	% Increase
Kawerau	36	60	67%
Ōpōtiki	21	93	343%
Whakatāne	117	291	149%

Figure 18: Housing register

Figure 18: Housing register

Housing register by bedroom 2024

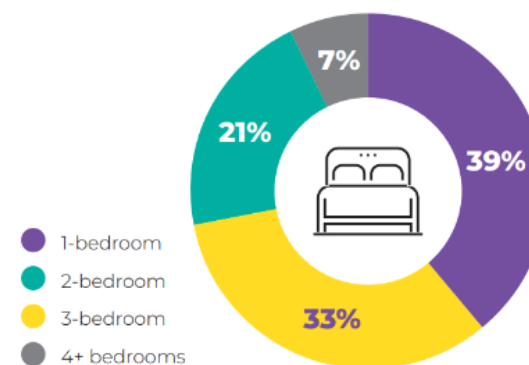


Figure 20: Housing register by bedroom

Natural hazards and climate resilience

The Eastern Bay faces various natural hazards such as flooding, landslides, earthquakes, coastal hazards, and rising groundwater, which will worsen with climate change. This means that limited land is available for future growth and some existing communities face growing risk levels.

Flooding, river management and flood protection are key considerations and integrated and adaptive strategies including consideration of management retreat are needed to support future growth to enable resilience in the long-term.

Where are we now?

Eastern Bay is already experiencing the impacts from a changing climate and natural hazards. This includes things like significant flooding events, new pests taking up residence, coastal erosion, greater calcification of the ocean and more drought like conditions. There is a rapidly closing window of opportunity to enable climate resilient development.

Our communities, iwi and hapu, councils and key stakeholders must make well-informed decisions about the levels of risk that we are prepared to accept, now and for future generations. Lessons from past events, both locally and across Aotearoa, highlight the significant economic and social costs of major floods, particularly for communities located in flood schemes. Cyclone Gabrielle alone is estimated to have caused up to \$14.5 billion in damage⁴.

River flooding poses a challenge for Eastern Bay. Rivers are dynamic systems and have the potential to cause damage to people, property, taonga, and infrastructure. New data is being obtained to improve insights into the vulnerability of low-lying settlements to natural hazards and the changing dynamics of large river systems. Affordability, climate change, residual risk are key issues for the flood scheme.⁵

Some existing settlements are subject to residual risk from over-design events. Existing settlements in the Eastern Bay that rely on flood protection schemes, such as stopbanks, are not typically susceptible to smaller events. However, extreme weather events – like Cyclone Gabrielle or Cyclone Debbie – could exceed the system's capacity or cause failures. Therefore, even with mitigation measures like flood defences, land use restrictions, or other engineering solutions, the risk of damage or unforeseen impacts on the wellbeing of the community remains.

⁴ [Impacts from the North Island weather events - Information release - 27 April 2023](#)

⁵ [BOPRC Long Term Plan 2024-2034: Infrastructure Strategy](#)

Climate change affects councils' strategic infrastructure needs and costs. This includes maintenance, renewals and new projects for water supply, stormwater, wastewater systems, transportation. For stormwater, it involves planning for larger capacity pipes and overflow areas in master planning, and wastewater treatment plants will need to be in climate-safe locations. Transport decisions include where to build new roads or bridges and choosing suitable sealing materials. Long-term solutions might involve shifting or reducing access to high-risk roads. Other responses include finding alternative freshwater sources, monitoring saltwater intrusion, and preparing for microbial spread in drinking water during warmer weather.

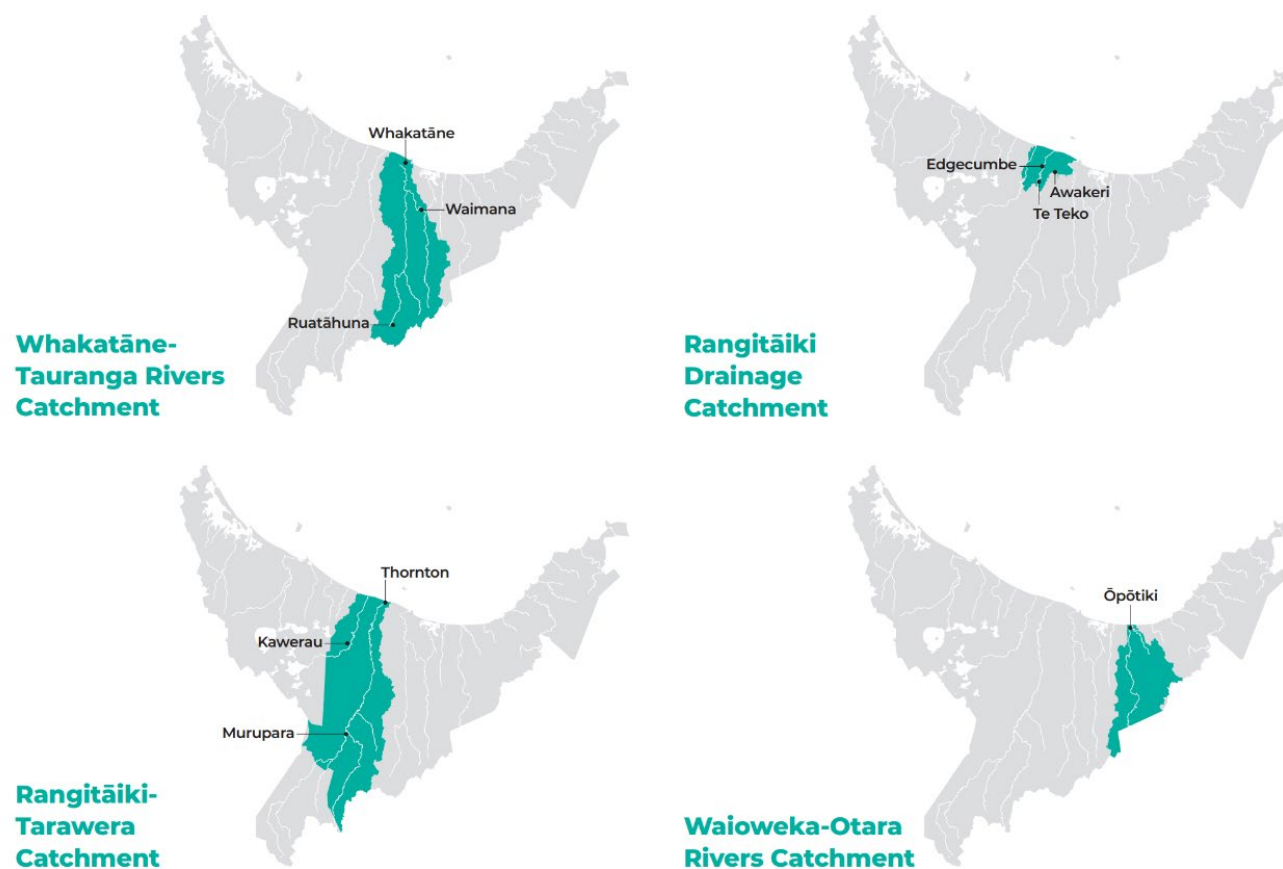


Figure 15: Catchment locations

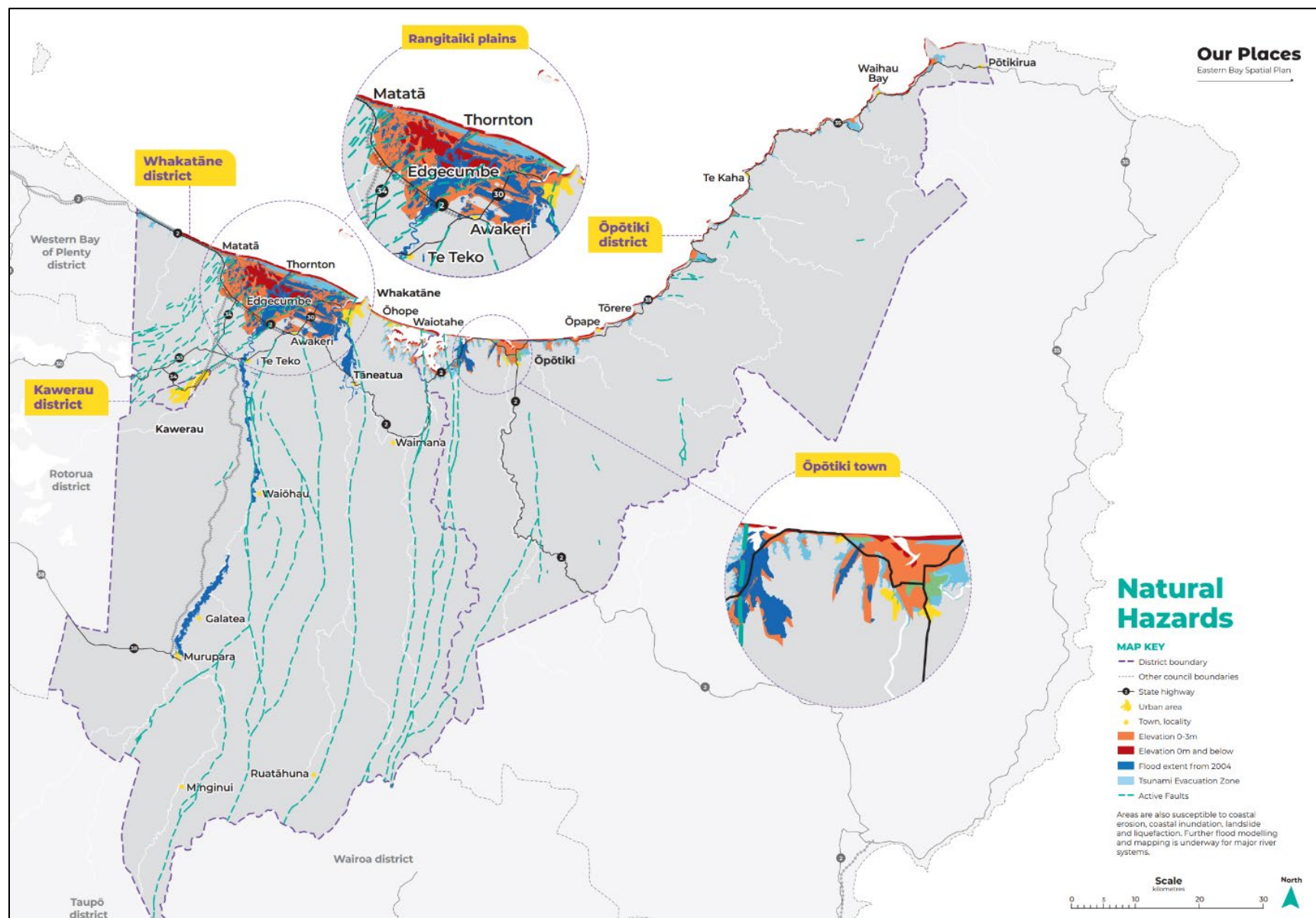


Figure 16: Natural hazards

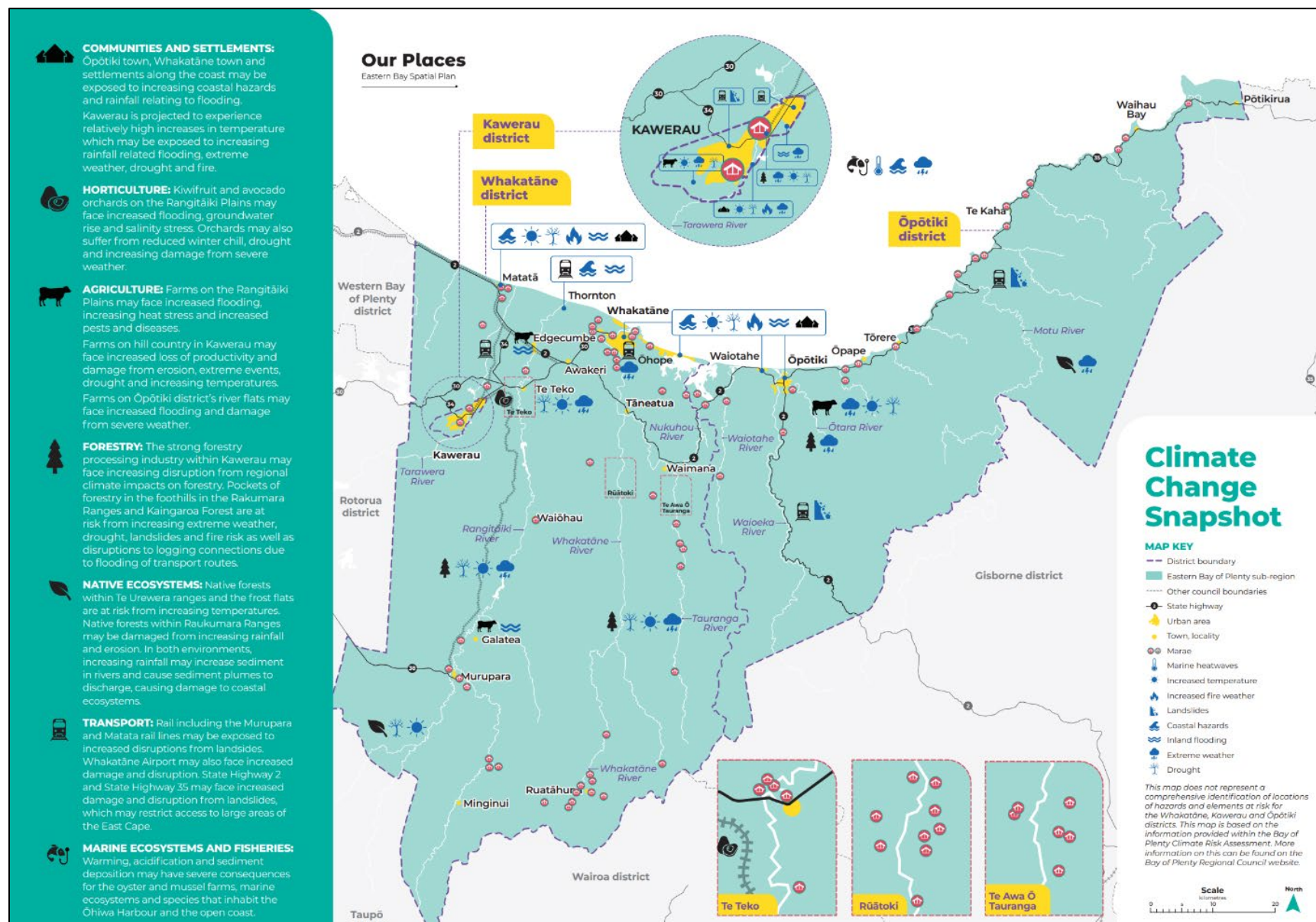


Figure 17: Climate change risks

What is being done?

A lot of work is taking place currently to address the risks from natural hazards and climate change. Some of the ones related to the spatial plan are included here:

Whakatāne District Council has developed a Climate Change Action Plan focusing on transport, energy, water services, waste management, land-use, and the built environment. These considerations are now part of climate action plans informing Council's planning processes, integrated into Asset Management Plans, the Long-Term Plan 2024-34 and the Infrastructure Strategy. Additionally, Whakatāne's Climate Change Risk Assessment identifies and prioritises climate risks to develop local adaptation plans with the community. Over time, these plans will be incorporated into major documents like the spatial plan.

Ōpōtiki District Council has initiated a workstream in its Long-Term Plan (2024-34) to understand the risks and hazards the district is most exposed to and investigate mitigation measures such as additional stop banks and temporary stormwater storage solutions. This includes gathering place-based research to inform adaptation planning for the township and coastal communities and inform long-term infrastructure planning. The findings will help determine potential costs for replacing infrastructure assets, explore options for property buy-outs in the event of major flooding, and define the role of other agencies including Central Government. As a first step, Opoitiki District Council (ODC) in partnership with the Bay of Plenty Regional Council (BOPRC) are scoping a risk assessment for the existing township.

Kawerau District Council (KDC) is preparing stormwater modelling to inform future planning decisions.

Long-term river management planning is underway as part of the Bay of Plenty Regional Council's River Scheme Sustainability Project. This will ensure the long-term viability and effectiveness of flood schemes with a focus in the Whakatāne–Tauranga, Rangitāiki-Tarawera and Waiwoeka- Ōtara catchments. Where possible, options will be considered to make 'room for the river', particularly in rural areas where land can be utilised for flood management without impacting existing townships while risk management responses are developed.

Evacuation mapping is being prepared for flooding and tsunami to inform emergency and evacuation planning for rural and urban areas. This work is likely to identify welfare centres, safe evacuation routes and safe locations to support emergency preparedness. Civil Defence and Emergency Management also play an important role in ensuring lifelines such as power, internet and mobile phone providers are resilient in the case of extreme natural hazard events.

Climate change is likely to have significant impacts on Māori and their role as kaitiaki and will be impacted by risks posed to the natural environment to which they have an innate connection. Climate change is expected to increase existing inequities and vulnerabilities within communities in the Eastern Bay of Plenty. It is likely to have a greater impact on Māori due to current income levels, health statistics, and unemployment levels. Local iwi and hapū are beginning adaptation planning with support from BOPRC community-led adaptation funding and other Central Government agencies. Iwi-led approaches in Maraenui, Ōpape and Tōrere in the Ōpōtiki District are leading the way for localised adaptation planning in the Eastern Bay of Plenty.

Climate change is also anticipated to impact on the productivity of rural areas that support local rural economies and sustain nearby townships and require investment in water storage solutions and essential and supporting a diverse range of energy systems and grid resilience. To support this, councils may need to support industry actions for climate-resilient infrastructure and sustainable agricultural land-use practices. This includes promoting agricultural diversification and other economic strategies to reduce vulnerability to climate impacts, ultimately strengthening long-term economic resilience.

What does the future hold?

Flood protection, and more adaptive approaches: Flood protection will continue to play a key role in supporting community wellbeing. However, as conditions change, more adaptive and resilient approaches may need to be explored to ensure communities remain safe and resilient to the effects of natural hazards and climate change in the long term.

Integrated stormwater management: Recognising the increasing costs to maintain the flood schemes and managing climate-related risks to people, property and infrastructure, the spatial plan promotes integrated stormwater management as a key component of future growth planning and provide opportunities for the community input into the planning of new growth areas including Awakeri, Hukutaia, and Matatā.

Improved information about risk: Natural hazard mapping is required by the Bay Plenty Regional Policy Statement and will soon become available for flooding, coastal erosion and inundation and tsunami mapping. Once this information is accessible, technical risk assessments can be undertaken for at-risk locations to increase community awareness and inform future planning decisions.

Integrated adaptive planning responses: As a starting point, assessing the natural hazard risk is critical to better inform councils and communities at a local scale. For townships defended by stop banks, a range of risk reduction responses will be required and have implications for:

- River management planning
- Asset management planning
- Adaptation planning
- Emergency management planning
- Land-use planning

Adaptation planning is an iterative process and will rely on a whole of community approach for solutions to eventuate. Ultimately, risk management responses will reflect the level of risk the community is willing to accept and can afford.

The community must be at the centre of all solutions: In priority areas with existing recognised risks, such as Ōpōtiki and Whakatāne townships, risk assessments are to be prepared in accordance with the Regional Policy Statement to inform the development of adaptive planning responses to manage natural hazard risk. Additional risk assessments may be progressed for other at-risk locations across the sub-region including Tāneatua, Te Teko and Edgecumbe.

Where appropriate, some communities may need to consider long-term strategies to ensure existing areas are resilient, and where affordable or feasible solutions are not available, to move away from highly vulnerable locations.

Since future risk management decisions will have significant implications for community wellbeing and livelihoods, the outcomes of these assessments will need to be carefully balanced alongside other local priorities including housing supply, economic growth, and social wellbeing. Whatever the strategy, the community must be at the centre of any future adaptation planning.

Climate change adaptation roadmap

As we better understand the impacts of hazards and climate change, what does this mean for local communities, iwi and hapu, stakeholders. Experts and decision makers play a key role at all stages of the process?

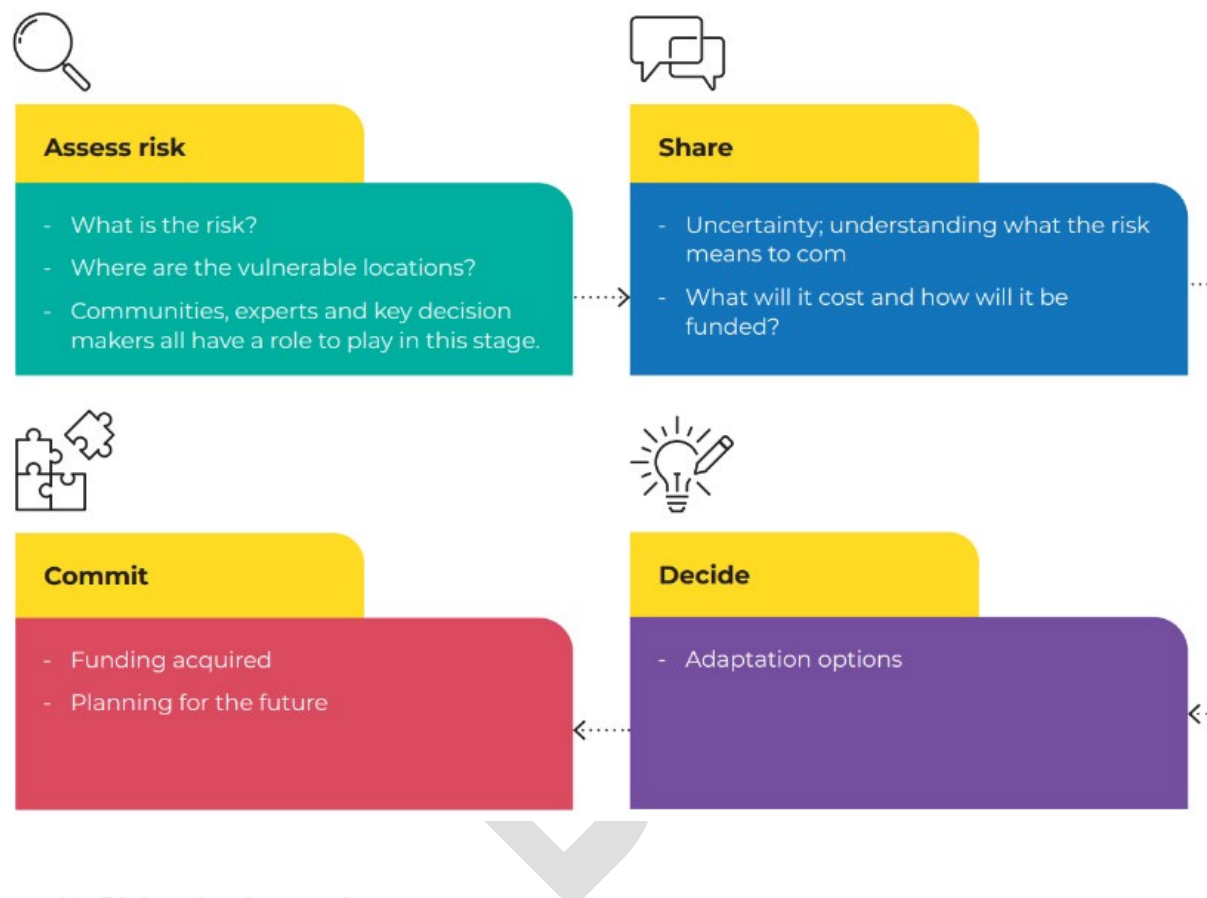


Figure 18: Risk reduction roadmap

Rural Environment

The Eastern Bay's rural environment will remain a cornerstone of our region's prosperity, identity and lifestyle, supported by access to goods, services and community amenities in vibrant urban centres. We need to continue priority efforts towards:

- **Minimising land fragmentation**
- **Managing incompatible land uses**
- **Unlocking Māori land for development**
- **Fostering strong links between rural and urban areas**

Where are we now?

The sub-region includes vast rural areas of native forest and bush, plantation forestry, pastoral agriculture, horticulture and other primary industries. Extensive forestry uses dominate the less fertile areas in the south and south-east of the sub-region, dairying is predominantly located on fertile, mid-coastal lowlands. Rural land use plays a crucial role in our economy.

Highly productive land protection

Versatile and productive soils are essential to the primary production industry in the Eastern Bay. Highly productive soils are ideal for growing a wide range of crops due to their fertility and favourable physical properties. They require less mitigation to be productive, making them highly valuable for agriculture.

The National Policy Statement for Highly Productive Land (NPS-HPL) protects these valuable soil resources. It provides guidelines for local authorities to identify and manage these soils, balancing the need for urban growth with the preservation of land essential for food production. The NPS-HPL categorises soils into different classes based on their productivity and aims to protect these soils for their on-going use in land-based primary production while avoiding inappropriate subdivision, development and use. Highly productive land has been mapped for Land Use Capability classes 1, 2 and 3 in accordance with the current NPS-HPL. Amendments have been signalled to remove class 3 land but are not currently in effect.

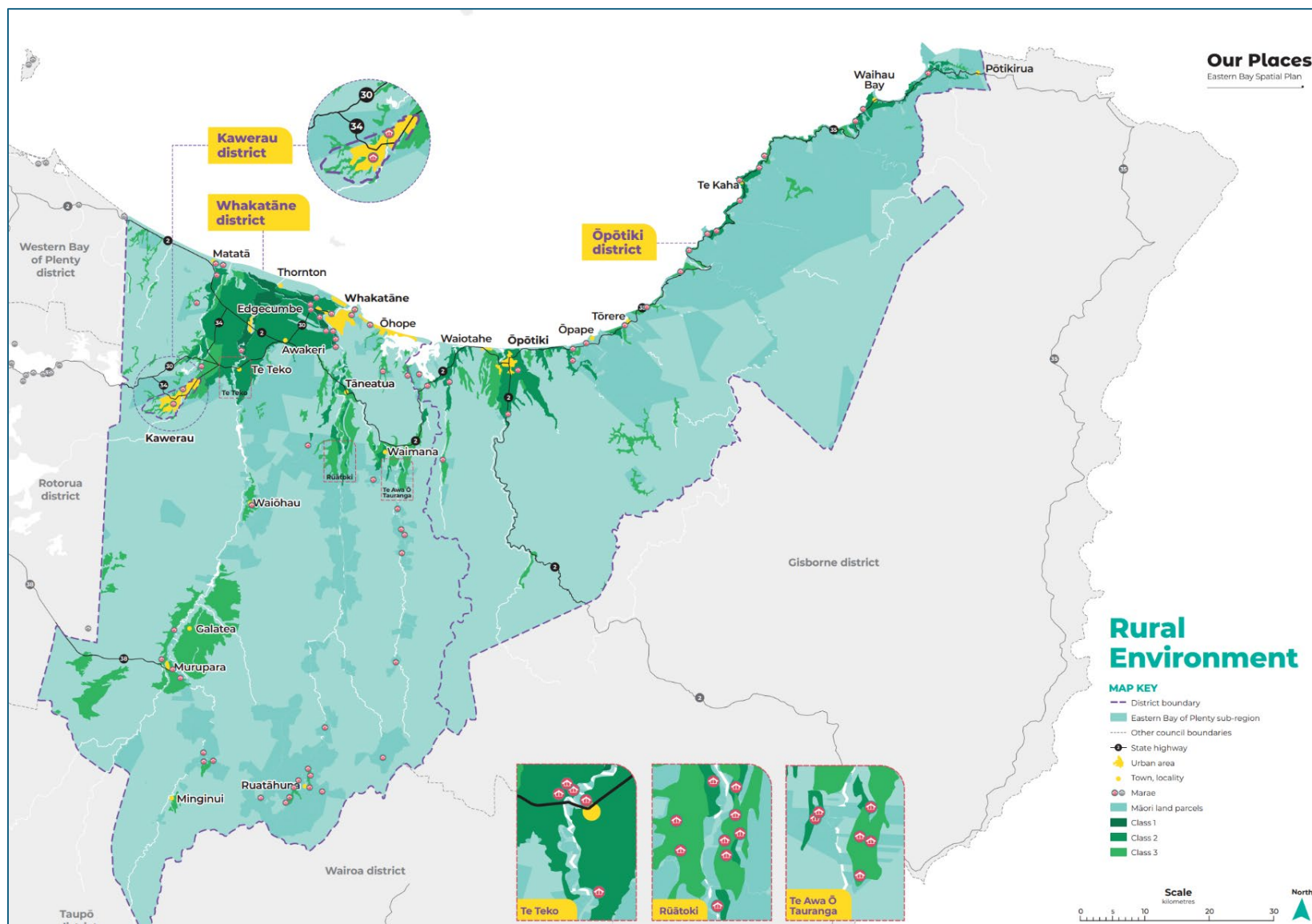


Figure 19: Rural environment

Māori freehold land is mainly in rural locations

The dispossession of land through confiscation and associated land use change has led to the loss of Māori owned land and in a lot of cases where land has been given to iwi, this has been in a different location to their traditional rohe. Most iwi in the Eastern Bay have settled their Treaty claims and have their Treaty Settlements enacted through legislation. Today, 22% of land in the Eastern Bay is Māori freehold land, being 168,987 ha in total⁶, with most of this being in the rural environment. Tāngata whenua as landowners have varying interests across the sub-region, recognising that Māori housing and business development is intertwined with the growth of the Eastern Bay.

Biodiversity and open spaces

There is 758,899 ha of land in the Eastern Bay. Several defining areas set the broad structure of the rural environment. The largest of these include Te Urewera, covering 127,845 ha, Department of Conservation (DOC) land covers 200,891 ha and plantation forestry land covers 152,713 ha.⁷ These are important culturally, for biodiversity or economic reasons and shape the rural character of the Eastern Bay.

Te Urewera: The Te Urewera Act was a key part of the Treaty of Waitangi settlement negotiated between Tūhoe and the Crown. In brief, Te Urewera Act 2014 recognises:

- Te Urewera is, and has always been the homeland of Tūhoe.
- Te Urewera is recognised in law as an identity and legal person in its own right.
- Tūhoe are the tangata whenua (host) and kaitiaki (guardians) of Te Urewera.
- Te Urewera Board is appointed to represent the legal personality of Te Urewera and to provide governance over Te Urewera.
- Te Urewera Board may grant permits to manuhiri (visitors) on behalf of Te Urewera and Tūhoe (Tangata Whenua and kaitiaki of Te Urewera) for activities such as hunting.

(Source: www.ngaituhoe.iwi.nz)

⁶ This does not account for all land owned by Māori or Māori trust land, as some of this is held under general freehold title including large parcels of land owned by Ngāti Tūwharetoa ki Kawerau.

⁷ The Eastern Bay of Plenty sub-region includes Whakatāne District, Kawerau District and Ōpōtiki District. The geographic boundaries are as of 1 January 2023. Data sources: Land Information New Zealand, Department of Conservation and Te Puni Kōkiri.

What does the future hold?

Effective management of growth and development is crucial, given the importance of primary industries to our economy and the need to maintain and improve the ecological qualities of these areas.

Some of the things we need to do include:

Minimising land fragmentation	Managing land fragmentation becomes a critical challenge due to subdivision and residential development, threatening the productive value of rural land and complicating sustainable growth management.
Managing incompatible land uses	Unplanned rural lifestyle living can cause incompatible adjacent or nearby land uses, creating reverse sensitivity concerns and negative effects on residents' wellbeing. Structure planning for new development areas must consider reverse sensitivity effects early in the planning process to identify spatial solutions like buffers or separation distances to create good outcomes.
Unlocking Māori land for development	Includes complexities different from general title land development, such as multiple ownership complexities, governance, financing challenges, planning restrictions, and infrastructure investment.
Fostering strong links between rural and urban areas	The connections between rural communities and townships and other services centres like Te Kaha and Murupara are important to recognise. A stronger focus on improving transport accessibility and resilience is also important.



Our Places

Eastern
Bay of Plenty
spatial plan

Part Three: Our Growth Plan



Contents

Part 3: Our Growth Plan	5
Overview.....	5
Getting to a growth plan.....	7
Decision-making principles about development	8
Three different Strategic Corridors.....	9
Central Urban Corridor.....	11
More business land is needed	13
Māori Land Trust and owner aspirations	13
Priority growth areas in the central corridor.....	14
Awakeri	15
Whenua Māori (West of Coastlands).....	17
Matatā.....	19
Pūtauaki (Industrial Area).....	21
Kawerau Residential Infill/Intensification	22
Hukutaia growth area	23
Whakatāne (Kopeopeo infill)	24
Existing urban areas in the Central Corridor that are constrained	25
Ōpōtiki township.....	26
Whakatāne (Infill)	27

Te Teko	28
Edgecumbe	29
Southern Rural Corridor	30
Where are we now?.....	30
Iwi aspirations	30
What does the future hold for the Southern Corridor?	32
Minginui and Te Whaiti	32
Murupara.....	32
Tāneatua	32
Te Awa O Tauranga, Ruatoki, Ruatāhuna.....	32
Eastern Coastal Corridor	33
Where are we now?.....	33
Iwi aspirations	35
What does the future hold?	39
How will this be achieved?	40

Note:

Before the spatial plan is received by Council for adoption, minor changes will be made to the spatial plan document to improve communication and readability, provide Te Reo translation of headlines and corrections to spelling, and graphic design of the total document.

Figures

Figure 1: Priority growth areas	6
Figure 2: Sub-regional corridors	10
Figure 3: Urban Central Corridor	12
Figure 4: Awakeri location	15
Figure 5: Whenua West of Coastlands Location	17
Figure 6: Matatā location	19
Figure 7: Pūtauaki location	21
Figure 8: Kawerau location	22
Figure 9: Hukutaia location	23
Figure 10: Whakatāne (Kopeopeo infill) location	24
Figure 11: Ōpōtiki township location	26
Figure 12: Whakatāne (Infill)	27
Figure 13: Te Teko location	28
Figure 14: Edgecumbe location	29
Figure 15: Rural Southern Corridor	31
Figure 16: Eastern Coastal Corridor	34
Figure 17: Ōpōtiki iwi pipeline projects Kererutahi to Opape	36
Figure 18: Ōpōtiki iwi pipeline projects Ōmarumutu to Hawai	37
Figure 19: Ōpōtiki iwi pipeline projects Haupoto to Whangaparāoa	38

Part 3: Our Growth Plan

Overview

This section outlines how development could be accommodated across the sub-region, based on the projected population and employment requirements, technical assessment of the performance of different locations, and feedback through engagement. An overview of the decision-making principles and process behind the strategy is explained.

To communicate the growth strategy, the sub-region has been segmented into three corridors of different characteristics: the central urban corridor, rural southern corridor, and the coastal eastern corridor. Infrastructure is mainly addressed in Part 4 – Infrastructure considerations.

The following Priority Growth Areas provides an overview of where new growth is expected to occur.

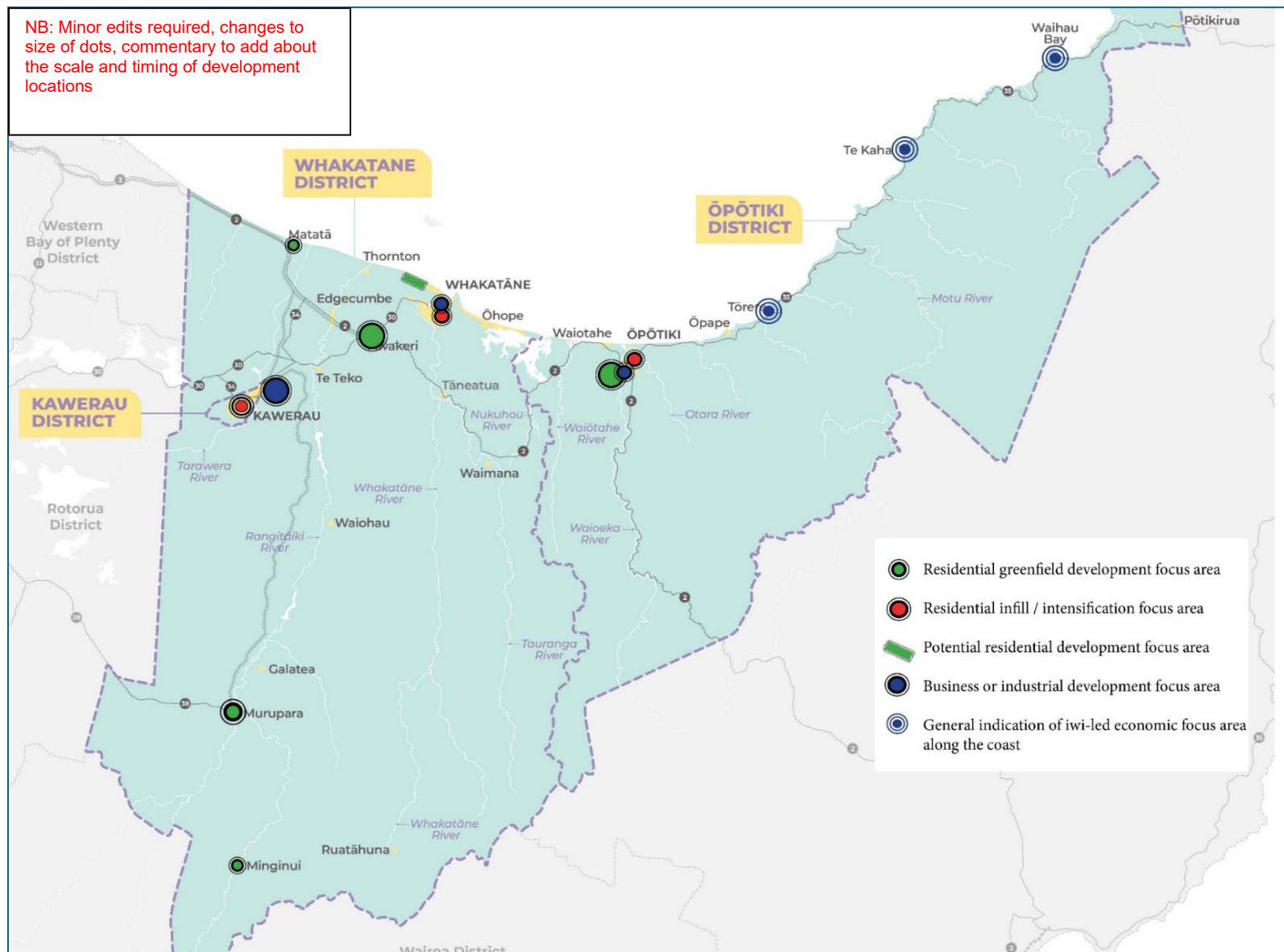


Figure 1: Priority growth areas

Getting to a growth plan

To provide the inputs for the land use changes proposed through the growth corridors, various scenarios were explored to see how different land use changes might work. Further information about the process can be found in the Scenarios and Development Options Report. Here's how we did it:

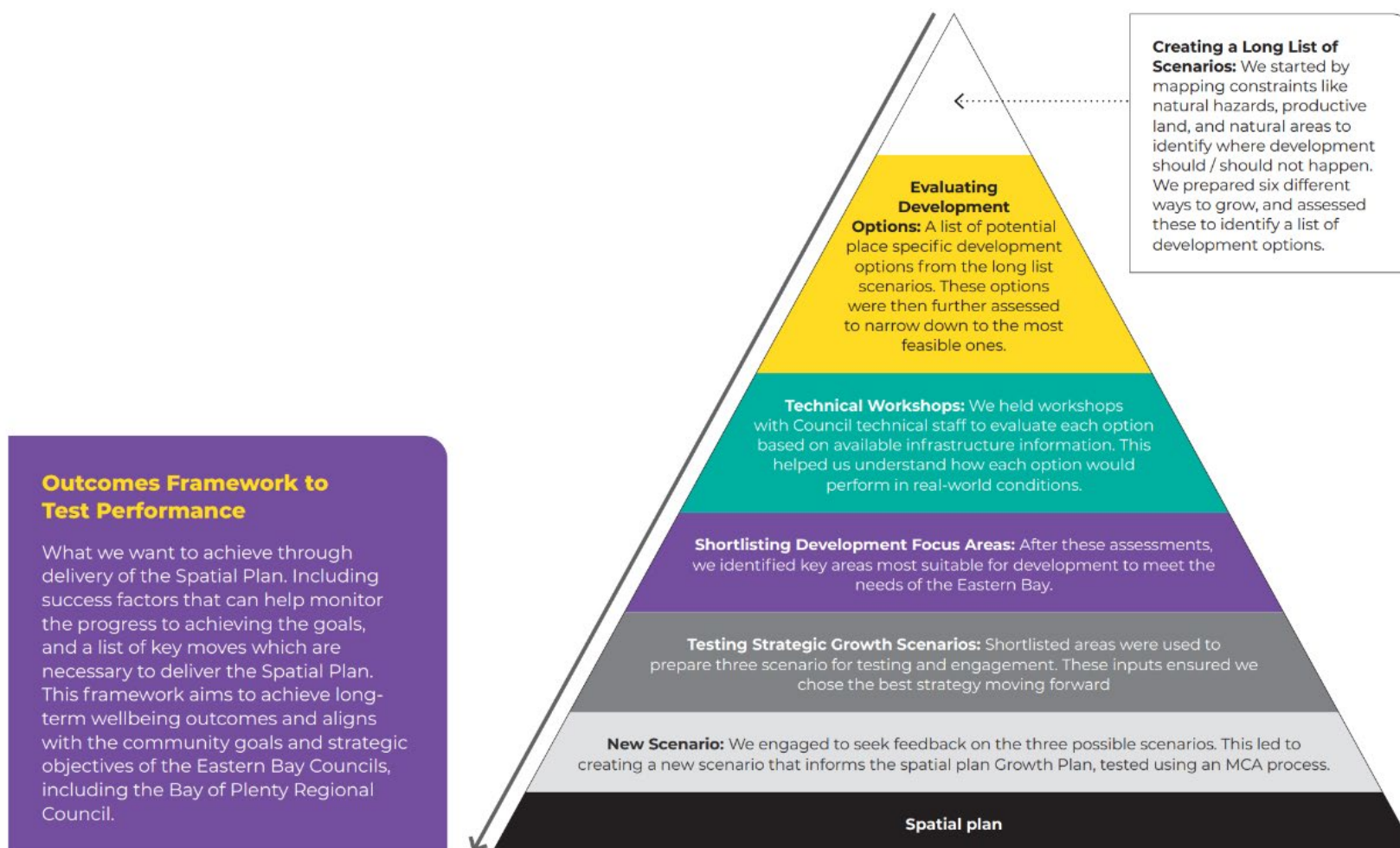


Figure 2: Scenarios and Development Process

Decision-making principles about development

Based on the goals and public engagement feedback, a set of decision-making principles was adopted to determine where development could be located and to guide how it should happen. These were applied to prepare the new scenario, including to assess new land areas identified through submissions.

Principles that direct where we want development to happen

- 1 First, consider development locations where there are existing settlements and infrastructure before contemplating new growth areas and infrastructure.
- 2 Avoid locations where man-made and natural hazard risk (including residual risk) and effects of climate change cannot be practicably and equitably managed.
- 3 Urban development locations should have good connections or access to employment, services and schools, and have affordable community infrastructure to support community wellbeing.

Principles that are ‘givens’ that apply in all locations

- 1 Avoid and mitigate impacts on natural areas to protect and conserve.
- 2 Protect culturally significant areas from development.
- 3 Minimise urban development on Highly Productive Land and ensure no rural residential development on Highly Productive Land (excluding papakāinga).

Principles about what we want to achieve

- 1 Enable and support iwi/hapū to use their land for their aspirations and unlock opportunities and ensure engagement reflects this intention.
- 2 Cost of infrastructure is feasible and affordable.
- 3 Enable a certainty of zoned and serviced land supply for residential and business purposes for a thirty-year period.
- 4 Locations that enable residential development and economic development opportunities are preferred, including iwi/hapū development.
- 5 Consider the changing needs of housing types due to shifts in demographics.
- 6 A settlement pattern that supports achievement of net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.
- 7 Community wellbeing outcomes can be supported by great placemaking.

Three different Strategic Corridors

The Eastern Bay of Plenty is a diverse and vibrant sub-region, characterised by its three main urban centres and numerous smaller villages and coastal settlements. Spread across the entire Eastern Bay are 92 marae, focal points for Māori communities, providing spaces for gatherings, ceremonies, and cultural activities. The sub-region includes areas of plantation forestry, pastoral agriculture, horticulture, and natural areas. These varying urban and rural environments form the backbone of our community, each contributing uniquely to the region's identity and prosperity.

The sub-region is organised into three main corridors. These corridors facilitate movement, economic activity, and sustainable growth, ensuring that both urban and rural areas thrive. Each corridor identifies **priority growth areas** that are recommendations for where to focus additional planning and investments to enable development or other related aspirations for change.

- **Urban Central Corridor:** includes the townships of Kawerau, Whakatāne and Ōpōtiki and extends along the coast, capturing main rail routes to the port and connection to SH 2. It is expected to see the most development activity.
- **Rural Southern Corridor:** includes the large southern extent of the Whakatāne district, including the villages of Tāneatua, Waiōhau, Galatea, Waimana, Murupara, Minginui and Ruatāhuna with linkage to Rotorua from SH 38. This corridor emphasises iwi-led housing and development opportunities to support rural communities, forestry and horticulture industries.
- **Coastal Eastern Corridor:** includes the coastal strip extending from Ōpōtiki township to Pōtikirua. The Coastal Eastern Corridor has a focus on iwi-led housing and economic initiatives specifically for horticulture and aquaculture industries and is anchored by Te Kaha as the main service centre.

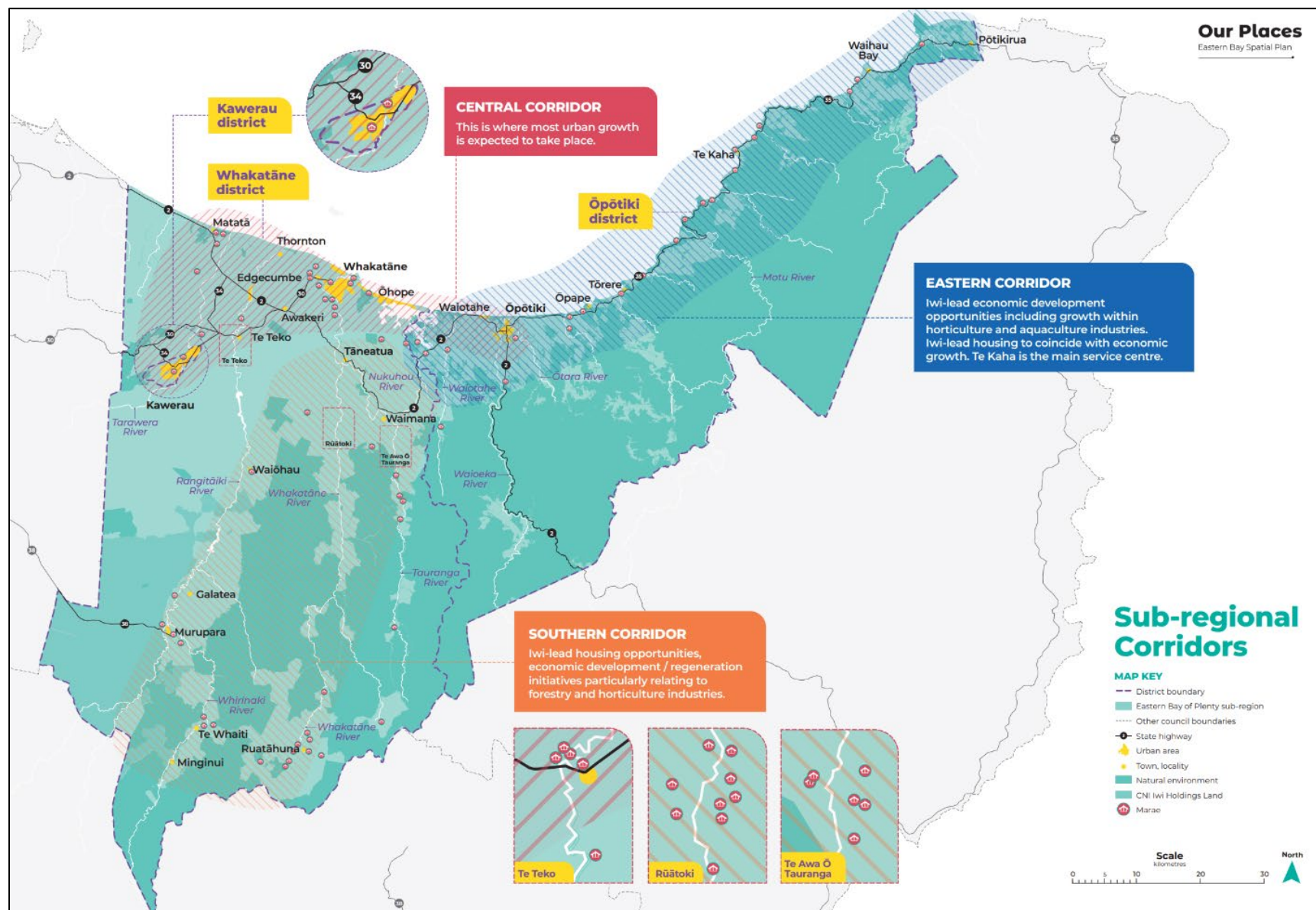


Figure 3: Sub-regional corridors

Central Urban Corridor

The Central Urban Corridor is the area with the largest current and projected urban growth in the subregion. The three main townships of the sub-region are within this corridor:

- Kawerau township – is in the heart of the sub-region and offers a variety of services and amenities. The Kawerau township supports around 8,000 residents and those working in the commercial and industrial areas, including the fast-developing Putauaki Trust Industrial Zone.
- Ōpōtiki township - is near the coast adjacent to the Ōtara and Waioweka rivers, defended by stop banks. The township serves as a key hub for local and rural communities. The Ōpōtiki Wharf provides access to the coast, enhancing recreational and economic activities. Residents also connect with the Ōtara and Waioeka rivers, which converge near the town, offering opportunities for fishing, kayaking, and other water-based activities.
- Whakatāne township – is near the coast and adjacent to the Whakatāne River. It is also defended by stop banks. Whakatāne offers a wide range of services and amenities for both residents and visitors, as the primary sub-regional centre.

The central corridor is rich in highly productive soils and rural farming activities, with the sub-regions most significant industrial land agglomeration located in Kawerau. The Putauaki industrial area in Kawerau is a priority for industrial growth. The area benefits from excellent transport links via State Highways 2 and 30, and a railway connecting directly to the Port of Tauranga. SH 2 connects Tauranga in the west to Gisborne in the southeast, while SH 30 links Rotorua in the southwest with Whakatāne. These transport connections are vital for the industrial and farming sectors.

The Tarawera, Rangitaiki, and Whakatāne rivers flow through the Rangitaiki Plains into the Pacific Ocean, making the land rich in alluvial deposits but also prone to flooding during heavy rains which are currently managed by flood schemes. River flooding is a significant challenge for the Eastern Bay. Flood protection will continue to play a key role in supporting community wellbeing for existing settlements, including Whakatāne and Ōpōtiki townships. However, as conditions change, more adaptive and resilient approaches may need to be explored to ensure communities remain safe and resilient to the effects of natural hazards and climate change in the long-term. There are limited opportunities for expanding development areas within this corridor due to broad constraints like flood hazards or highly productive lands.

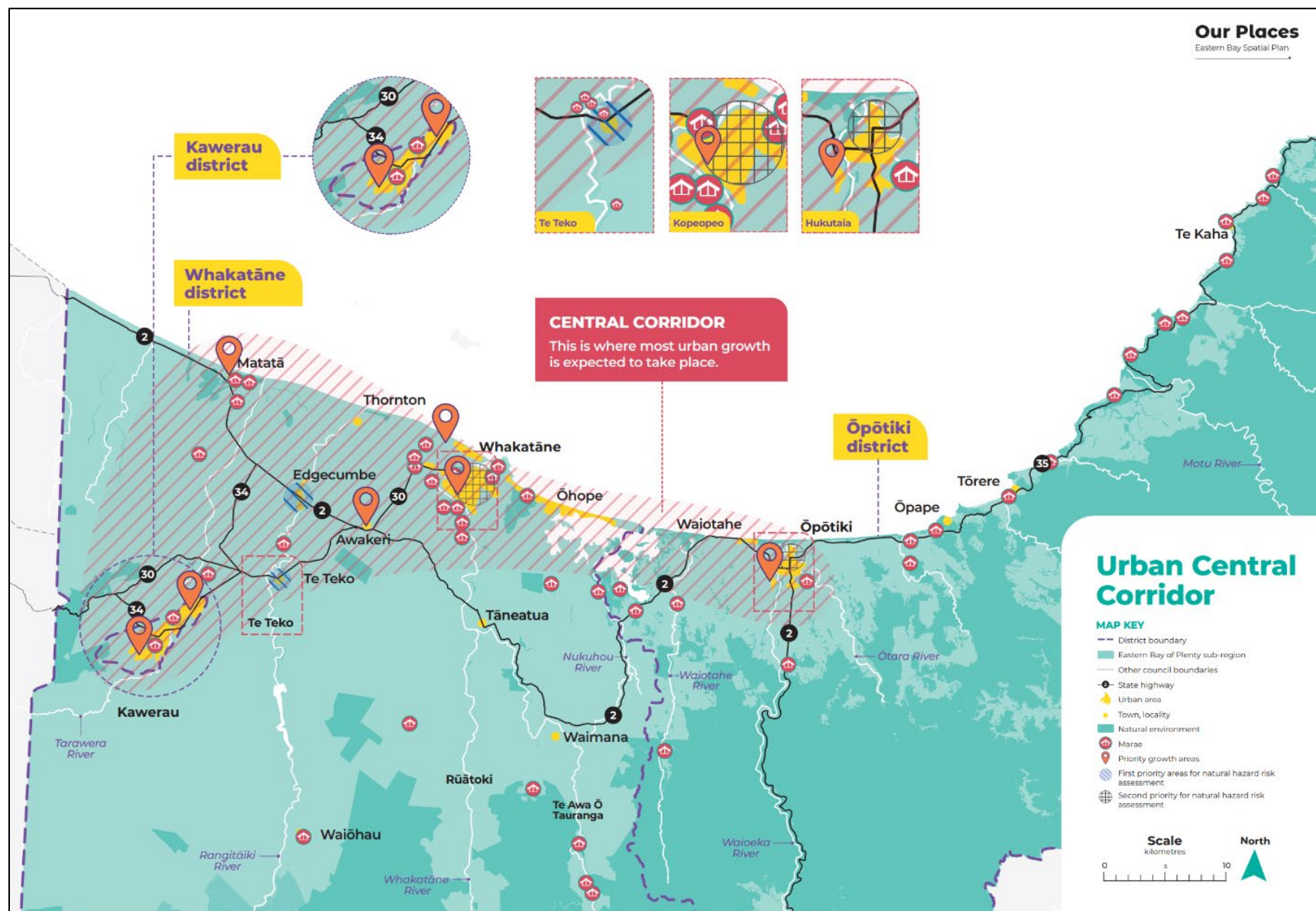


Figure 4: Urban Central Corridor

More business land is needed

By 2053, Whakatāne district is projected to require 2,000 new jobs, 1,000 new jobs in Ōpōtiki and 1,400 in Kawerau. This means that an additional 57.8 ha of land is needed across the sub-region for both industrial (40 ha) and commercial (17.8 ha) purposes. This growth is primarily anticipated to focus around new growth areas, with some rejuvenation within existing urban centres. Major industrial growth will be focused on Putauaki Trust Industrial Zone.

Whakatāne township is the primary sub-regional service centre and given that space within the existing urban centre is finite (although there is still growth potential) additional commercial land will likely be required over the term of the plan near to the township. A 2022 survey by Whakatāne Council estimated 8 ha of light industrial land and 2 ha of commercial land available throughout the Whakatāne district for development. Much of this was available on redevelopment sites. With a forecast demand of 18 ha of commercial business land and a potential supply of 10 ha, there is likely a need for to 10-18 ha more commercial business land (e.g., commercial and light industrial activities).

Ōpōtiki township currently has insufficient land for industrial activities but can meet future commercial land needs through redevelopment or infill within the township, and as part of planning for new development at Hukutaia. At the time of this plan's preparation, ODC is undertaking a specific planning investigation into industrial land supply which will make recommendations for re-zoning actions.

Māori Land Trust and owner aspirations

One of the goals of the spatial plan is to work with Māori landowners to enable development of their land in alignment with their aspirations. A key part of the planning process has been engaging with local iwi. Many iwi and hapū provided submissions through Te Au o Te Awa Punga in the public consultation period in 2024, identifying key priorities and opportunities for development partnerships.

Many landowners and trusts have not yet fully explored development opportunities or funding mechanisms for their land. Continued dialogue is essential as development aspirations evolve over time and constraints posed by natural hazards and climate change must be carefully considered. Specific areas of interest within the Central Urban Corridor include Māori land near Awakeri, Whenua Māori west of Coastlands, and land to the east of Matatā. In Ōpōtiki, development aspirations include areas around Hukutaia, the Totara Block, and further development towards the coast, including the Marina and Industrial Park.

Priority growth areas in the central corridor

Area	Timing	Notes
Awakeri	Short-Medium term	Develop into an urban township of more than 2,000 dwelling units
Whenua Māori West of Coastlands	Medium term	Explore opportunities based on Land Trust and hapu interests, with substantial potential for development of 190 ha
Matatā	Medium-Long term (Infill) Long term (Expansion)	There is existing zoned capacity requiring centralised wastewater treatment to be realised, and a long-term opportunity to expand eastward
Putuaki (Industrial Growth Area)	Ongoing	Continued ongoing development
Hukutaia	Ongoing	Develop into an urban community of 2,000 dwellings
Whakatāne (Kopeopeo infill)	Ongoing	Ongoing infill of Whakatāne township in locations safe from natural hazards

Note: Long term (10-30 years), Medium term (3-10 years), Short term (0-3 years)

The next steps are being worked through by each Council and while the priority growth areas would be the areas where larger changes might occur to enable more development, these will be supported through the ongoing infill and intensification of townships, through rural residential development, pāpakainga, and ongoing infill of smaller communities as already enabled through district plan provisions.

Awakeri

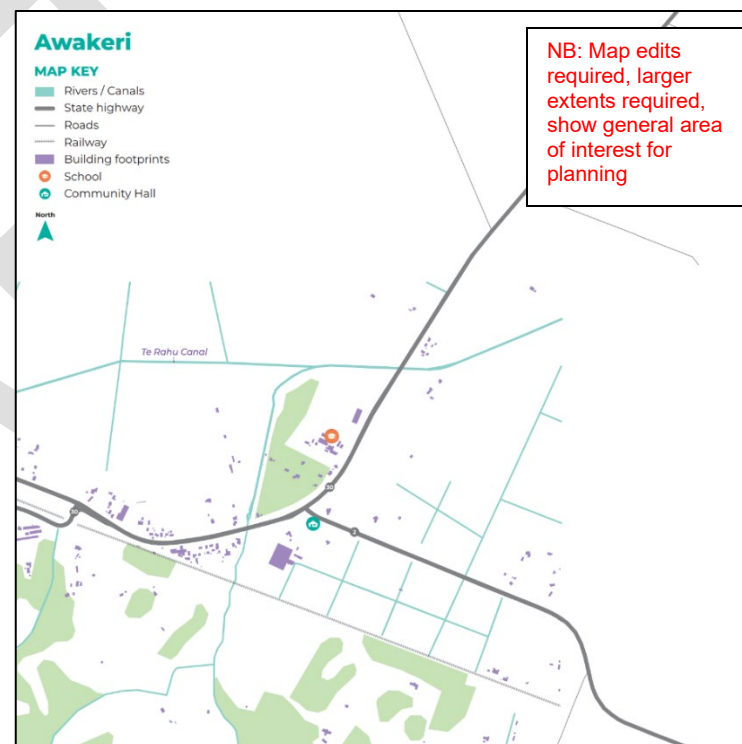
Today, Awakeri has a small permanent population focused around a school and community recreation centre. The intersection of SH 2 and SH 30 is a major transport node within Awakeri, encouraging a high volume of through traffic, approximately 8.5 km southwest of Whakatāne and 25 km to Kawerau. The land is generally flat, backstopped by hills. It is located within a flood scheme, and stormwater management planning is needed to inform future growth planning to manage the effects of climate change, protect the levels of service of the flood scheme and manage downstream risk.

What growth could look like in Awakeri

By 2055, Awakeri could develop into an urban community with a centre focused on commercial and community amenities. Development could be more than 2,000 residential lots, supported by investments into enabling infrastructure like transport, three waters, and public facilities.

Awakeri is a priority for development because of a relatively low flood risk profile enabling resiliency, a consolidated land ownership pattern, existing community facilities, and excellent transport connections to employment locations in urban areas and more broadly throughout the sub-region. This means residents will have a choice of employment, schooling, services, and recreational options.

As Awakeri grows, it will build on its own unique identity, complete with new parks and open spaces created through careful master planning and placemaking. There are schooling options to meet roll requirements, and good bus options to other schools in the district including secondary schooling. An approach to stormwater management that relies on natural systems and interlinked parks and natural open spaces can become part of the identity for the place. Expanded public transport services to main employment locations in Kawerau and Whakatāne townships can offer transport choice.



Sustainable development in Awakeri can be part of addressing the need for more employment opportunities in the sub-region. Providing appropriate land for commercial and small-scale industrial activities can promote local employment. Commercial activity needs to be planned with care to reinforce the primacy of Whakatāne township as the prime sub-regional commercial services centre, and to maintain Kawerau and Putauaki Industrial Area's role as the industrial hub for the sub-region. Additionally, commercial development needs to help make Awakeri an in-demand place for people to live through quality urban design and place-making approaches. Future residential use could be supported by commercial and small-scale industrial development to boost employment and commercial land supply.

Māori landowners in the area are actively exploring opportunities for development that uphold te taiao, ensuring future growth does not come at the expense of the whenua or wai. The Kiwinui Trust wish to see inclusion of a large area of Māori land as part of the development at Awakeri. While currently used for carbon forestry, over time there are broad opportunities for this area to facilitate pāpakainga, provide for open spaces, or other development formats and activities that can complement the village's expansion into an urban town and strongly inform the community's identity, including a commitment to sustainable land use and intergenerational wellbeing.

The area will continue to benefit from a rural aspect with proximity to farming and agricultural activities, as much of the surrounding land classified and protected as highly productive. Reverse sensitivity issues between agricultural and urban activities will be proactively addressed through careful structure planning, which is likely to require a sufficient buffer space.

The existing school and community events centre provide a focus for the existing community life and future ones. Located approximately 500-600 m northwest from the core of the residential growth area, this will promote walkable connections, but careful management of the highway network will be needed to promote safe speeds and pedestrian friendly access. Planning will need to consider the tension between local access and through-trips on the highway network.

Next steps

The next steps will be determined by Whakatāne District's local growth strategy in consultation with the community. These steps are expected to include integrated catchment management planning, advancing feasibility studies, a masterplan and plan changes, assessments for infrastructure and other matters like environmental outcomes, and securing funding for key infrastructure interventions. Both the New Zealand Transport Agency (NZTA) and the Ministry of Education will be key players in the future planning.

With careful planning and collaboration with iwi, hapu, and the community, Awakeri can become a resilient community playing a vital role in the sub-region's future. Community facilities, open spaces, and local services will play an integral part alongside development, to create a place people are proud to live. Collaboration with iwi and hapū and Māori landowners is essential to shaping an inclusive, culturally enriched, and sustainable future.

Whenua Māori (West of Coastlands)

A 190 ha area of land was raised by landowners through the submissions stage of the spatial plan for consideration of its development potential. The land is west of the Coastlands community near Whakatāne township.

The land is owned by Māori Land Trusts and is within the Ngāi Taiwhakaea rohe. Currently undeveloped, the land could result in a sub-regionally significant contribution to the forecasted housing requirement and business opportunities for landowners. The land is naturally elevated with slight undulations forming part of the natural dune area. Its elevation means it is substantially more resilient to flood risks.

The land is centrally located with a coastal position. This coastal location is expected to support a good degree of commercial opportunity for landowners. To develop the land, work will needed to integrate hapū perspectives and ensure wāhi tapu and sites of cultural significance are protected. The priority for Ngāi Taiwhakaea is to protect, preserve and restore te taiao in any development. Currently, there is not clear agreement around the future use of the lands. To illustrate the scale of the opportunity, a very conservative five residential unit per ha gross density would yield 950 dwellings.

What growth looks like

The area is a strategic opportunity for housing and socio-economic activities. The area could remain in its current state or be developed for a wide range of uses from pāpakainga through to institutional activities. A masterplan by Māori Land Trusts and hapū would need to be undertaken to inform subsequent district plan changes. A structure plan will inform potential development of this area, conceptualise the intended development proposal, infrastructure approach, and related funding proposals. Whakatāne District Council would have a role to enable and help manage the provision of infrastructure to service the location as well as related regulatory functions.

Next steps

The next steps involve WDC working closely with the Māori Land Trusts, iwi, and hapu, to support the development of aspirations and site feasibility. This will inform a structure plan or master planning that can then guide potential zoning changes and infrastructure considerations.

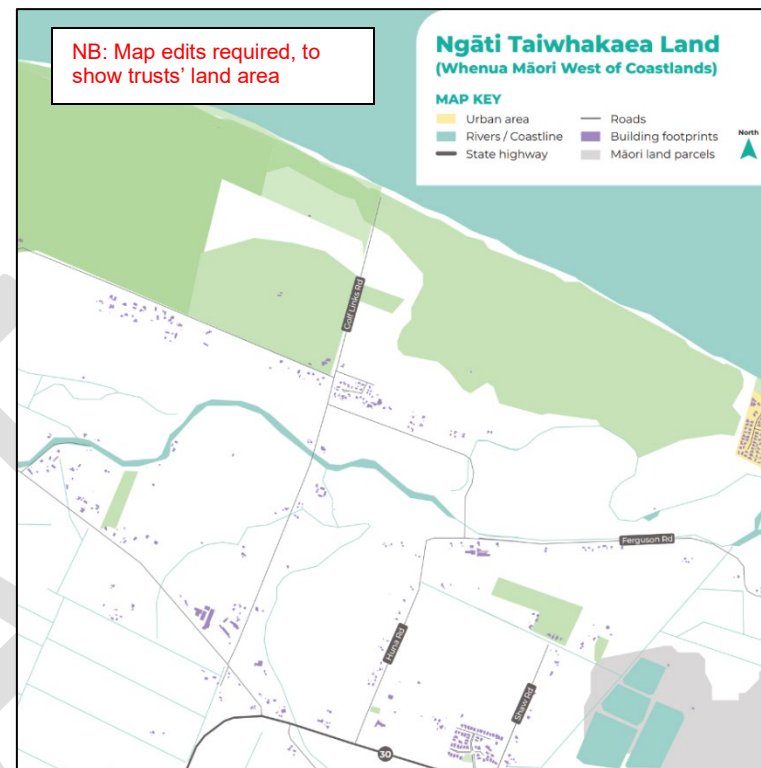


Figure 6: Whenua West of Coastlands Location

Key priorities include securing three waters considerations and funding possibilities such as private funding agreements. The masterplan should consider logical planning boundaries and not be drawn solely on land ownership patterns. This may result in extensions of the area initially defined and require broader engagement with adjacent landowners.

Consideration of Local Waters Done Well will be needed, along with catchment wide stormwater management plans that help support resilient management of stormwater and maximising the existing drainage schemes while minimising effects on it. There are options to connect to existing water and wastewater services in Coastlands or to extend services along Golf Links Road. Given the coastal dune landscape, stormwater management must align with natural drainage systems.

Further feasibility studies and infrastructure assessments will be essential to unlocking sustainable development while ensuring alignment with community and environmental priorities.

Matatā

Matatā is a coastal village located in the west of the district, at the foot of the Matatā Scenic Reserve (Whakapoukarakia) and the north-western edge of the Rangitaiki Plains. It has an existing community of around 1,700 residents¹. It is an important gateway to the eastern bay from the west with SH 2 passing through the town. Matatā is rich in cultural heritage and natural beauty.

What future growth might look like

Matatā's future will be influenced by population growth driven by nearby employment hubs. Increased activity in the Putauaki Industrial Area in Kawerau, business development at Rangiuru (east of Papamoa), and continued growth within Whakatāne township are expected to create new employment opportunities within a reasonable commuting distance (approximately 25 minutes). This will likely attract new residents to Matatā, reinforcing the need for a coordinated and sustainable approach to township development. As a gateway to the eastern bay, there are strong ambitions amongst the community for local economic development, and to develop eco-tourism opportunities.

The Tarawera Awa River Strategy Group are developing plans to return the nearby Tarawera River to its natural watercourse. The lower catchment area also drains into the Te Awa o Atua and the Tarawera River and is subject to coastal processes. Iwi are leading efforts to restore the mauri of the Tarawera Awa to Te Awa o Te Atua and out to te Mihinmarino.



Figure 7: Matatā location

The residential zone in the Whakatāne District Plan for Matatā is larger than the current developed urban footprint. Subject to the development of a reticulated wastewater system, the town is anticipated to grow from approximately 260 homes to 600–700 homes. This is expected to happen through a mixture of infill and subdivision of existing residential properties over the long term of 10-30 years. A fragmented and complex land ownership, emphasis on protection of the natural environment, stormwater management, and natural hazard risks suggest development and changes will initially be slow.

¹ 2018 Census, Stats NZ

Additional to the existing capacity provided for in the district plan, there is elevated land suitable for future new growth further east of the existing residential zone. This area could accommodate another 700–800 homes and should be preserved for future urban development consideration by avoiding low density residential uses.

Where to next?

To guide the future development of Matatā, a master plan for Matatā should be progressed to ensure future development protects and enhances the town's natural character and enables sufficient development opportunities. A new wastewater treatment plant that services Matatā is critical to enabling development and achieving environmental outcomes.

The community was clear through engagement that the character of Matatā is paramount. Planning will need to take a placemaking-first approach that interweaves changes with existing development to support the town's unique character. Economic development activities and detailed planning should also consider how to leverage the role of the community as a gateway to the eastern bay.

The community is interested and needs to be highly involved in directing the future of Matatā. A local economic development plan should be prepared to direct Matatā's future, in tandem with any local growth strategy. There is a strong concern that successful development and new economic activity may price out existing residents, and this needs to be a consideration in planning.

Partnerships with iwi, hapū, and Māori Land Trusts will be critical to the township's ongoing development. Opportunities include exploring lease structures that preserve Māori land ownership while enabling development. A slow, careful approach to planning the future of Matatā is preferred.

Pūtauaki (Industrial Area)

The Pūtauaki Industrial Zone in Kawerau originally covered approximately 171 ha. In 2024, a boundary adjustment with Whakatāne district approved the transfer of an additional 311 ha to the west of the existing site into Kawerau District, part of which will be rezoned for expansion of this industrial area.

What Growth looks like

Kawerau will continue to be the sub-region's premier industrial growth area. The Sub-Regional Economic Development Strategy identifies future development as a green industry hub with geothermal and bioenergy facilities.

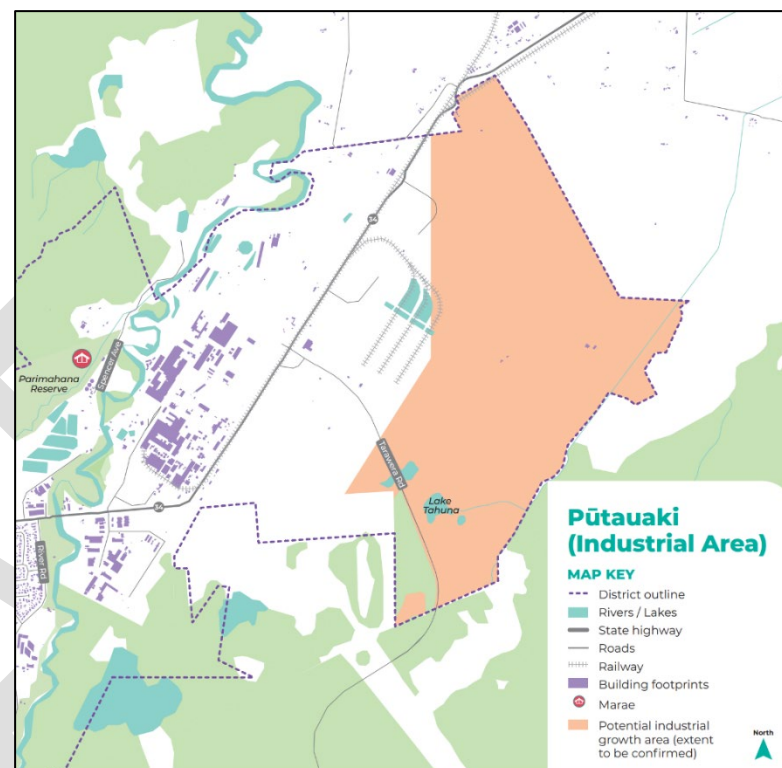


Figure 8: Pūtauaki location

Kawerau Residential Infill/Intensification

Kawerau district has limited opportunities for greenfield residential development, so increasing housing will require infill or intensification of existing residential areas. Stoneham Park is one of the remaining greenfield opportunities and is nearly into development stages.

What growth looks like

Kawerau's growth will be driven by market forces and will be largely dependent on infill development capacity. There are some opportunities for the development of Māori-owned land for papakāinga or other Māori-led housing initiatives. District-wide stormwater flood modelling will inform the review of the district plan and include provisions to manage flood risk.

Where to next?

For Kawerau, residential growth will focus on development of Stoneham Park, infill and intensification of existing residential areas, papakāinga or other Māori-led housing initiatives. Collaboration with iwi and strategic upgrading of infrastructure in relation to demand will be key to unlocking sustainable growth in Kawerau. Between 1990 and 2021, Kawerau averaged about 5 new dwellings consents per year.² Stoneham Park will enable around 104 residential units.

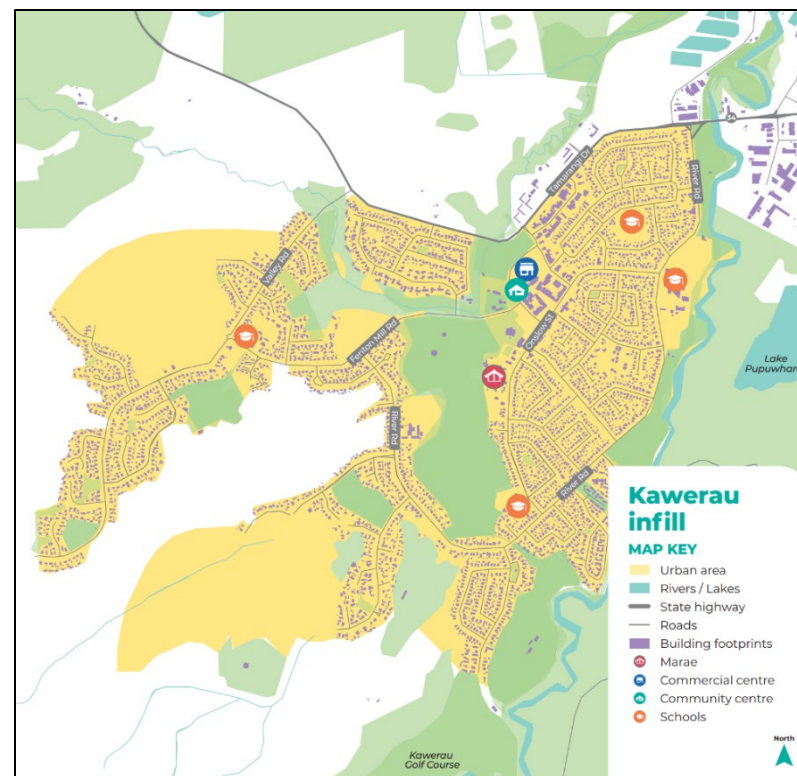


Figure 9: Kawerau location

² Kawerau District Council Stoneham Park Residential Development Property Market Report, Veros

Hukutaia growth area

Located southwest of Ōpōtiki, the Hukutaia area is currently bounded by Woodlands Road, Hukutaia and Dip Roads, and Grant Road and is located above the Otara-Waioweka flood scheme. It currently has a mix of urban residential around Hospital Hill and rural land uses. With an elevated position it sits outside most flood hazard risk areas and is better positioned in this respect than the township.

What growth looks like

The area has the capacity to provide for 2,000 residential dwelling units by 2055. Local commercial opportunities will create employment and contribute to the vibrancy and resilience of the new area. Development concepts have identified smaller-scale commercial opportunities to support the area's employment growth. A district plan change and new structure plan will rezone and unlock the land within Hukutaia Growth Area. However, future planning will need to consider impacts on the Otara-Waioweka flood scheme and the existing Ōpōtiki township. Hukutaia will develop into a vibrant new growth cell with land for social infrastructure and facilities made available as growth and demand increase. Growth in Hukutaia will be steady, with a mix of residential density dwellings providing a safer retreat for some existing residents and natural growth for others working in the township.

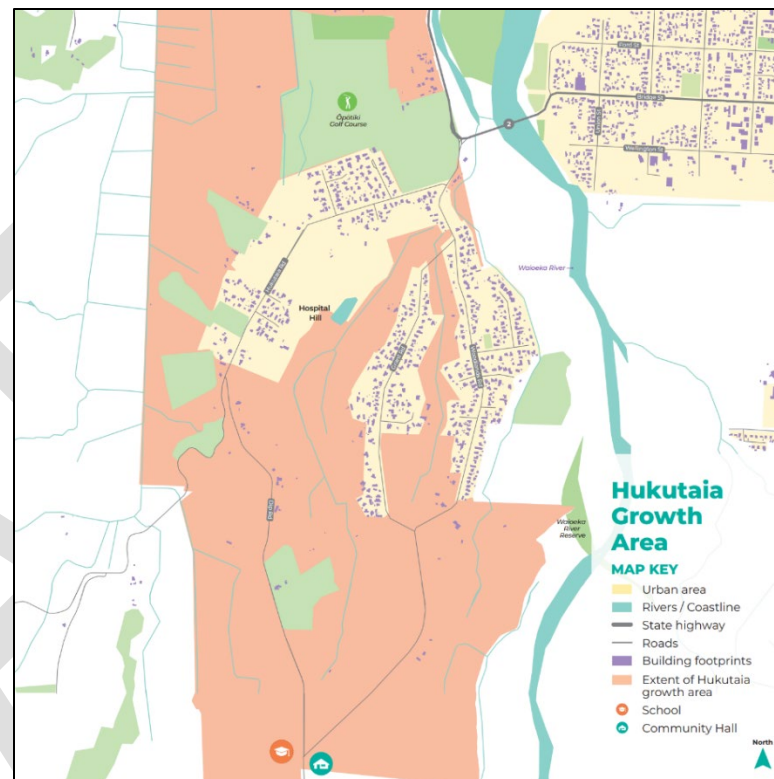


Figure 10: Hukutaia location

Where to next?

For Hukutaia, the next steps focus on unlocking its potential as a key growth area. A district plan change and structure planning will be essential to rezone land, ensuring sustainable and well-integrated development. With capacity for 2,000 new homes by 2055, growth will be staged to align with infrastructure upgrades and community needs.

Key priorities include securing resilient water supply solutions, evaluating wastewater treatment options, and implementing effective stormwater management and manages downstream risk to existing Ōpōtiki Township. The planned Stoney Creek utilities bridge will enhance water supply resilience, while electricity upgrades will support increasing demand.

Ongoing collaboration with iwi, landowners, and stakeholders will guide growth, ensuring Hukutaia develops as a vibrant, well-serviced community with local employment and commercial opportunities.

Whakatāne (Kopeopeo infill)

Unlike the wider Whakatāne urban area, Kopeopeo (along with other higher elevated areas like Hillside) presents a safer opportunity for infill development as it is less exposed to natural hazard risks compared to other lower-lying areas of Whakatāne township.

Kopeopeo sits on land elevated above the flood hazard risks of stop bank failure or an overtopping event from a storm exceeding a 1/100 year annual exceedance probability (AEP) intensity.

What growth looks like

As an established community, there is unlikely to be a substantial or quick increase in infill and intensification. Kopeopeo, and similarly elevated areas, present an opportunity for gradual continued infill or intensification development over the timeframe of the spatial plan.

While there is existing water and wastewater capacity for infill development, there are constraints. For example, existing urban water mains will eventually require upgrades to meet increased demand, and the potential expansion of the Whakatāne Wastewater Treatment Plant will need to accommodate additional capacity for the area.

Where to next?

Kopeopeo and other similarly elevated areas offer a strong opportunity for continued infill and intensification in the short to long term, given its elevation and lower exposure to natural hazard risks. However, long-term growth will depend on shifting public and developer perceptions toward higher density living. Infrastructure planning will focus on ensuring water supply resilience, with potential connections to primary and secondary mains from Paul Road or Braemar Road. Upgrades to ageing asbestos cement water mains may also be required to support increased demand.



Figure 11: Whakatāne (Kopeopeo infill) location

Wastewater capacity is currently being assessed, with further modelling needed to determine if upgrades to pump stations and rising mains are necessary. The potential expansion of the Whakatāne Wastewater Treatment Plant could accommodate future growth, ensuring long-term service reliability.

Stormwater management remains a priority, with ongoing reviews to enhance system performance and maintain effective drainage. While Kopeopeo sits at a higher elevation than the Whakatāne CBD, it remains within key river catchments, requiring ongoing flood risk considerations as part of broader spatial planning efforts. Future development of stormwater systems should promote catchment wide blue green network consideration.

Existing urban areas in the Central Corridor that are constrained

The Central Corridor has several villages and townships that have developed over time around rivers in low lying areas. These areas have been previously zoned for a range of land use activities. These places have been home to communities for generations. Continued collaboration with iwi, landowners, and key stakeholders will shape a sustainable path forward.

In some locations such as Tāneatua or Ōpōtiki township, the spatial plan has adopted a precautionary approach that acknowledges that natural hazard constraints apply and there are no planned or funded mitigations to fully address risks. Full mitigation may not be feasible or affordable. As such, these are not included as priority growth areas.

The spatial plan takes the position that areas promoted for new growth need to be ones that are demonstrably resilient. The spatial plan does not change zoning in the district plan and it does not on its own create or prohibit additional development at these locations. A future district plan review or plan change would be needed to make a change like that.

Communities that are not being promoted for additional development capacity, beyond what is already enabled through the current district plans, include:

Ōpōtiki township

Ōpōtiki township is surrounded by the Waiwoeka and Ōtara rivers and defended against adverse flood conditions by stop banks on either side of the urban area.

Ōpōtiki will continue to provide for infill development at a controlled pace in the short term. In the medium to long term, as flood risks and management options including funding are better understood and implemented, development potential within the township may change. Hukutaia will enable a resilient development option nearby the township to absorb population and commercial growth, including from possible managed retreat from natural hazards.

Risk assessments will inform river management planning, infrastructure planning, adaptation planning, emergency preparedness, and land use planning and will guide future growth decisions, ensuring that Ōpōtiki remains a resilient and well supported township.

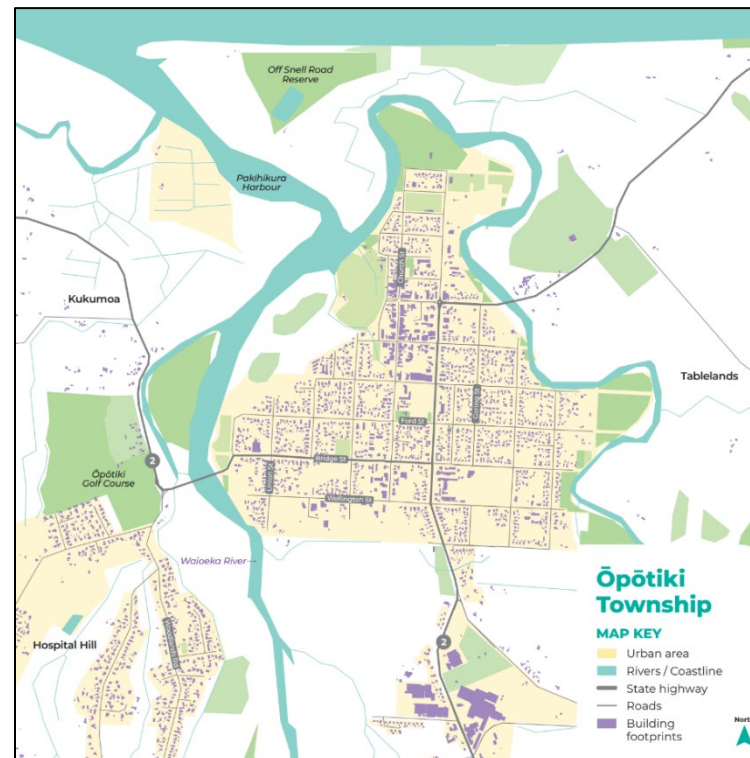


Figure 12: Ōpōtiki township location

Whakatāne (Infill)

Lower lying land within the Whakatāne urban boundary (excluding Kopeopeo and similarly elevated areas) and adjacent to the township is subject to natural hazard risks associated with the Whakatāne River and its potential for flooding. As a result, other locations such as Matatā and Awakeri have been identified for future growth.

As further investigations are undertaken to understand natural hazard risk and, as future risk management strategies evolve, district plan provisions may be changed to address better understanding of the risk.

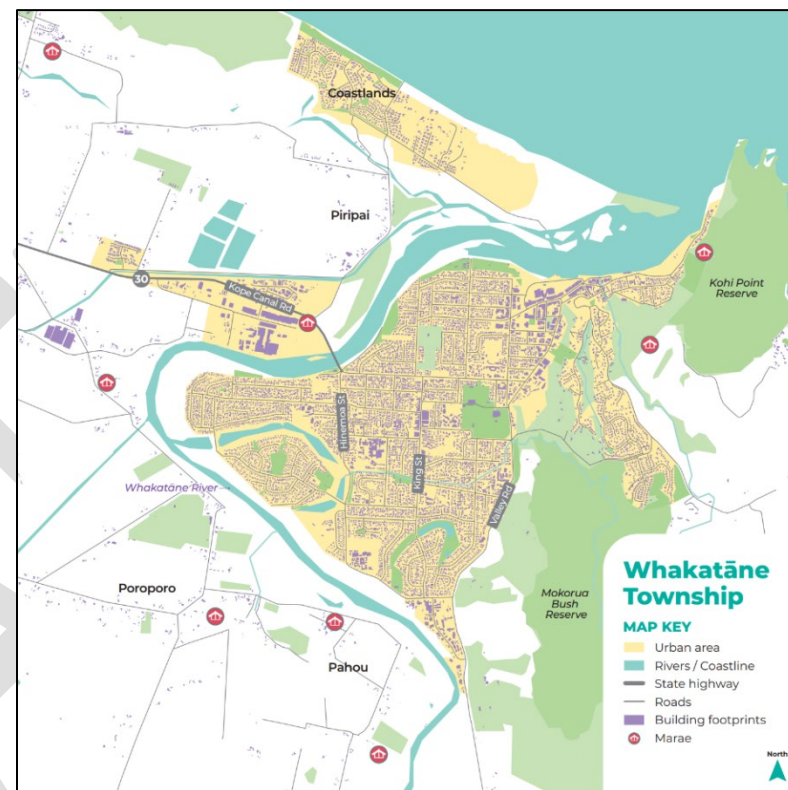


Figure 13: Whakatāne (Infill)

Te Teko

Te Teko has capacity for small scale growth within the existing urban area on land currently zoned for residential development. The existing settlement is defended in some locations by stop banks and is unprotected in other areas meaning parts of the settlement are susceptible to large flooding events.

For these reasons, the community remains vulnerable and therefore, Te Teko is not progressed as growth option in the spatial plan. In the interim, natural hazard risk assessment and resilience planning is promoted.



Figure 14: Te Teko location

Edgecumbe

Edgecumbe is a vibrant community nestled along the banks of the Rangitaiki River, with a strong sense of connection to its natural environment. The settlement is defended from the risk of flooding by stop banks along the river's margins, as well as being part of the Rangitaiki River and Drainage Scheme.

In 2017, Edgecumbe faced a significant challenge when heavy rains from Cyclone Debbie led to a breach in the stop bank, causing the Rangitaiki River to flood much of the village. Edgecumbe is not progressed as viable as a growth area for new urban development.

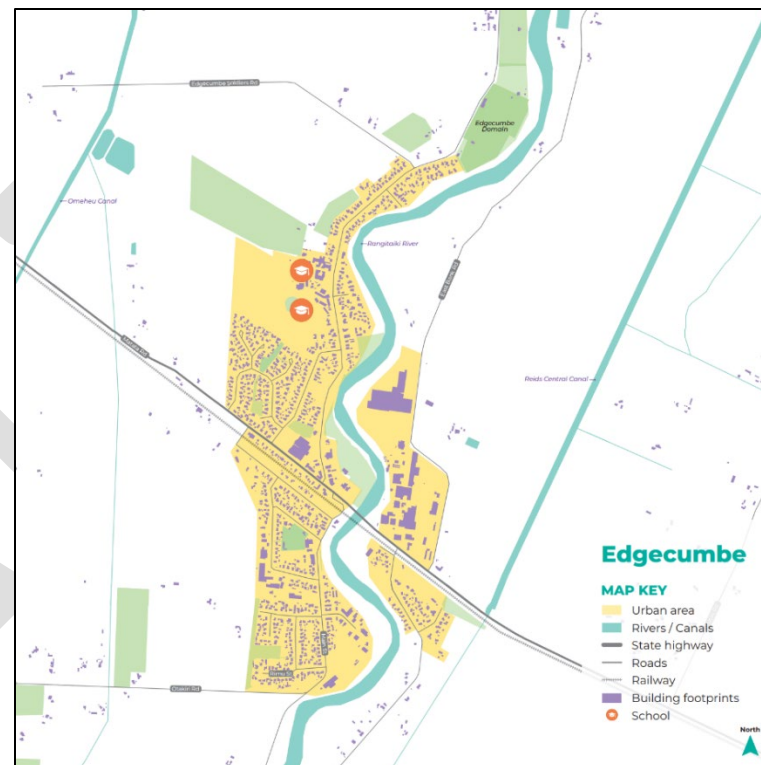


Figure 15: Edgecumbe location

Southern Rural Corridor

Where are we now?

The Rural Southern Corridor stretches from Tāneatua in the north to Minginui in the south, including areas like Murupara, Waimana, Waiōhau, Ruatāhuna, and Galatea. This area is known for its small rural towns, agriculture, forestry, and large areas of protected indigenous forest, including Te Urewera and Whirinaki Forest Park. Tourism here focuses on these beautiful natural areas. The three main iwi in this corridor are Ngāti Manawa, Ngāti Whare, and Ngāi Tūhoe.

The Galatea Valley is a productive area with dairy farms, while the Kaingaroa Forest and Central North Island (CNI) Iwi Collective Forestry Lands lie to the west. The Rangitāiki River, along with the Ōhinemataroa (Whakatāne), Whirinaki and Tauranga rivers, flows through this corridor, playing a significant role in the corridor. The Rangitāiki River is co-governed by the Rangitāiki River Forum and has hydro-electric power stations at Aniwhenua and Matahina.

Key transport routes include SH 38, connecting Murupara to Rotorua, the Te Urewera Rainforest Route, and Galatea Road linking to the Rangitāiki Plains and the north. Tāneatua and Waimana are served by SH 2 and Tāneatua Road, which connects to Whakatāne. There's also a rail line from Murupara to Kawerau and Tauranga.

Iwi aspirations

The three main iwi in the Southern Rural Corridor have specific aspirations:

- Ngāti Manawa aim to uplift health and wellbeing in Murupara, by supporting economic development and creating a thriving community that acts as the service hub for the Southern Rural Corridor. This includes establishing a service centre on SH 38, revitalising the town centre, improving community infrastructure, progressing the housing development at Miro Drive and developing housing at Evans Park.
- Ngāti Whare have goals for Minginui and Te Whaiti which support self-sufficiency and include sustainable waste and water management, upgrading homes, developing papakāinga, renewable energy projects, ecotourism, revitalising the town centre, and strengthening educational facilities.
- Ngāi Tūhoe have documented their aspirations in Tūhoe - Te Uru Taumatua and tribal authorities' publications. Ngāi Tūhoe's long-term housing goals are outlined in the Tuhoe Blueprint: Housing 40 Year Vision.

Ongoing conversations with iwi are crucial to identify how councils and others can support these aspirations.

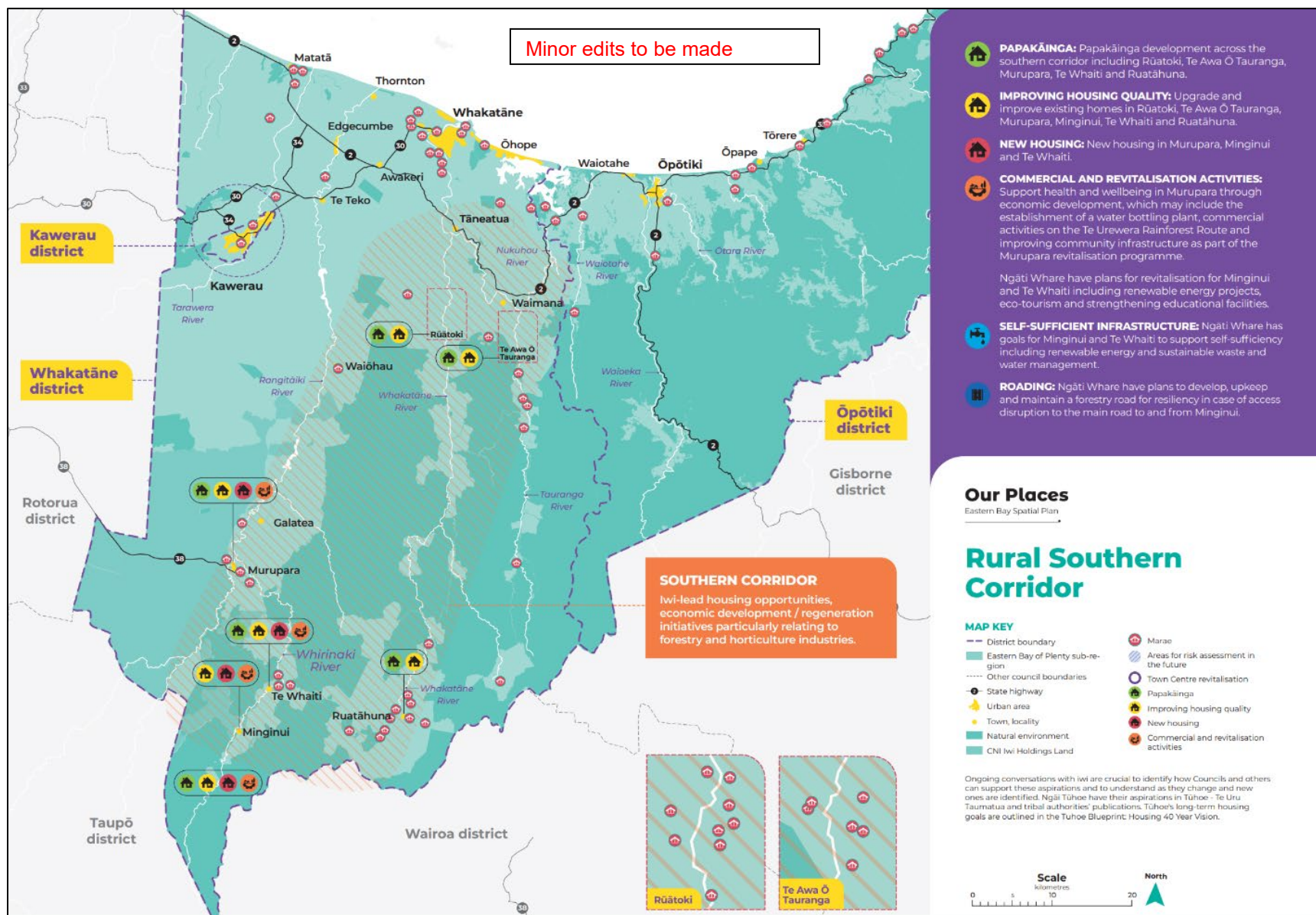


Figure 16: Rural Southern Corridor

What does the future hold for the Southern Corridor?

The focus for the Rural Southern Corridor is on iwi-led housing and economic opportunities, particularly in tourism, forestry, horticulture, and potential new ventures like sustainable water bottling. The main emphasis is on supporting iwi-led initiatives.

Growth in this corridor means resilience, revitalisation, and supporting iwi aspirations. The focus for Three Waters Infrastructure is improving existing systems or self-sufficiency. Marae must be supported as cultural and community hubs, including for emergency management. Community facilities are co-located and appropriately service the needs of each community.

Minginui and Te Whaiti

By 2055, increased Māori housing and papakāinga will support the growth of Ngāti Whare descendants living within the Minginui and Te Whaiti communities. Marae and surrounding areas will be prepared as emergency hubs. Minginui will grow sustainably, providing for whānau needs and creating a central recreation area and essential services accessible to the Te Whaiti community.

Murupara

By 2055, Murupara will have improved public facilities and community spaces. Key changes proposed for consideration include the conversion of Evan's Park into a residential zone and enabling a commercial area on the Te Urewera Rainforest Route. Both require initial feasibility assessments.

Tāneatua

By 2055, flood mapping and natural hazard risk assessments will inform the feasibility and affordability of any risk management planning and decisions to be considered in the future. There have been prior documented flood events affecting this community. Due to known flood risk and the absence of mitigation measures to manage that, Taneatua it is not progressed as a viable growth area. A natural hazard risk assessment is required to understand the extent of risk and to inform the feasibility and affordability of any future risk management responses. In the interim, some limited low-density development may occur in safe areas already enabled in the district plan where there is available infrastructure capacity.

Te Awa O Tauranga, Ruatoki, Ruatāhuna

By 2055, Ngāi Tūhoe will have advanced their aspirations to establish pāpakainga goals outlined in the Tuhoe Blueprint Housing Strategy in locations resilient to natural hazard risk and climate, to ensure existing and future communities are safe and resilient in the long-term. Infrastructure will be self-sufficient and sustainable, with resilient transport connections.

Eastern Coastal Corridor

Where are we now?

The Eastern Coastal Corridor stretches from Ōpōtiki township west to Kererutahi, south to Waiwoeka Pa, and east to Pōtikirua. This area is known for its rural and coastal charm, with a strong focus on iwi-led housing and economic development.

Ōpōtiki District Council has worked closely with Ngāitai, Te Whānau ā Apanui, and Whakatōhea to inform the content of this plan. These iwi groups own 60% of the land in the district and are responsible for major economic drivers in the area. With 66% of the district's population being Māori, their partnership with local, regional, and central government plays a crucial role in how the future development of the Eastern Corridor will take place.

Te Kaha serves as the main service centre, with coastal marae and settlements along SH 35. There is limited flat land for development along the coast, but it is rich in versatile soil. The mountainous Raukumara Forest Park and conservation land to the south are rich in indigenous vegetation and recreational reserves. These areas attract people from all over the country for cycling, hiking, and fishing. Ngāti Porou land within Ōpōtiki district is mostly located within these mountainous areas.

State Highways 2 and 35 are vital for connecting the Eastern Corridor internally and to external markets. However, the area is vulnerable to coastal flooding and landslides, which can disrupt access, especially east of Ōpōtiki. Development south of Ōpōtiki is also limited by the Waiwoeka River floodplain and protected versatile soils.

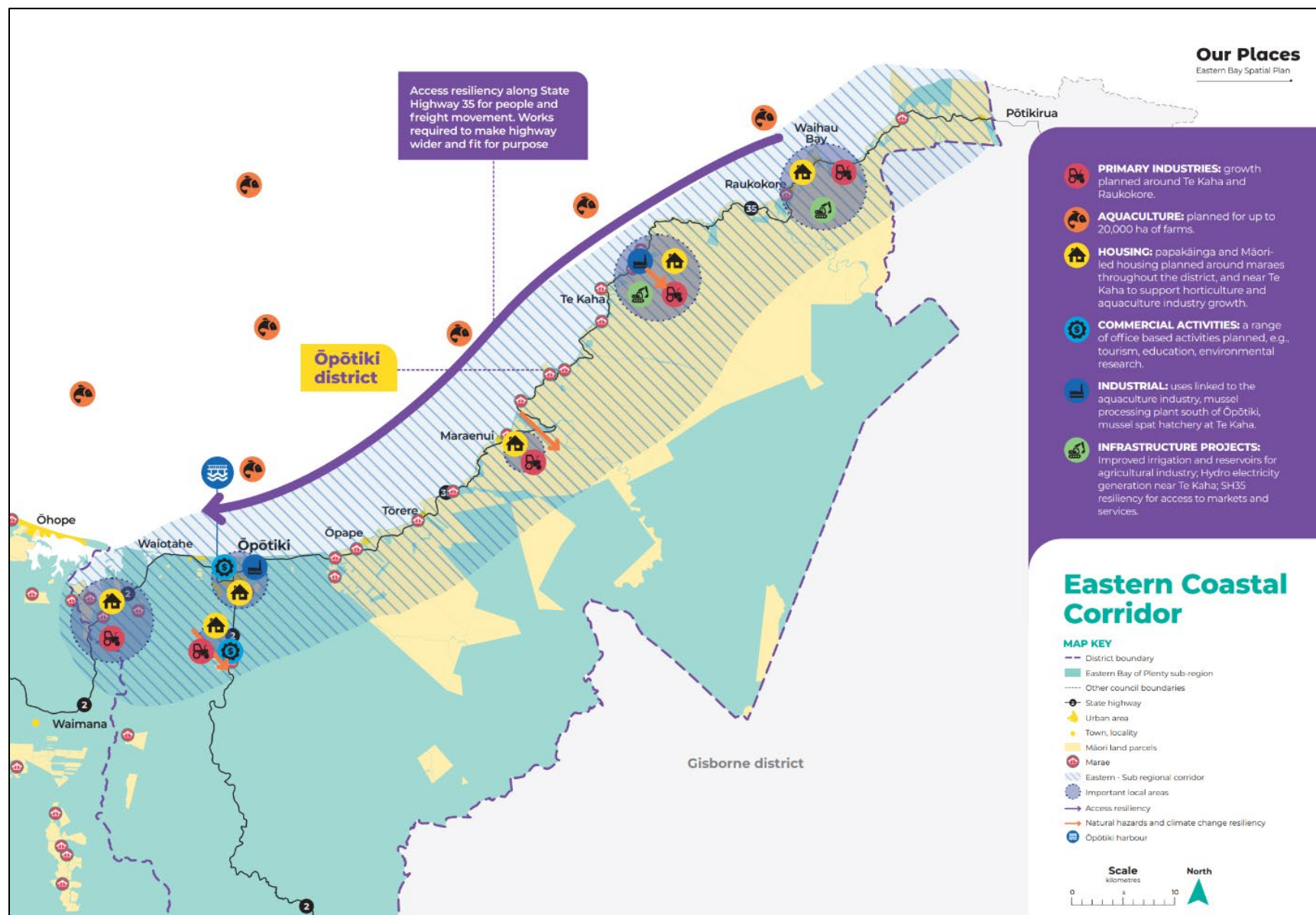


Figure 17: Eastern Coastal Corridor

Iwi aspirations

Iwi in the Eastern Corridor have big plans for housing and businesses that would contribute to economic growth in the area. They aim to establish papakāinga and Māori housing near marae and near Te Kaha to support local industries. Recent Treaty Settlements with Te Tāwharau o Te Whakatōhea and Government grants for Te Whānau-ā-Apanui have boosted these plans.

Important projects that have the potential to enhance the community's economic, social, and cultural wellbeing in the Eastern Corridor include the following:

- Whakatōhea were the first in the world to develop an Open Ocean Greenshell Mussel farm, with their 20-year journey beginning in the late 1990s. Their mussel processing facility in Ōpōtiki has the most modern mussel processor in New Zealand and has the potential to have the largest production capacity in the southern hemisphere.
- Te Whānau-ā-Apanui have applied for the largest single seawater consent for aquaculture in New Zealand, are planning an on-land mussel spat hatchery and research hub near Te Kaha and exploring the seaweed industry. To avoid reliance on the often closed state highway network, they are also investigating sea freight options from Te Kaha for mussel transport.
- The Mahi Haurahi Horticulture Centre between Omaio and Waihou Bay includes multiple kiwifruit, macadamia and truffle orchards.
- Raukokore/Waihou Bay community water storage projects to support new kiwifruit orchards.

Aquaculture is primarily led by iwi, with Māori wellbeing deeply connected to the land and sea. The Crown invested \$164.34 million in a group of projects across Ōpōtiki district to enable sustainable aquaculture industry in the Eastern Bay of Plenty. It includes the Whakatōhea aquaculture farm and processing facility (opened in 2021), harbour development (the harbour opened in 2024), Ōpōtiki Town Wharf Upgrade (completed for temporary boat launching of mussel boats), the Marina and Wharf Development for industrial uses and commercial/recreational boats (scheduled to be undertaken in 2025), and Te Hauata Mussel Spat Hatchery near Te Kaha (in planning phase).

Ōpōtiki pipeline projects from Kererutahi (Tūranga Pikitoi) to Opape

Ōpōtiki iwi have identified a range of pipeline projects across the district. These signal likely expenditure and development that may act as a catalyst for growth.

LIMITATION: This map is subject to hapū consultation



Figure 18: Ōpōtiki iwi pipeline projects Kererutahi to Opape

Ōpōtiki pipeline projects from Ōmarumutu to Hawai

Ōpōtiki iwi have identified a range of pipeline projects across the district. These signal likely expenditure and development that may act as a catalyst for growth.



Figure 19: Ōpōtiki iwi pipeline projects Ōmarumutu to Hawai

Ōpōtiki pipeline projects from Haupoto to Whangaparāoa

Ōpōtiki iwi have identified a range of pipeline projects across the district. These signal likely expenditure and development that may act as a catalyst for growth.

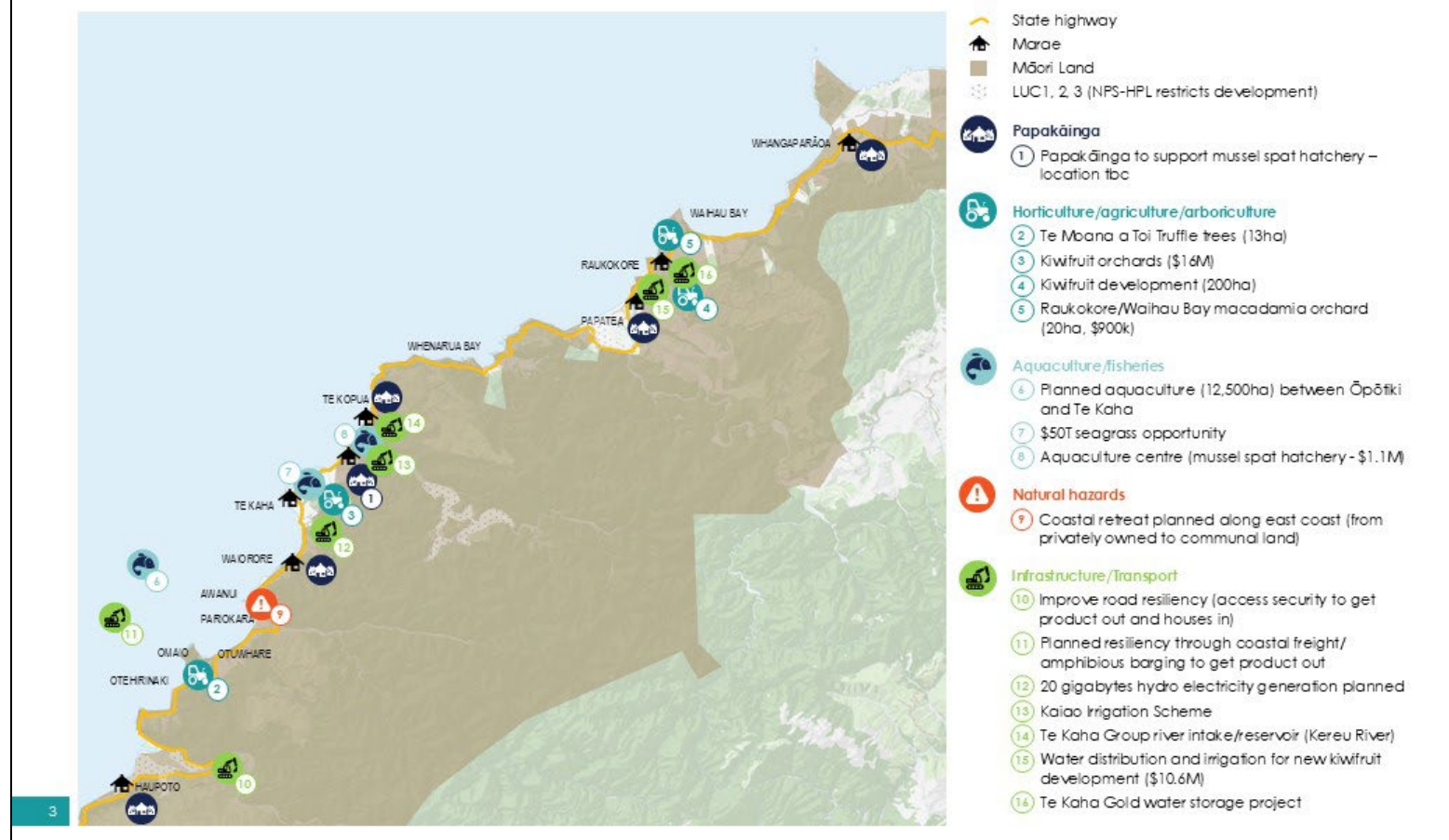


Figure 20: Ōpōtiki iwi pipeline projects Haupoto to Whangaparāoa

What does the future hold?

Pāpakainga

Māori-led housing is set to play a significant role in the Eastern Corridor's housing supply. There are plans to develop over 200 papakāinga units in the next five years, providing homes for tangata whenua returning to the area. These developments will generally be close to rural work opportunities and marae. Community feedback has highlighted the need for infill in smaller settlements and rural residential development along the coast. This approach supports the sustainability of small communities and allows people to live near their whānau and cultural heritage.

Business and development

Iwi will continue to be key players in various business ventures within the Eastern Corridor. Primary industries will continue to be a significant economic driver across the Eastern Corridor. Central Government investments are supporting the development of kiwifruit, macadamia, and truffle orchards, as well as infrastructure for these industries. Whakatōhea is planning large scale māra kai (kiwifruit and dairy blocks) south of Ōpōtiki, supported by environmental education, Hauora Wellness Centre and research for regenerative farming practices.

Aquaculture is a major focus, with investment into over 20,000 ha of water space planned for mussel farming north of Ōpōtiki township and Te Kaha. Ōpōtiki Processing Facility will be expanding its operations and the mussel spat hatchery will be established near Te Kaha to support the aquaculture industries. The Ōpōtiki Harbour Development Project enables Ōpōtiki to become a service and processing base for recreational and commercial vessels to support tourism, aquaculture and other marine related industries (including boat building/servicing).

Reliable transport connections, and reticulated services

State Highway 35 improvements to stabilise embankments is the key focus for the east coast to ensure access for people and products. State Highway 2 also needs to be secured against slips, but alternative routes need to be upgraded to provide more options and resiliency to the Ōpōtiki township. Most areas are remote and lack reticulated services, but some areas south of Ōpōtiki may connect to existing services. Infrastructure for smaller settlements can be managed through renewals programs.

Social and community infrastructure

Ōpōtiki township is the main centre for social and community services. There are various schools, holiday parks and a few small dairies within the Eastern Corridor and a medical center and hotel in Te Kaha. There is a shortage of commercial shops and employment opportunities along the East Coast, but Te Kaha has the potential to become a larger service centre with more offerings.

Marae play a vital role in supporting communities, especially during natural disasters. The Eastern Corridor's rich Māori heritage, along with the sea, expansive native bush and rivers provide opportunities for kai foraging, hiking, hunting, fishing and recreational activities. The area is part of the Nga Haerenga, the New Zealand Cycle Trail, which attracts visitors from across the country and internationally. The Motu Trails have boosted Ōpōtiki's regional identity, being accorded The Great Ride status in 2012. It generates annual visits of up to 20,000, supporting local businesses. There are opportunities to further develop eco-tourism opportunities.

How will this be achieved?

Transport network resiliency. Economic growth in the Eastern Corridor will increase the need for housing and put more demand on the transport network. The spatial plan highlights the need for secure access and improved road networks to support transportable dwellings and product transportation. The products being prepared in the Eastern Corridor can be very time sensitive to reach markets, and disrupted transport connections due to natural hazard events posing an ongoing challenge. Continued emphasis on improved resiliency of SH 2 and SH 35 is important for the economic development of the corridor.

Increasing industrial land supply. More industrial land is needed because of the expected demand for local industries to expand and new ones to establish. Ōpōtiki District Council is in the process of identifying land around the township, while development around Te Kaha will happen based on site specific opportunities taken forward through an enabling planning framework.

More housing supply and greater choice. Economic development plans for the corridor are also supported through the establishment of the Hukutaia development area to provide more housing choices for people who may work in these areas.



Our Places

Eastern
Bay of Plenty
spatial plan

Part Four: Infrastructure Considerations



Contents

Contents	1
Part 4: Infrastructure considerations.....	3
Overview.....	3
Social infrastructure	4
What is Social Infrastructure?	4
Social Infrastructure in response to growth.....	6
Transport and accessibility.....	7
Where are we now?	7
Response to growth	10
Transport and accessibility for priority growth areas.....	11
Three Waters Network	13
Where are we now?	13
Three waters for priority growth areas	16
Whenua Māori Land (West of Coastlands).....	17
Electricity networks	18
Where are we now?	18
Response to growth.....	20
Electricity infrastructure for priority growth areas	20

Note:

Before the spatial plan is received by Council for adoption, minor changes will be made to the spatial plan document to improve communication and readability, provide Te Reo translation of headlines and corrections to spelling, and graphic design of the total document.

Figures

Figure 1: Social infrastructure	5
Figure 2: Transport and accessibility	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Figure 3: River and drainage schemes	14
Figure 4: Three waters service areas and plants	15
Figure 5: Existing energy infrastructure network	19

Part 4: Infrastructure considerations

Overview

This section outlines important considerations for infrastructure in response to Part 3 – Our Growth Plan. It includes details on social infrastructure, transport and three waters infrastructure, and electrical networks and what will be needed to respond to growth.

The Spatial Plan looks at how the sub-region will grow over the next 30 years and where this growth will happen. This helps developers and infrastructure providers understand the sub-regions future growth better. It also enables infrastructure providers to plan ahead for where major investments are needed to support growth.

Adopting a prioritised, staged approach to servicing future growth offers a more realistic and achievable basis to ensure adequate funding is included in future Long-term plans to address infrastructure needs in priority growth areas.

Social infrastructure

We need to be realistic about expectations for the extent and quality of social infrastructure that we can afford while providing for overall wellbeing and quality of life in our communities. The quality and extent of social infrastructure varies across the sub-region and will continue to do so due affordability challenges.

We need to make good decisions to maximise the benefits of available investment, such as multi-use community hubs and open spaces, including opportunities for recreation and public use in development, providing for diverse needs of the community (including an ageing population). This includes supporting marae as community hubs, particularly in rural areas.

Our natural environment is integral to our lifestyle, social wellbeing and what makes the Eastern Bay of Plenty special. Ensuring good access to parks, reserves and open space (including forests and coastal areas) is key.

What is Social Infrastructure?

Social infrastructure includes:

- Public amenities: Parks, reserves, playgrounds, libraries, sports facilities, halls, museums, community centres, and pools owned by councils.
- Government services: Schools, education, and healthcare facilities.
- Marae: Central to iwi and hapū identity and maintaining cultural practices.

These facilities support strong, healthy, and vibrant communities. They are crucial for our social and cultural wellbeing. Marae and community halls also help during natural hazard and other emergencies. Providing these amenities and services is essential for supporting current residents, attracting new ones, and maintaining our lifestyle in the eastern bay.

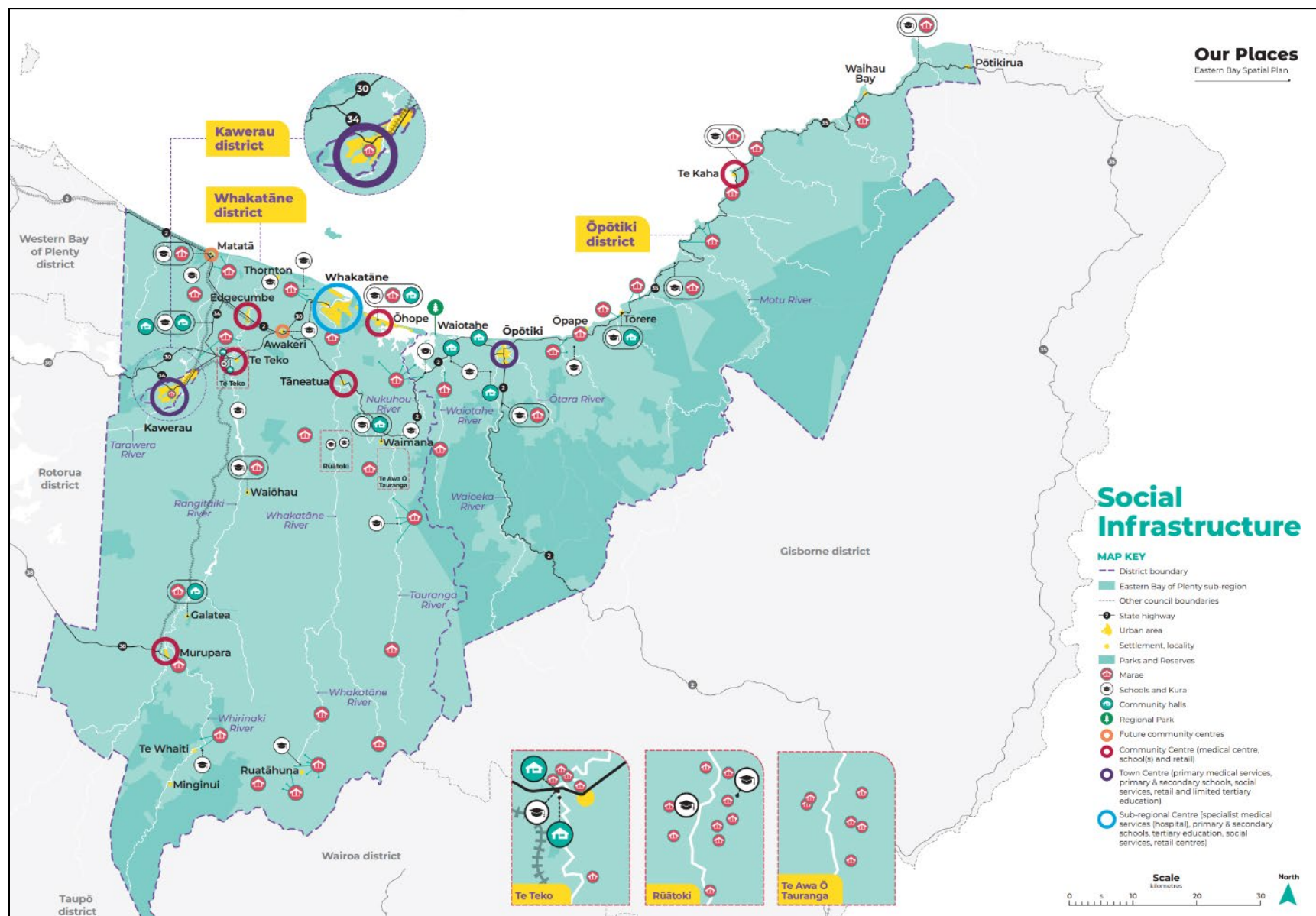


Figure 1: Social infrastructure

Social Infrastructure in response to growth

In the future, social infrastructure actions will focus on:

- Existing schools generally have some capacity for growth to meet roll requirements and there are good bussing options. Building new schools is expensive, so we will make best use of the capacity across the school network and expand existing ones first. New public schools are unlikely to be required to meet the expected growth.
- For Priority Growth Areas, new facilities will be planned to service those areas relative to the planned scale of the growth area. An example is Awakeri, which has some existing social infrastructure (school and community hall) and will require new parks and reserves as the area grows.
- Co-ordinate and target investment for facilities: Community infrastructure is predominantly funded by ratepayers and grants from various organisations, including charities. Marae are funded through a combination of self-funding (by iwi, hapu or whanau) and Government grants. Directing investment through a strategic facilities plan is key to making the best use of available funding.
- Supporting Marae as Community Hubs: Marae hold deep significance in Māori culture and play a crucial role in the eastern bay's social and community infrastructure. Marae often serve multiple functions, including as civil emergency hubs for their local communities. Marae are central to cultural wellbeing, focus points for community gatherings and events (hosting a range of activities from weddings, tangihanga, hui, and other celebrations. Other services such as education, kohanga reo, support services, haora (medical centres) can be located with marae, along with kaumatua housing and other papakāinga.
- Meeting diverse needs: We need to support both an aging population and young Māori and provide facilities for all ages, from children to seniors. Indoor sports facilities are increasingly in demand, and activities like walking, cycling, and swimming are important for all ages.
- Local placemaking and community plans: Revitalising communities requires local projects and involvement from residents. Community plans document and prioritise community aspirations and provide a pathway to achieve those aspirations. Partnership between councils and communities are key to achieving aspirations.
- Good access to parks, reserves and recreation facilities: It is important to maintain and improve access to active and passive recreation for peoples' mental health and social wellbeing. This includes walking and cycling networks. Recreational facilities need to be accessible and provide for diverse uses. New greenfield areas will be structure planned to include parks and recreation opportunities. Reserve management plans cover existing urban areas.

- Creating multi-use open spaces: Parks and reserves are likely to support a diverse range of uses and values. This includes passive and active recreation, walking and cycling connections, community gardens, ecological corridors, social and cultural gatherings, sustainable water and energy infrastructure (e.g., solar panels, rainwater collection), climate resilience and adaptation (e.g., shade, stormwater management), connection to nature and celebrating local cultural identity.
- Recognising the value of our Natural Environment for social wellbeing: Outdoor activities like hunting, fishing, and boating are integral to our lifestyle and what makes the Eastern Bay of Plenty special. We have extensive open spaces, forests, rivers, and coastlines. There are walking and cycling trails across the eastern bay such as Motu Trails (cycleway) and tracks within Te Urewera and Whirinaki Forest Park. Using these natural assets and existing parks and reserves for recreation benefits our wellbeing.

Transport and accessibility

Well-functioning transport infrastructure is essential to the continued sustainability, growth and economic success of the eastern bay.

Existing industries and new development opportunities are expected to impact on the amount of freight moved in the Bay of Plenty.

The state highways, the rail network and key local roads are vulnerable to damage and closure from rainfall related flooding, landslides, coastal erosion, sea level rise and coastal flooding.

Providing safer, more reliable and affordable access to transport services and choices will unlock opportunities for people and communities.

Where are we now?

The eastern bay has a substantial road network including several state highways (SH 2, SH 30, and SH 35). Daily heavy commercial vehicle movements have key strategic routes toward the Port of Tauranga and along the East Coast, southeast to Gisborne and south towards Murupara. Commuting also takes place between different locations within the sub-region. The Whakatāne and Kawerau districts are quite interdependent labour markets, however, Ōpōtiki district is more independent with few people commuting either in or out¹. External to the sub-region, urban growth and commercial development around Paengaroa at Rangiuru Business Park and along Rotorua's Eastern Corridor will also influence commuting patterns on the road network.

¹ Stats NZ (Census 2023)

The East Coast Main Trunk line carries over a third of New Zealand's rail traffic and is 182 kms long, from Hamilton through to Kawerau and Murupara. From Kawerau, there is a direct link to the Port of Tauranga enabling the delivery of products for export. This extensive infrastructure plays a pivotal role in connecting people and freight. A well-functioning road and rail network is a crucial element in supporting the sub-region's economic growth and development.

As growth has taken place, higher volumes of traffic have created capacity issues in some areas, which has led to traffic congestion. It has also created safety risks for some communities. The Whakatāne Bridge is a key link into Whakatāne town and carries infrastructure including Three Waters, telecommunications, gas and power to residents and businesses. Entry onto the bridge is congested during peak travel times and having a single point of access across the Whakatāne River creates vulnerability, particularly in case of emergencies or natural hazards. Communities dissected by state highways such as Ōpōtiki, Matatā, Awakeri, Edgecumbe, Tāneatua and Te Teko, also face increasing safety risks at intersections and for walkers and cyclists crossing these main thoroughfares. New Zealand Transport Agency plans to complete designs for safety improvements on SH 30 between Awakeri and Whakatāne within the current Long-term Plan period. At present, this design process does not consider projected growth in the corridor and there is a significant risk that the roundabouts proposed as part of this process will be over capacity once implemented or shortly thereafter.

The state highways, the rail network and key local roads are vulnerable to damage and closure from rainfall related flooding, landslides, coastal erosion, sea level rise and coastal flooding. These hazards are also being exacerbated by climate change. This impacts on travel reliability and safety and increases maintenance and reinstatement costs. There are also significant safety issues on some parts of the road network.

There is a regular public transport service connection from Whakatāne to Tauranga, however, services between other townships are currently only limited and without daily coverage. Only Whakatāne has an internal bus service that can service residents within the town. Consideration will be needed on how public transport can support growth, particularly as townships grow and services become more cost effective to operate, and an ageing population requires transport services to maintain accessibility and social connection.

Existing urban areas have good walking connections and there has been progress to deliver cycling facilities that improve safety and encourage more uptake in active transport modes (walking, cycling, using a scooter or skateboard). However, connections between townships is currently limited outside of the Motu Trails Cycleway that link coastal communities in Ōpōtiki between Waiōtahe and Tirohanga.

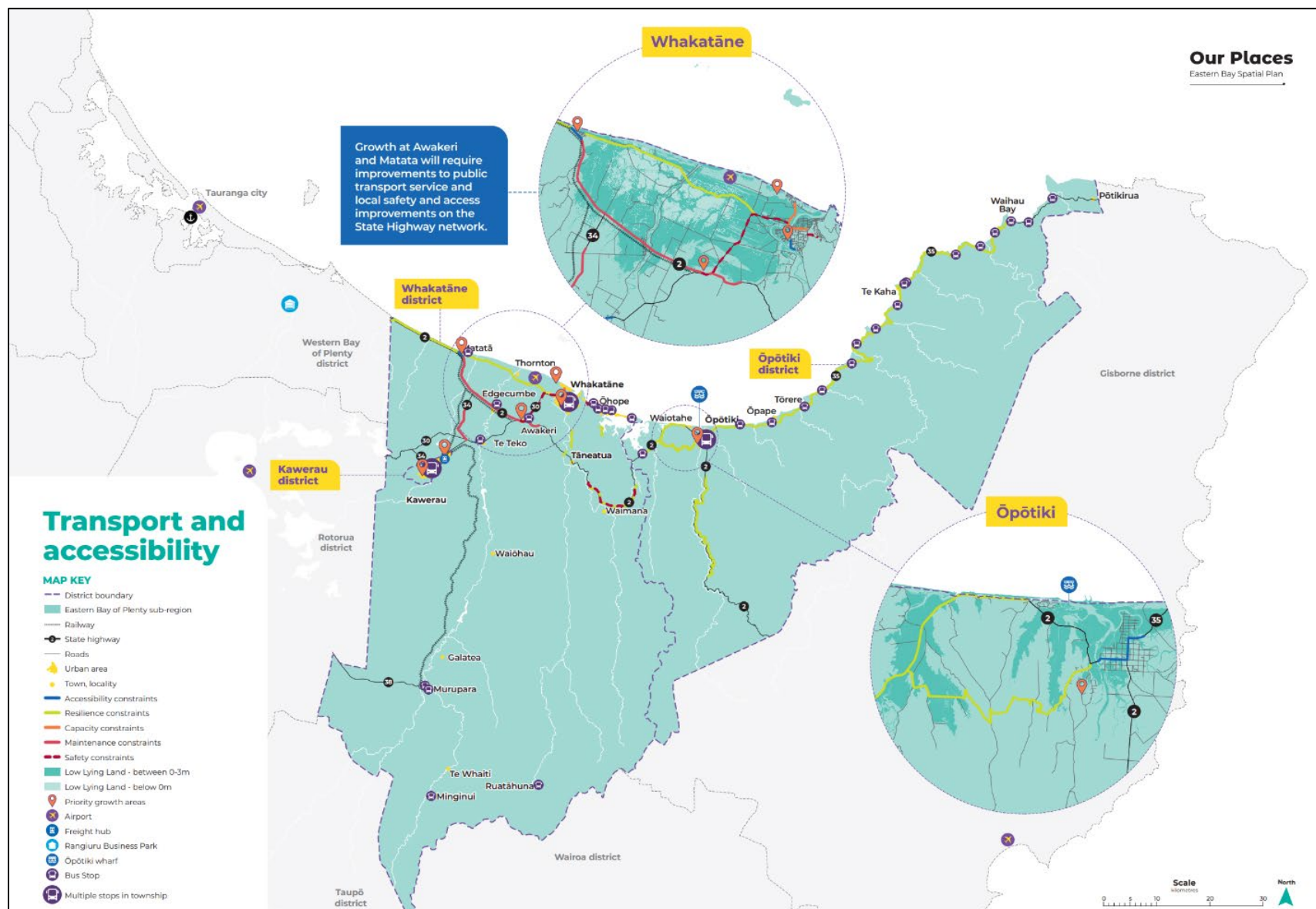


Figure 2: Transport and accessibility

Response to growth

Safeguarding the strategic road network to ensure that existing and new industries have good, reliable transport access will be a key focus. Several existing industries and new development opportunities are expected to impact on the amount of freight moved in the Bay of Plenty. Freight and resilience are closely linked because the reliability of a transport network significantly impacts transport costs for businesses. Reliability also gives businesses the confidence to plan and invest for the future. New Zealand Transport Agency's role in safeguarding the strategic road network for freight, involves a multi-faceted approach that includes safety improvements, resilience building, capacity enhancements, collaborative planning, and strategic decision-making to ensure the efficient and reliable movement of goods.

Ensuring the road network can handle enough traffic without long delays is crucial. Further work is needed to understand the capacity limits and vulnerability of transport networks and infrastructure, such as the Whakatāne Bridge. The outcomes of this work will be critical in assessing the amount of growth the eastern bay can sustain before key pieces of infrastructure start to limit growth. Growth in areas that will put increased pressure on the transport network or create unsafe situations for people needs to be considered and opportunities to mitigate or remove these risks evaluated and planned for.

We must ensure people and goods move more efficiently and effectively along transport routes. Priority growth areas will need to lessen the demand on the transport network by providing safe, attractive and connected active travel choices, catering for all ages and abilities, from existing and new residential areas, to jobs, schools, services, and leisure facilities to reduce the need for long-distance travel. With many townships less than 30 minutes apart by bike, there is potential for a linked network of bike paths, or trails connecting townships and main centres to provide better choices for low emissions transport for work and education trips. Generally, there will be a need for increased public transport options for the eastern bay communities as the population ages and more people are unable to drive to essential services.

Further work is needed to identify the next generation of substantial transport investments and large projects. The three district councils have work underway addressing infrastructure and service provision to reflect anticipated growth and demographic needs. The next few years will focus on delivery of already committed transport projects which largely target improving resilience and maintaining service levels. Work will commence on the development of a Transport System Programme to support the growth components of the spatial plan and improve network resilience. Continuing to work in partnership with NZTA will support the delivery of a high-quality, integrated, safe and efficient transport network.

Transport and accessibility for priority growth areas

Awakeri

Safety	Awakeri is dissected by SH 2 and SH 30 which are key freight routes which create safety risks for walkers and cyclists crossing these main thoroughfares. The stretches of highway between Rotoma and Awakeri (SH 30), Awakeri to Ōpōtiki (SH 2) and Matatā to Awakeri (SH 2) all experience safety issues. State Highway 30 between Awakeri to Whakatāne has significant safety issues and has been identified as a high-risk rural road by NZTA. As the main transport route between Rotorua, Whakatāne and the East Coast, the road is used by a range of users including daily commuters, freight, local traffic, cyclists and motorcyclists, tourists, and agricultural machinery. The roads leading to Awakeri will need to be prioritised for NZTA state highway improvements to ensure that future growth does not worsen the risks already present for road users.
Capacity and accessibility	While Awakeri is well connected to employment locations, future employment growth throughout the sub-region is likely to increase traffic volumes on the state highways, which could lead to severance issues for residents to access facilities in the community. Infrastructure investment to improve connectivity throughout the settlement will be required. Planning an urban form that reduces travel demand by including walking and cycling infrastructure is a priority. Further investigation into improving public transport connectivity to Whakatāne and Kawerau once the population grows will be required.
Resilience	State Highway 2, Awakeri to Ōpōtiki, has a range of resilience challenges, with limited local road detour options, which impacts on accessibility into Awakeri. A long-term view of the future of this network is required to provide reliable access into the future. New Zealand Transport Agency has allocated funding to investigate resilience improvements required for SH 2 between Awakeri and Opotiki, as well as for the Waioeka Gorge between Opotiki and Gisborne, however, there is no committed funding for implementation. Resilience improvements will need to focus on addressing areas at risk of slips, flooding, coastal erosion and coastal inundation.

Whenua Māori Land (West of Coastlands)

Capacity and accessibility	Housing growth west of Whakatāne is expected to place increased pressure on the Whakatāne Bridge and this will require assessment as part of planning. Investigation into the design of specific investments for additional Whakatāne access to support growth and improve network resilience is needed. There are likely to be localised capacity constraints at key intersections accessing the area, that will require infrastructure investment that can be staged alongside additional growth. Walking and cycling infrastructure will be a key component of the growth area with links into Whakatāne township.
Safety and resilience	The design and planning for the new growth area will need to include resilient and safe road infrastructure, integrated with the surrounding network to ensure continuous mobility for residents.

Matatā

Capacity and accessibility	Growth at Matatā will be influenced by increased employment opportunities in Kawerau, Rangiuru Business Park and Whakatāne township. There are likely to be localised capacity constraints at key intersections that will require infrastructure investment.
Safety	Increasing traffic volumes along SH 2 which runs through the settlement will require investment in the road infrastructure to reduce safety risks at intersections and for walkers and cyclists crossing this main thoroughfare.
Resilience	State Highway 2 west of Matatā is vulnerable to landslides, localised flooding and coastal inundation with the road susceptible to closures. New Zealand Transport Agency will need to investigate options to improve resilience along this route.

Hukutaia Growth Area - Ōpōtiki

Safety	The growth area is separated by SH 2 into Ōpōtiki township and safety risks at intersections for walkers and cyclists will need to be identified and addressed through investment.
Capacity and Accessibility	The Hukutaia growth area is close to town services and many trips can be contained within the local area for employment, services and education reducing the need to travel. To unlock the area for development, projects will need to include an intersection upgrade of SH 2 / Woodlands Road, establishment of a key road link from the growth area to the north to access employment areas along SH 2 and improvements for pedestrians, cyclists and mobility users. There is potential for a new walking/cycling link to be established across the Waioeka River at Stoney Creek Road, to enable connection to an employment area.
Resilience	State Highway 2, Ōpōtiki to Awakeri and the coastal section of SH 2 is vulnerable to damage and closure from rainfall related flooding and landslides which impacts on accessibility into Ōpōtiki (see Awakeri comments).

Three Waters Network

Where are we now?

The Three Waters network and its infrastructure include drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater assets, including piped networks, treatment plants and pumpstations. These utilities are essential for unlocking areas for growth. Finding the right design solution, at an appropriate level of investment, at the right time will be necessary to support growth. Council managed three waters infrastructure exists in some form in all urban spaces within the sub-region.

The Regional Council also manages river schemes across the sub-region which defend several existing settlements and rural land users from river flooding. The schemes are identified as regionally important infrastructure and include the Whakatāne-Tauranga River Scheme, Waioweka- Ōtara Rivers Scheme, Rangitaiki Drainage Scheme and the Rangitaiki Tarawera Rivers Scheme.

The Bay of Plenty Regional Council Infrastructure Strategy identifies affordability, climate change and residual risk as some of the significant issues for the river scheme. For this reason, it will be critical to ensure integrated planning processes protect agreed level of service to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the community and are affordable now, and in the future. For the foreseeable future, flood protection will continue to play a key role in supporting community wellbeing. However, as conditions change, more adaptive and resilient approaches may need to be explored to ensure communities remain safe and resilient to the effects of natural hazards and climate change.

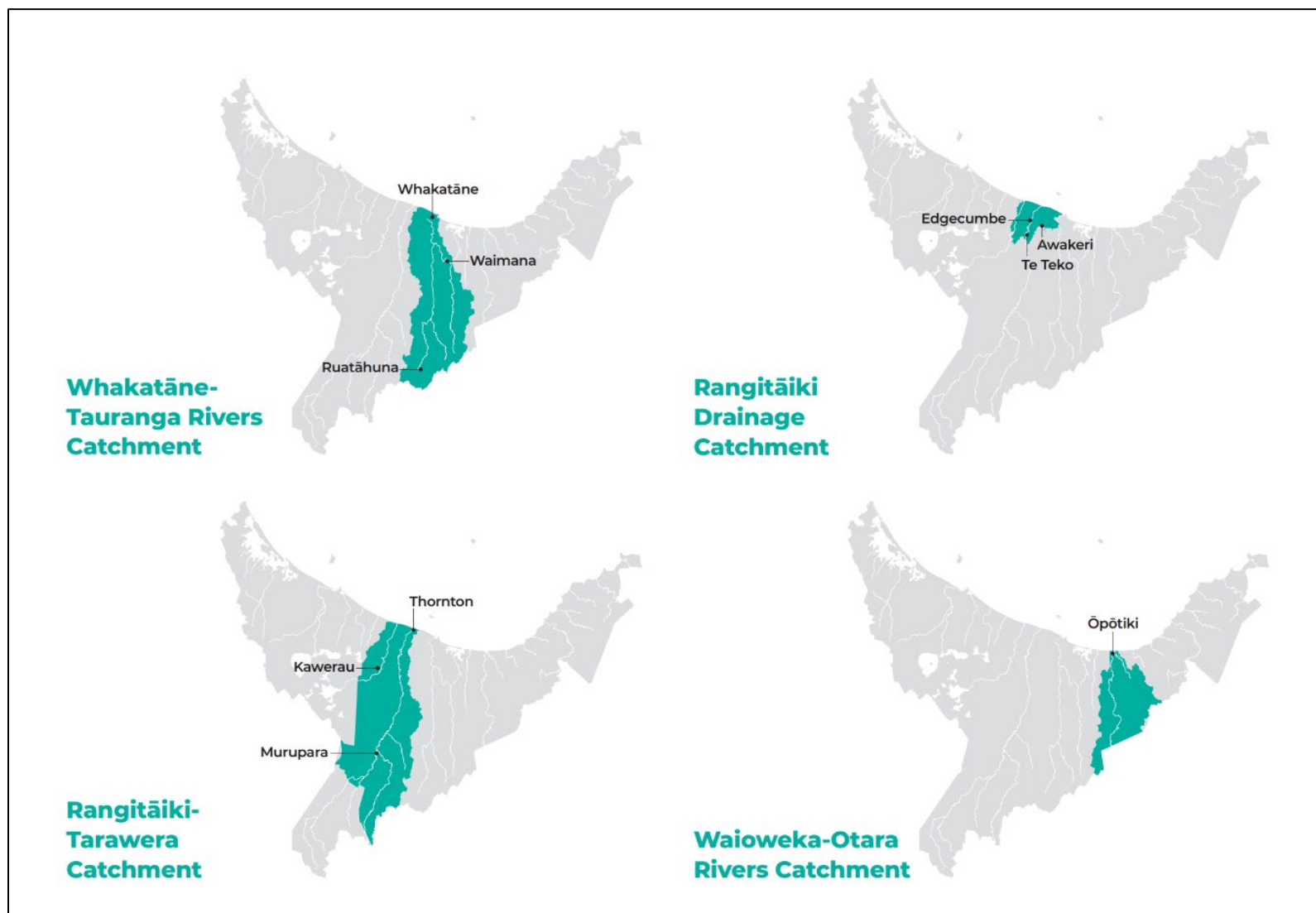


Figure 3: River and drainage schemes

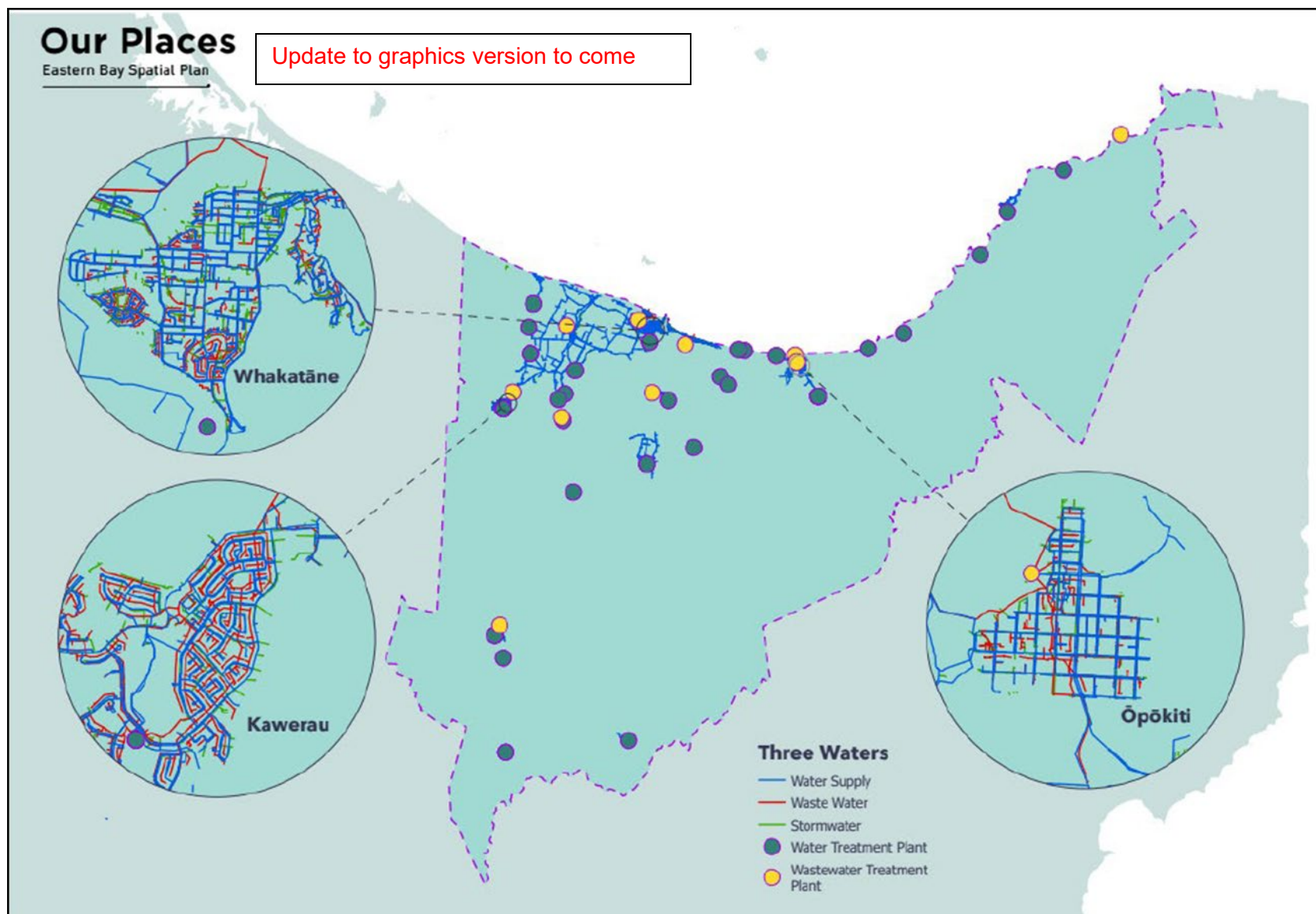


Figure 4: Three waters service areas and plants

Three waters for priority growth areas

Awakeri

Water supply	Longer-term growth projections would be supported as part of the wide Whakatane-Plains water strategy which would link Otumahi with Whakatane via Awakeri. Upgrades will be required to the trunk mains that currently serve Awakeri. There is an existing reservoir in the hill above Awakeri which will help support increased demand in the future. A new reservoir, in the hill above the Otumahi Water Treatment Plant will be commissioned in the middle of 2025. This can support growth in Awakeri as well as wider plans to integrate the Whakatane and Rangitikei Plains water schemes
Wastewater	Awakeri could be served by a standalone treatment plant or integrated with Edgecumbe (or Whakatane). There will need to be further feasibility studies around treated wastewater discharge to achieve the intended scale of development. Two primary options are being considered, including pumping raw wastewater to the Whakatāne Treatment Plant, which would require a new pipeline and pump station or developing a new wastewater treatment plant locally, with the potential to accept wastewater from nearby communities. Iwi have highlighted a preference for a best practice approach that delivers environmental outcomes. Generally, treating wastewater at source is seen as a more preferable option to conveying untreated wastewater large distances.
Flood management	As Awakeri is located within the Whakatāne-Tauranga River Scheme, an integrated stormwater catchment management plan will be needed to take a catchment-based approach to inform future growth planning. This will consider the agreed level of service of the existing flood scheme are protected including the Te Rahu Canal, and downstream flooding risk is managed to ensure existing and future communities are resilient to the effects of climate change. This approach will guide best practicable options for managing stormwater runoff within the new growth area and take a holistic approach to water sensitive urban design to manage flood risk.

Whenua Māori Land (West of Coastlands)

Development involving Whenua Māori Land west of Coastlands would benefit from further details feasibility on impacts with the existing scheme and overall network for water and wastewater.

Water supply	While existing water connections serve the nearby Whakatāne Golf Course, existing properties currently receive a low service level from the reticulated water network with consumers often experiencing low water pressure, particularly during summer high demand periods. This existing limitation restricts Council's ability to connect additional properties to the network. Where they are permitted, properties are asked to install on-site water tanks, connected to the network via restricted feed. In the longer term, more intensive housing growth would need to be supported by network upgrades as part of the wider Whakatane/Plains scheme integration strategy.
Wastewater	Existing wastewater infrastructure serves the Coastlands area and Shaw Road but does not extend down Thornton or Golf Links Roads.
Flood management	Existing stormwater infrastructure serves the Coastlands area and Shaw Road but does not extend down Thornton or Golf Links Roads. The area, predominantly coastal dunes, relies on ground soakage and natural drainage to the Orini Canal.

Matatā

Water supply	The water supply from Jennings Spring is sufficient for short to medium-term growth. Integrating Matatā with the plains scheme would be a necessary option. This would also increase the resilience of the Matatā supply as it would not be reliant on a single water source.
Wastewater	<p>The planning for a new wastewater system is currently underway but it is not fully funded. Matatā growth would be incorporated into the future Matatā scheme which would have growth provisions at the start.</p> <p>The current wastewater management system in Matatā is failing. Despite ongoing efforts over several decades to establish a centralised wastewater solution, the town continues to struggle with poor wastewater management. The high groundwater levels and proximity to sensitive environmental areas render the current individual property septic tanks and disposal fields ineffective and unsuitable for the local environment. As a result, effluent from these ageing systems is seeping into the environment, contaminating land and water that are crucial to the community and mana whenua relationships and connection with their rohe.</p>
Flood management	Stormwater management in Matatā is sensitive and can be influenced by inland and coastal flooding, with runoff draining through wetland areas to the coast. This means that development in the eastern area will require a comprehensive catchment-wide stormwater management approach to ensure existing and future risk and effects on sensitive receiving environments, including Te Awa o Atua are managed to inform future growth planning.

Hukutaia Growth Area

Water supply	Hukutaia has enough water capacity to support low levels of growth, and planned upgrades will facilitate staged development. A utilities bridge river crossing from Stoney Creek Road will improve water pressure and increase resilience for Hukutaia, Ōpōtiki, and Waiotaha. As Hukutaia's development options and growth phasing become more defined, further investigations into water demand management measures can be explored to optimise supply and mitigate future risks.
Wastewater	For wastewater, two primary options are being considered: upgrading existing infrastructure to transport waste to the upgraded Wastewater Treatment Plant in Ōpōtiki or establishing a new treatment plant in Hukutaia. The latter option would offer resilience and reduce the burden on the existing infrastructure.
Flood management	An integrated catchment management plan will be developed that takes a catchment-based approach to inform future growth planning to effects of climate change are managed, the agreed levels of service of the flood scheme are protected and to manage any increases in downstream risk including any increases in risk to the existing Ōpōtiki Township. An integrated catchment management plan will also consider guide best practicable options for managing stormwater runoff within the new growth area and take a holistic approach to water sensitive urban design.

Electricity networks

Where are we now?

Electricity infrastructure plays a crucial role in supporting both existing communities and future development. Our sub-region is currently serviced by Horizon Energy, which owns and operates the electricity distribution network, and Transpower, the state-owned enterprise responsible for New Zealand's high-voltage transmission network, known as the National Grid.

The transmission network in the Bay of Plenty consists of both high-capacity 220 kV and lower-capacity 110 kV circuits. Electricity generation is concentrated in the eastern part of the region, particularly around Kawerau, while demand is higher in the central areas, Whakatāne and Ōpōtiki. This results in a predominant east-to-west power flow, connecting major hydro and geothermal generation to the North Island's transmission backbone.

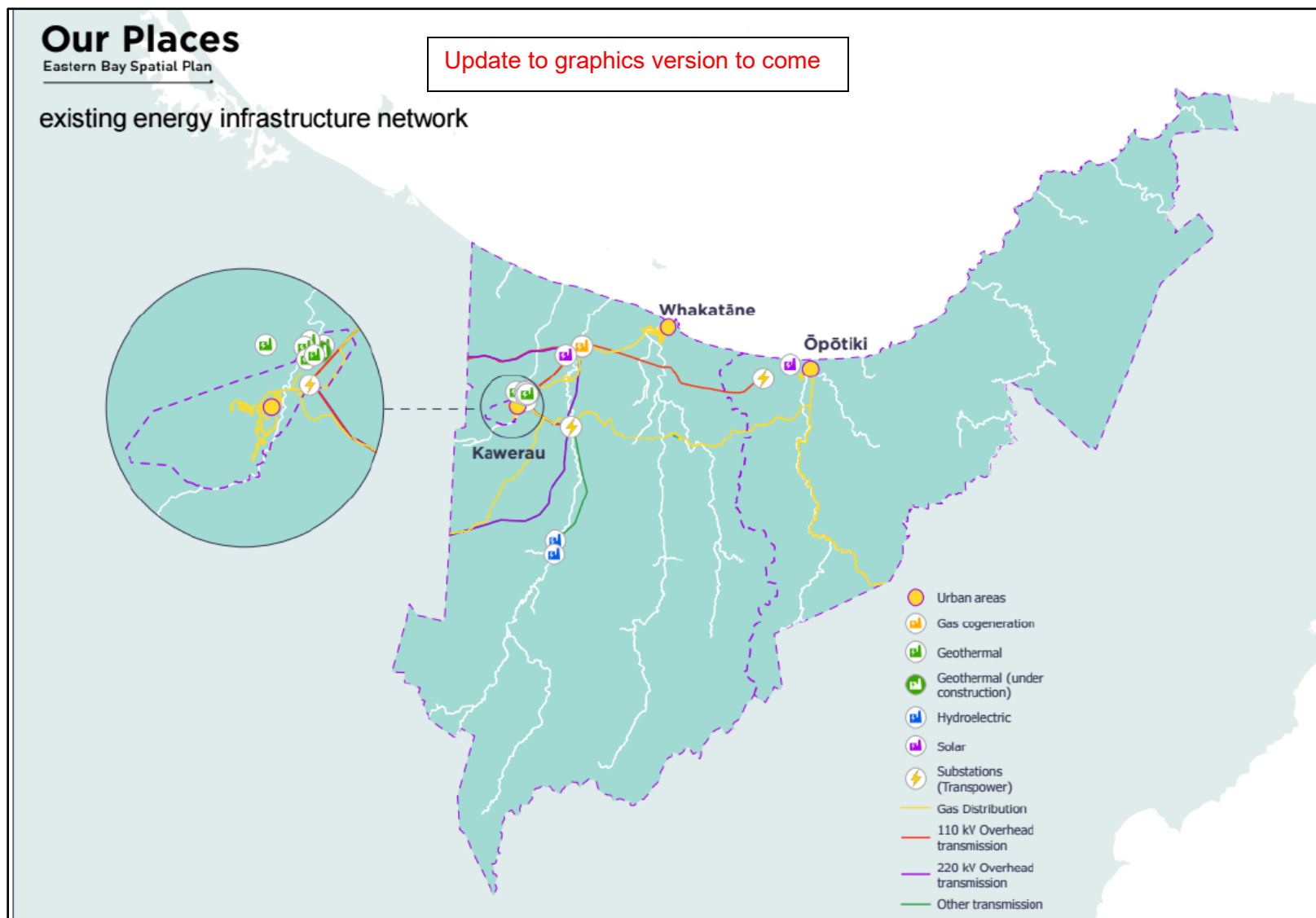


Figure 5: Existing energy infrastructure network

Response to growth

The spatial plan looks ahead to 2055, envisioning an electricity network that is resilient, future-ready, and capable of supporting the eastern bay's continued growth and transformation. Targeted investments in grid upgrades, additional substations, and enhanced conductor lines can strengthen the network's ability to support priority growth areas and ongoing business-as-usual development. These improvements will also enhance reliability, minimising the risk of outages and disruptions as demand increases. Collaboration is at the heart of our approach, ensuring that our co-management partners and key stakeholders play an active role in shaping the region's future. To create an electricity network that meets the needs of our sub-region, we will continue working closely with Transpower, Horizon Energy, Central Government, iwi, and local businesses.

Electricity infrastructure for priority growth areas

Awakeri	Currently has sufficient capacity for the existing population, however, capacity for growth is another required improvement. The current 11kV feeder to Awakeri can only support an additional 3.6 MVA. Development of the scale anticipated will require an upgrade to the 11kV feeder to ensure adequate electricity supply.
Whenua Māori Land (West of Coastlands)	There is electricity infrastructure along Golf Links Road to the Golf Course. The networks currently supply the Papakāinga development (near the golf course) and can support an additional 150 residential dwellings. The feeder has the capacity to supply up to 1.9 MVA, equivalent to 540 residential dwellings. Horizon Energy have confirmed that a further network upgrade would be required.
Matatā	The current electricity network is constrained during peak periods and Horizon Energy plans to develop a new substation at Manawahe to accommodate future growth in the area. The development of the new substation may need to be bought forward based on the demand needs should the Matatā development proceed faster than the timing of the new substation funding proposal.
Hukutaia	Hukutaia requires upgrades to its electricity network to support growth. Horizon Energy has plans to establish a new dual sub-transmission supply to Ōpōtiki by 2027. A new 11kV feeder system can be established following the completion of the Horizon Energy dual sub-transmission supply to Ōpōtiki by 2027. This will cater to the electricity needs of 2,000 residential dwellings and industrial developments.



Our Places

Eastern
Bay of Plenty
spatial plan

Part Five: Implementation



Contents

Part 5: Implementation	3
Implementing the plan.....	3
Key moves and priorities for implementation.....	3
Key moves.....	5
Collaboratively shape the future	5
Nurture strong and effective iwi and hapū partnerships	5
Build climate resilient communities.....	6
A prosperous, high productivity sub-region.....	7
Enough housing and business land to meet demand	8
Great places for people to live for generations	9
Connect people with opportunities, and freight with markets	9
Improve biodiversity and ecosystem health	10
Clear and consistent sub-regional funding priorities	11
Implementation considerations	11
Governance to implement the plan.....	11
Implementation toolbox.....	11
Implementation Risk	14
Prioritising and choosing where and when to invest.....	16
Updates to this plan.....	17

Appendix 1: Implementation activities	18
Spatial Plan and eastern bay-wide actions	19
Central corridor actions	22
Eastern Corridor actions	25
Southern corridor actions	26
Natural hazards and climate resilience actions	27

Figures

Figure 1: Goals and key	4
Figure 2: Councils can have different roles during implementation	12
Figure 3: Implementation processes, alignment with Subregional Economic Development Strategy	13

Note:

Before the spatial plan is received by Council for adoption, minor changes will be made to the spatial plan document to improve communication and readability, provide Te Reo translation of headlines and corrections to spelling, and graphic design of the total document.

Part 5: Implementation

Implementing the plan

This implementation plan provides the strategy for the Councils to work on delivering the spatial plan, as a set of Key Moves and Implementation Priorities. The implementation will be joined up with activities related to the Sub-Regional Economic Development Strategy. This version of the spatial plan is a starting point, expected to evolve and change in response to shifting influences, legislative requirements, and new information.

Key moves and priorities for implementation

The goals are what we want to achieve over the long term for the eastern bay, they have been developed by the Project Governance Group. The key moves explain what we will focus on to get there, and the implementation priorities tell us where to start. The implementation priorities will inform a more detailed implementation plan that looks at how each item will be delivered. It is expected this would be developed after the spatial plan is approved. The key moves will also inform existing and near-term planning and policy work, such as the Whakatāne Growth Strategy, the Ōpōtiki Hukutaia development area and industrial needs study, and changes to Kawerau's district plan, amongst other processes.



Figure 1: Goals and key moves

Figure 1: Goals and key moves

Key moves

Collaboratively shape the future

We will work together, with stakeholders, and the community to deliver the spatial plan.

Implementation priorities:

- 1 Spatial Plan partners will adhere to a joint governance structure for implementing the spatial plan, setting priorities together, engaging communities, and adapting to changes in the operating environment.
- 2 Councils will engage with stakeholders and the eastern bay community at a local level. This will be achieved by implementing the plan, including the development of local area plans and growth strategies, new LTPs, and modifications to related plans and policies such as regional and district plans, as well as future updates to the spatial plan or economic development strategy.
- 3 After establishing the governance structure, the Governance Group should direct the preparation of a detailed implementation plan for the spatial plan and economic development strategy to focus on activities that benefit from sub-regional coordination, and a monitoring framework to assess progress towards goals.

Nurture strong and effective iwi and hapū partnerships

Involve iwi and hapū in decisions about their rohe and support achieving housing and wider aspirations.

Implementation priorities:

- 1 Iwi and Hapū will be engaged as key decision-makers in the development and implementation processes related to their rohe. It is essential to allocate resources to iwi and hapū to facilitate their participation in projects and processes to enable the realisation of their aspirations.
- 2 Prioritise actions that enable iwi and hapū to utilise their land in ways that advance their aspirations and unlock long-term opportunities, in full context of Treaty Settlements, including Council commitments to prepare strategies and establish governance forums. Further targeted engagement must occur to resolve outstanding matters and ensure implementation reflects iwi and hapū priorities.

- 3 Ngāti Rangitihi has a responsibility under the Ngāti Rangitihi Claims Settlement Act 2022 to develop and implement the Tarawera Awa Restoration Strategy Document under a co-governance framework. This is aimed at restoring the mauri of both the Tarawera River and Te Awa o te Atua. A key focus is exploring the potential for reconnection and returning flow between the Tawera Awa and Te Awa o Te Atua. The implementation of the spatial plan, particularly around Matata will support and consider this focus.

Build climate resilient communities

Ensure vulnerable communities and new growth areas are safe and resilient to natural hazard risk and the long-term effects of climate change.

Implementation priorities:

- 1 Local and regional councils will undertake joint stormwater and risk management planning through master planning to inform the design, form, and location of detailed structure planning for new key growth areas (e.g., Awakeri, Hukutaia and Matata) to protect agreed levels of service of the flood schemes, manage the effects of climate change over the next 100 years, and avoid increases in risk to people, property and infrastructure.
- 2 Prepare local climate change risk assessments and undertake community-led adaptation planning initiatives across the eastern bay sub-region. This includes completion of the Whakatāne District Climate Change Risk Assessment.
- 3 Progress collaborative natural hazard risk assessments prepared under the RPS for Whakatāne and Ōpōtiki townships to better understand risk and to inform future risk management planning.
- 4 Consider operational and governance arrangements for the integrated management of natural hazards, flood management and climate change adaptation across the functions of Territorial Authorities, the Regional Council, iwi and hapu and lifelines utilities and Civil Defence and Emergency Management for long-term risk reduction in priority locations.
- 5 Support hapū and iwi and to develop their own capacity, strategies and responses to climate adaptation in specific locations.
- 6 Support local emergency preparedness and evacuation planning to enhance the safety and preparedness of urban and rural communities.

A prosperous, high productivity sub-region

Create a resilient and competitive economic environment through strategic economic development, infrastructure enhancement, and market engagement.

Implementation priorities:

- 1 Implement the spatial plan together with the Sub-Regional Economic Development Strategy for the Eastern Bay. These plans address interconnected opportunities that necessitate a coordinated approach, including a unified sub-regional governance structure to oversee the implementation of both.
- 2 Build from the strengths of the existing economic base of the sub-region, support workforce development, and enable key growth sectors (as set out in the Economic Development Strategy):
 - Aquaculture centre of national significance (Ōpōtiki), the largest and most productive aquaculture region in New Zealand, providing direct benefits to locals.
 - Green energy and industrial hub (Kawerau), forefront of green energy and a premier engineering and manufacturing hub, subregional freight gateway to the Golden Triangle.
 - Commercial and residential heart (Whakatāne), a dynamic business network and regional service centre with coastal living with transport links throughout the Bay and beyond.

To support this, as outlined in the Sub-Regional Economic Development Strategy:

- 3 The Project Governance Group should establish a business and capital advisory group. This group can help identify and enable public-private funding opportunities.
- 4 Each Council needs to ensure a supply of zoned and available housing to enable attraction/retention of talent in the eastern bay.
- 5 New Zealand Transport Agency will need to consider prioritising improvements for state highways 35, 2, and on key bridges (like Peketahi Bridge) to improve connectivity for economic purposes and to enable housing growth.

- 6 Enable economic development led by iwi, hapū, and/or Land Trusts, particularly when this involves Māori-owned lands where there are aspirations for economic activities.
- 7 In the Central Corridor, Matata will become a gateway to the eastern bay and a place that entices the travelling public to visit. An iwi-led master planning approach that encompasses the public realm and economic development would support this taking place.

Enough housing and business land to meet demand

Ensure zoned, serviceable, and connected land to enable more housing and business land at the locations defined in this plan.

Implementation priorities:

- 1 In Whakatāne, land use and infrastructure planning will acknowledge and reinforce Whakatāne township's position as the principal sub-regional commercial and services hub, as well as the central residential and commercial core of the sub-region.
- 2 As part of structure planning for priority growth areas, identify and manage the potential for health effects associated with reverse sensitivity between industrial and agricultural operations and sensitive receiving activities such as residential areas or schools.
- 3 Continue to provide a diverse range of housing across the sub-region, in proximity to and suitable for workers in the primary industries and town-based businesses and industries. This includes:
 - Whakatāne district's Local Growth Strategy will work at a local place-based scale and lead to structure plans, district plan changes, and infrastructure investment strategies to unlock the priority growth areas of the Central Corridor. This will focus on Awakeri initially, followed by Matatā, and Whenua Māori West of Coastlands (*pending iwi and hapu confirmation). It will involve ongoing dialogue with the community.
 - In Ōpōtiki district, planning for and investment into the Hukutaia development area will continue to reinforce this area as a primary residential growth area, and an enabling planning framework will support iwi economic and housing aspirations throughout the eastern corridor.
 - In Kawerau, the success of the Putauaki Industrial Area will continue with ongoing expansion, as the pre-eminent industrial growth area for the sub-region. Kawerau District Council will also complete changes to the district plan to enable infill and pāpakainga housing supply opportunities.
- 1 Changes to infrastructure provision in smaller settlements will largely be considered through renewals programmes in the context of local aspirations, especially where these are well-known through local masterplans, such as those underway for Murupara and Minginui.

Great places for people to live for generations

Develop and improve community places and facilities to enhance quality of life as communities change over time.

Implementation priorities:

- 1 The townships of Whakatāne, Ōpōtiki, and Kawerau are prioritised for place-making activities and investments due to their significant contributions to the overall experiences of individuals within the sub-region. Parks and open space investment plans need review as population change occurs due to new development areas.
- 2 Greenfield urban development will be planned to include provisions for parks, facilities, and reserves. In areas anticipated to undergo significant changes, the impact on existing facilities, such as local parks, will be evaluated to determine if adjustments in the level of service are required.
- 3 Subsequent more detailed planning activities, like WDC's Local Growth Strategy and ODC's Hukutaia Development Plan, will need to put in place locally-defined placemaking outcomes and methods.
- 4 Murupara and Te Kaha need ongoing development of community facilities, and support for retail and businesses as they continue to evolve as locally important rural service hubs that support rural residents, the travelling public and enable the local economy.

Connect people with opportunities, and freight with markets

A well-functioning transport system that enables future growth, provides access to social, recreational, housing and economic opportunities.

Implementation priorities:

- 1 Improved resilience of strategic freight connections (road and rail) to the Port of Tauranga and to Gisborne. This includes improved resilience on state highway connections (SH 35) in the Eastern Corridor, for economic purposes reliant on connections through to the Port of Tauranga.
- 2 Identify packages of transport projects and investment pathways to support delivery of the spatial plan by preparing a Transport System Programme. Develop a network demand modelling tool to assist with this programme. Engagement feedback outlined interest in active transport modes and improvements to public transport services.

- 3 Continue to assess resiliency issues on the transport network and seek improvements. The National Land Transport Programme 2024-2027 includes a resilience investigation of SH 2 from Awakeri to Ōpōtiki. This study should include consideration of transport system requirements to support the settlement pattern changes in this plan – particularly related to Awakeri and Hukutaia. The study should also consider the local road by-pass as alternative to SH 2 along Waitahe to provide resiliency to Ōpōtiki township.
- 4 Develop a list of projects to unlock priority growth areas and embed these into the Regional Land Transport Programme, seek co-funding from NZTA.
- 5 Ensure NZTA's State Highway Improvement Programme includes development assumptions that are aligned to the intended priority development areas.

Improve biodiversity and ecosystem health

Use integrated environmental management practices to enable a full range of ecosystems to be restored to a healthy functioning state.

Implementation priorities:

- 1 Planning for environmental and sustainable outcomes will include Mana Whenua values and priorities as shared, upholding iwi and hapū rights through Te Tiriti o Waitangi.
- 2 The spatial plan supports the Tarawera River reconnection and rechannelling being progressed as part of a masterplan for Matata due to the cultural, economic, and environmental benefits this may generate.
- 3 Local planning for priority growth areas will identify environmental and sustainability objectives and methods as part of the initial planning processes to apply in development. These will address, amongst other matters:
 - Avoidance and mitigation of possible effects on sensitive natural or cultural areas, and restoration projects.
 - Environmentally sustainable and water sensitive design principles that will guide preparation of structure plans in relation to nature-based solutions and compliance with environmental regulations.

Clear and consistent sub-regional funding priorities

Use available and new funding methods to facilitate the key moves and implementation priorities.

Implementation priorities:

- 1 Maintain a consistent sub-regional approach to regional deals, and engage with the Infrastructure Commission's Infrastructure Priorities Programme as a key way to access Central Government funding for major infrastructure projects.
- 2 Regional Land Transport Plans and Water Services Delivery Plans will need to include the necessary investments outlined in local planning initiatives, to enable priority development areas as they are determined.
- 3 Identify required infrastructure projects in LTPs to enable Development Contribution charging, which is likely to require a review of these charges.

Implementation considerations

Governance to implement the plan

To develop the plan, a Project Governance Group was established to guide and shape the plan. This group has included representatives from local and central government, iwi authorities, and others. This group or a similar one needs to be maintained to address sub-regional matters through a co-governance partnership approach and implementation of the plan.

Serving as the strategic voice for the eastern bay, this group should have a clear delegation of authority from the Councils. Additionally, it should be involved in other matters related to spatial planning, including regional agreements, economic development, legislative reform, and the implementation of anticipated amendments to the RMA. This group could determine when the plan required review and updating, receiving regular updates on key indicators.

Implementation toolbox

Our Places identifies a strategy to achieve our goals. As a 30-year plan, it will take time and hard work to make change happen. There are many tools Councils can employ to deliver the strategy, and many roles they can play to make things happen.

Some of the implementation priorities identified under Our Places are achievable through compliance with the policy guidance, rules and regulations in the relevant currently operative district plans. Some may not be achievable until changes to the relevant district plan can be made. Other activities may require investments into capital projects, or changes to asset management plans. Given the complexities of some of the proposed projects and their actions and the term of the spatial plan, it is expected that projects may need to be prioritised and phased to achieve efficiency in spending and resource use.

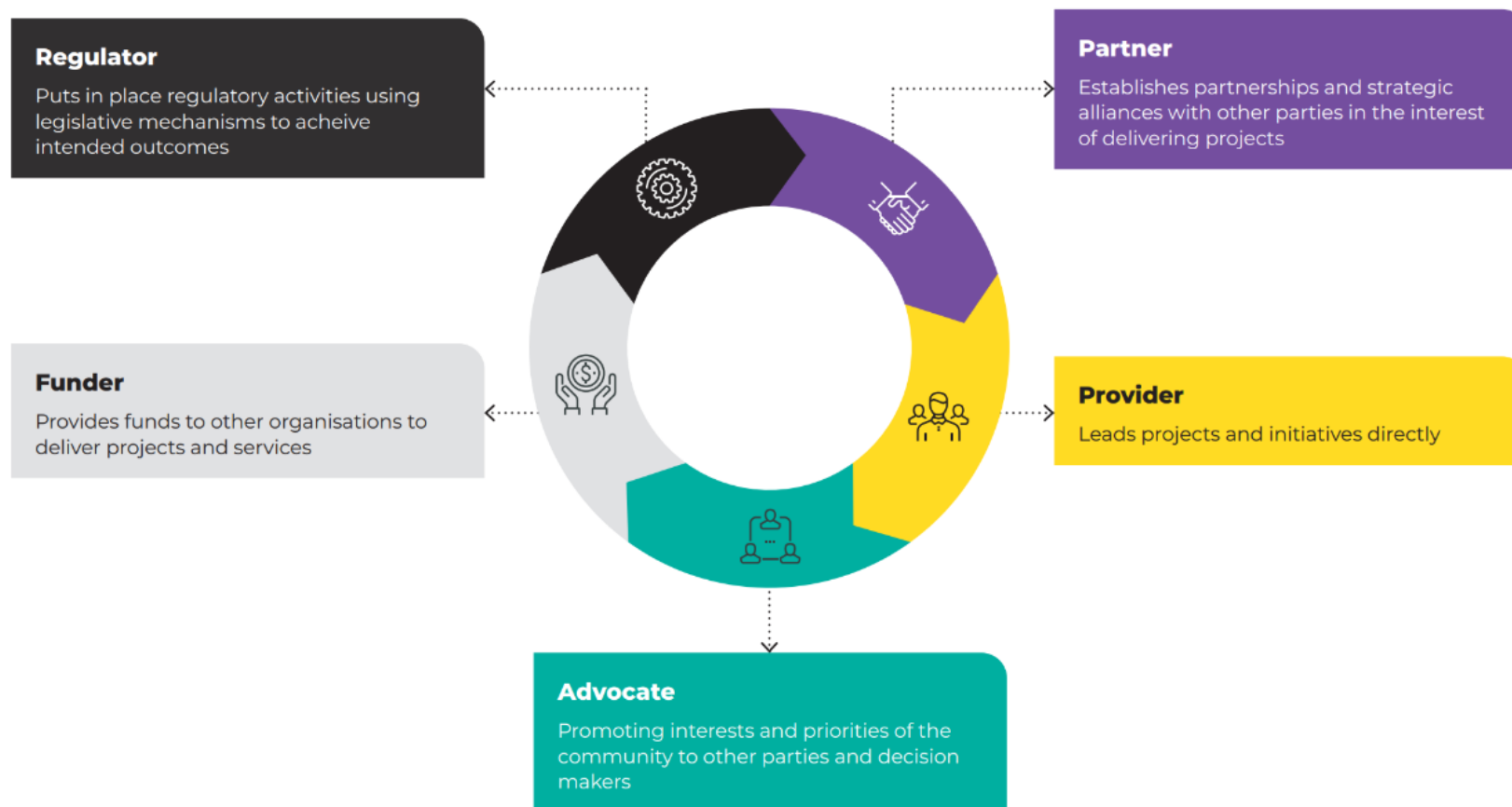


Figure 2: Councils can have different roles during implementation

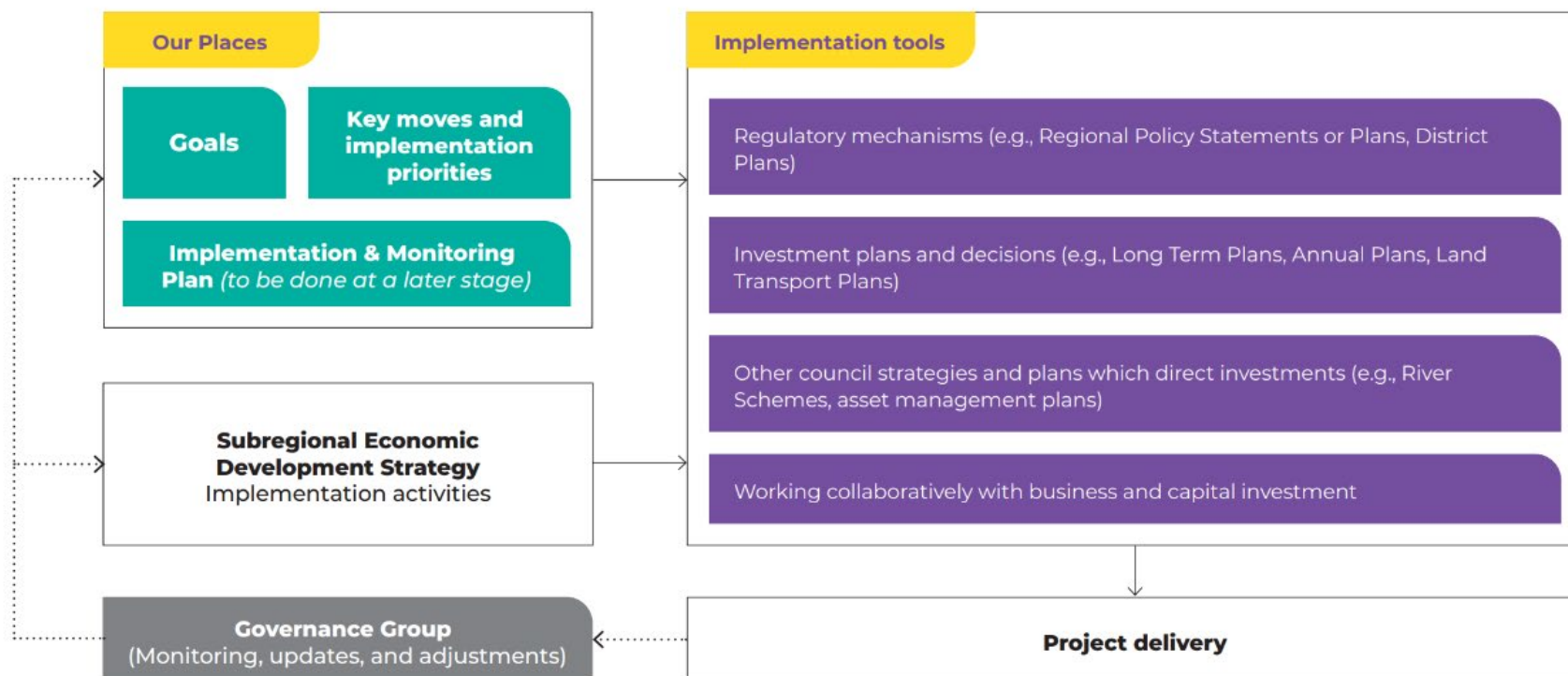


Figure 3: Implementation processes, alignment with Subregional Economic Development Strategy

Implementation Risk

Potential high risks	Mitigation	Performance Indicator
Partnerships There is a risk that partnerships needed to deliver sub-regional outcomes and the key moves do not happen because the plan is not implemented.	An agreed sub-regional governance group for the spatial plan, economic development strategy and other broad scale initiatives (e.g., regional deals, responding to Government policy changes) should be established with a Terms of Reference that delegates authority to work on behalf of Councils and other partners, and it needs to be resourced to operate effectively.	A Project Governance Group is confirmed with an approved Terms of Reference by July 2026. Councils provide operational funding in Annual Plans and LTPs to support the Governance Group's operation and to ensure that iwi partners can fully participate.
Commercial feasibility There is a risk that development areas are not commercially viable due to infrastructure costs, and housing or business land does not get developed, and housing and economic development outcomes are curtailed.	Councils can encourage viability by de-risking development priority areas by creating clear and enabling planning frameworks, providing structure plans that set out urban form and infrastructure requirements, ensuring natural hazard risk information is available and mitigations are well understood, and ensuring enabling infrastructure projects are outlined in LTPs and other funding planning to enable development to proceed in a timely manner.	A plan change and structure plan is undertaken for Awakeri, including an infrastructure funding plan. Infrastructure requirements for priority growth areas are identified in relevant LTPs, Regional Land Transport Plan. Integrated catchment management plan is developed for Awakeri and informs future structure planning.
Infrastructure funding and affordability There is a risk that infrastructure costs are unaffordable for councils, and priority development areas or related placemaking and economic development activities cannot be delivered.	Mitigation can include employing investment thresholds, exploring the use of private investments into public projects, and ensuring required infrastructure projects are in the LTPs and infrastructure strategies to enable appropriate development contributions. Prioritise investment into fewer development locations at a time, and avoid opening different development areas that would compete with each other and undermine the timely recovery of Council investments (e.g., through Development Contributions)	Development of the Whenua Māori Land West of Coastlands area or extension of Matatā beyond existing zoned capacity does not take place until the Awakeri development is established with a funded infrastructure programme.

Potential high risks	Mitigation	Performance Indicator
Population growth There is a risk that the population may be lower or higher than the selected most likely population scenario, which could affect commercial viability for development and funding sources.	The medium population growth scenario suggests that the sub-region will grow by 16,500 over the next 30 years. However, this is dependent on external factors like immigration rates, and this affects how fast development capacity will be absorbed. Mitigation includes monitoring the population change and adapting investment timing.	Population change, residential units consented, and commercial floorspace consented is monitored and reported at least annually to the Project Governance Group.
Changes in Government policy Changes in national policy directions can influence the viability of delivering the spatial plan due to funding criteria shifts or policy requirements changing.	With each change in Government review, the strategy to determine if the priorities need to change to better align to the Government's priorities of the day, this may mean changing implementation priorities based on the opportunities at hand.	The Project Governance Group decides whether a review is needed within 12 months after a national election.
Climate change & natural hazards Natural hazard risks exist and will become worse through climate change. This affects existing communities.	Undertake comprehensive natural hazard risk assessments for at-risk locations to consider risk management options. For the priority growth areas (Awakeri, Hukuatia and Matata) undertake integrated stormwater planning at the master planning stage to inform structure planning and the objectives of the relevant river schemes.	In the short term, natural hazard risk assessments are completed for Whakatāne township and Ōpōtiki township to inform future risk management decisions and planning. Integrated stormwater management planning is completed for Awakeri, Matata and Hukutaia.

Prioritising and choosing where and when to invest

It is important to acknowledge that population and employment growth rates will vary from year to year. Councils need to plan for this variability and adjust the pace of implementation accordingly. The Ten Year LTP provides a mechanism for funding decisions and ongoing changes to funding strategies. LTPs are one of the mechanisms that determines how fast we can deliver projects, considering available resources (funding and workforce).

While the pace of implementation will be directed by the availability of resources and funding balanced with demand from changing population and economic growth, the strategy identifies a short term need to invest in Awakeri and Hukutaia as the two priority development locations that are considered the easiest to progress quickly and affordably.

Priority	Location	Details
Short-Long term	Hukutaia	Priority development location, 2,000 residential units
Medium-Long term	Awakeri	Priority development location, potential for 2,000+ residential units
Medium-Long term	Matata infill	Priority development location, 600-700 residential units
Long term	Matata expansion	Potential extension of residential area eastwards of Pollen Street, following Awakeri development, with potential for 700-800 residential units
Further consideration, Medium to Long term	Whenua West of Coastlands	Requires defined potential for development of this area
Ongoing	Other development locations like Murupara or Te Kaha, and ongoing infill in safe places in existing townships	Enabled through ongoing asset renewals programmes

Note: Long term (10-30 years), Medium term (3-10 years), Short term (0-3 years)

Updates to this plan

The spatial plan will need to be reviewed and possibly updated at the time of key events, and regularly to keep it updated. The governance group that oversees the implementation of the plan should determine when this needs to happen. A regular review and update at a minimum every six years is recommended. It should include community engagement, and the timing should link with the following LTP updates to embed new actions in funding frameworks.

Other triggers that could instigate a review to confirm if an update is needed, may include events like those outlined below, or other similar matters:

- National and local elections
 - Changes to legislation including Resource Management Reform
 - Development of a detailed Implementation Plan for the spatial plan
 - Development of an Implementation Plan for the Subregional Economic Development Strategy
- Release of new population statistics by Statistics New Zealand (subnational population projections (on a 2023-base) will be released on 25 September 2025)
- Further certainty of planning for priority growth areas, or should they prove infeasible
 - Changes to funding availabilities and partner funding requirements (e.g., new GPS on Land Transport)

Appendix 1:

Implementation activities

Implementation of the strategy requires commitment to resources, alignment of other strategies and investment plans, and commitment to making change happen. The activities proposed through the spatial plan are mostly unfunded and require further consideration in LTPs to confirm resource commitment.

The key moves and implementation priorities have informed a preliminary list of activities that should be considered to implement the plan. These have been developed with the input of prior engagement feedback from iwi partners, stakeholders, the public, and from technical assessments. Timing and funding are yet to be determined.

Once the spatial plan governance group has been established, a top priority item should be to approve a full implementation plan. This should include confirmation of the roles and inputs from partner organisations towards unlocking the benefits sought through the spatial plan. Subsequent investigations, successful implementation, and more detailed plans will change and update these actions.

Spatial Plan and eastern bay-wide actions

Table 1: Implementation actions, eastern bay-wide

ID	Activity group	Relevant key moves	Description	Lead agency	Collaborators
SP1	Spatial plan	1.1	Governance for implementation Establish a governance entity to oversee the implementation of the spatial plan, engagement, and future changes to the plan – in association with the economic development strategy.	WDC	BOPRC, KDC, ODC, NZTA, HUD, Kainga Ora, Health NZ, iwi partners, Kānoa, Regional Services Commission
SP2	Spatial plan	1.1	Funding for governance Ensure operational support and funding in long term plans, including enabling appropriate data acquisition for monitoring risk indicators.	WDC	BOPRC, KDC, ODC
SP3	Spatial plan	6.1, 6.2, 6.3	Placemaking for structure plans Use local growth strategy or district plan engagement processes to define placemaking principles that guide preparation of structure plans and community revitalisation projects in relation to provision of community infrastructure and recreational facilities and effects on existing assets.	WDC, ODC	KDC
SP4	Spatial plan	2.2, 5.4	Address district plan barriers to pāpakainga Gather more detail on the quantum and timing of pāpakainga and what regulatory barriers affects its realisation. Review district plans to alleviate regulatory barriers where appropriate.	WDC, ODC, KDC	Iwi, hapu and Māori Trusts

ID	Activity group	Relevant key moves	Description	Lead agency	Collaborators
SP5	Spatial plan	6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4	Facilities strategic plan Develop an eastern bay community facilities strategic plan to co-ordinate and target investment to make the best use of existing and planned facilities and available funding. This includes considering meeting diverse needs of the community, multi-use open spaces, co-location of community facilities, and providing good access to facilities across the eastern bay.	WDC, ODC, KDC	Sport BOP, Te Whatu Ora/Health NZ, iwi and hapu
SP6	Spatial plan	7.1, 7.2, 7.3, 7.4	Transport system programme Develop a transport system programme (assisted by the development of a network demand modelling tool) and explore new investment pathways to support delivery of the growth components of the spatial plan. Explore investigations needed for an additional Whakatāne access to support growth components of the spatial plan and projects to improve network resilience. Consider staging triggers for growth areas within the development of the transport system programme. Work with NZTA to identify current and future levels of service requirements for the State Highway network that accommodates future growth, existing user experience and funding availability for improvements.	WDC	ODC, KDC, NZTA, BOPRC, KiwiRail, Regional Transport Committee, Regional Public Transport Committee
SP7	Spatial plan	6.1, 6.2	Cycling network plan for priority growth areas in Whakatane district Create a safe, accessible, and interconnected network of cycle paths that promotes sustainable transportation and enhances community connectivity through local planning processes, strategies and projects.	WDC	ODC, KDC, NZTA, BOPRC

ID	Activity group	Relevant key moves	Description	Lead agency	Collaborators
SP8	Spatial plan	8.3	Water sensitive design practices Define environmentally sustainable and water sensitive design principles and standards to guide preparation of structure plans in relation to nature-based solutions and compliance with environmental regulations. Embed these through district plan reviews when required.	WDC, ODC	BOPRC, iwi
SP9	Spatial plan	2.2, 2.3	Identify and respect sites and areas of significance Work in partnership with iwi and hapū in the protection of cultural heritage sites and areas of significance and recognise and respect tangata whenua values in local planning processes. Develop a detailed understanding around each priority development area as part of master planning.	WDC, ODC, KDC, BOPRC	Iwi and hapu
SP10	Spatial plan	4.1, 4.2	Implement the Sub-Regional Economic Development Strategy Support the key growth areas as identified in the Sub-regional Economic Growth Strategy, including prioritising infrastructure and planning. Prepare a local economic development plan for each district and consider capacity building for iwi authorities Develop a workforce strategy for the eastern bay.	WDC, ODC, KDC	BOPRC, iwi and hapu
SP11	Spatial plan	4.1	Capital advisory group The Project Governance Group should establish a business and capital advisory group. This group can help identify and enable public-private funding opportunities.	Governance Group	WDC, ODC, KDC, BOPRC

Central corridor actions

Table 2: Implementation actions, Central Corridor

ID	Activity group	Relevant key moves	Description	Lead agency	Collaborators
C1	Central Corridor	5.4, 6.3	Local Growth Strategy Prepare a local growth strategy through partner involvement and community engagement that includes specific activities to plan, fund and deliver infrastructure for priority growth areas in Whakatane District.	WDC	BOPRC, NZTA, Ministry of Education, iwi and hapu
C2	Central Corridor	9.2	Water and Wastewater Strategy Prepare a water and wastewater strategy that incorporates an integrated network approach to servicing existing communities and planned priority growth areas, to recognise efficiencies in combined treatment plant services and other alternatives like package treatment plants.	WDC	BOPRC
A1	Awakeri	7.2, 7.4, 7.5	State highway access and safety improvements to enable growth Lobby for access and safety improvements along SH 30 and SH 2 for consideration in the state highway improvement programme. Apply for funding to NZTA to install a roundabout at corner of SH 2 and SH 30	WDC	NZTA, BOPRC
A2	Awakeri	7.3	SH 2 Awakeri to Ōpōtiki resiliency Ensure growth assumptions in NZTA's SH 2 resiliency project reflect the intent of the spatial plan.	NZTA	WDC, ODC, KDC, BOPRC
A3	Awakeri	6.2	School capacity Involve Ministry of Education in the local growth strategy in relation to forward planning of network capacity for schools.	WDC, ODC	Ministry of Education

ID	Activity group	Relevant key moves	Description	Lead agency	Collaborators
A4	Awakeri	5.4	<p>Masterplan Awakeri</p> <p>Explore the best options for rezoning to urban land use. Consider options such as private plan change, public plan change, or a review of strategic long-term plans.</p> <p>Involve iwi, hapu and māori land trusts, stakeholders, and the local community in determining design principles and options.</p> <p>Continue to engage and support kiwinui trust and other trusts to establish a masterplan for the land. Explore options for rezoning trust land from rural to facilitate urban residential and other urban land uses.</p> <p>Prepare a structure plan to guide phased development. Establish risk profile and appropriate mitigation to be considered and/or designed into three waters systems.</p>	WDC	B
W1	Whenua West of Coastlands	5.4	<p>Vision and masterplan for Whenua West of Coastlands</p> <p>Continue to engage and support Kiwinui Trust and other trusts to establish a masterplan for the land. Establish the aspirations of the Māori freehold landowners. Ensure an appropriately suitable planning boundary that may include other lands adjacent. This should identify further required investigations and implementation activities related to planning, funding, and infrastructure.</p>	WDC	Land Trusts, Taiwhakaia, Ngāti Awa, NZTA, BOPRC
M1	Matata	2.3, 5.4	<p>Masterplanning for Matata</p> <p>Develop a masterplan involving the local community and with engagement with iwi to better understand their priorities for development aspirations for land, economic development, socio-economic risks, and infrastructure needs including parks and open spaces.</p> <p>This may be delivered through the Local Growth Strategy.</p> <p>This needs to encompass the Tarawera River Restoration Strategy Group's intent for the Tarawera River reconnection and rechannelling.</p>	WDC	Ngāti Rangitihi, Tūwharetoa ki Kawerau and Ngāti Awa, NZTA, BOPRC, others

ID	Activity group	Relevant key moves	Description	Lead agency	Collaborators
M2	Matata	9.2	Progress Matata wastewater treatment plant The current wastewater management system in Matatā is failing. Provide a safe and reliable wastewater system for Matatā that reduces public health and environmental risks. Enable growth outcomes identified in the spatial plan.	WDC	Co-design group, BOPRC
O1	Ōpōtiki	5.3	New zoned industrial land Undertake Industrial Plan Change to open up (yet to be) chosen locations around Ōpōtiki township to meet future demand for industrial development.	ODC	
O2	Ōpōtiki	7.1, 7.3	Advocate for SH 2 bypass resiliency improvement Advocate for improved transport resiliency of the bypass route (Hukutaia Road-Crooked Road-Verrall Road-Brown Road-Gabriels Gully Road-Waiotahi Valley Road) as alternative to SH 2 along Waiotahi, to ensure access to and from Ōpōtiki township.	ODC	NZTA, BOPRC
H1	Hukutaia	3.1, 5.3, 6.3	Implement Hukutaia development Undertake natural hazard risk assessment for Hukutaia Growth Area to direct planning decisions. Identify commercial and residential uses, infrastructure, and open spaces, through structure planning. Undertake Hukutaia Plan change to open up rural land for urban development. Work with landowners and other stakeholders to develop an infrastructure finding strategy. Seek improvements at the SH 2 and Woodlands Road intersection by NZTA.	ODC	BOPRC, NZTA, iwi, landowner, Ministry of Education
P1	Putauaki Industrial Area	5.3	Sustain the growth of Putauaki Industrial Area Maintain the area attractive to large footprint regionally significant industrial activities, by avoiding reverse sensitivity limitations posed by adjacent land use activities.	KDC	WDC, ODC, Whenua Maori

ID	Activity group	Relevant key moves	Description	Lead agency	Collaborators
P2	Putuaki Industrial Area	4.2	Support the primacy of the Putuaki Industrial Area Within priority growth areas, ensure commercial uses do not compete directly with the large-scale heavy industries sought at the Putuaki Industrial Area through appropriate land use regulations.	WDC, ODC	KDC

Eastern Corridor actions

Table 3: Implementation actions, Eastern Corridor

ID	Activity group	Relevant key moves	Description	Lead agency	Collaborators
EC1	Eastern Corridor	7.1	SH 35 Resiliency Improvements Advocate for improved transport resiliency of SH35 connecting the Eastern Corridor to Ōpōtiki township.	ODC	NZTA
EC2	Eastern Corridor	2.1, 2.2, 4.2	Support economic development by iwi When setting investment priorities or making regulatory changes, ensure iwi aspirations are a consideration: Iwi-led developments, including the iwi pipeline projects identified in the Eastern corridor to drive economic growth. ODC to provide support to enable iwi to meet Māori aspirations. Support the aquaculture as key growth area as identified in the Sub-regional Economic Growth Strategy, including prioritising infrastructure and planning.	ODC	Iwi, hapu and Māori Trusts

ID	Activity group	Relevant key moves	Description	Lead agency	Collaborators
EC3	Eastern Corridor	6.4	Te Kaha Placemaking Enable and support development of community facilities, retail, and businesses for Te Kaha to become a central service hub. Engage with the community to understand their need and priorities to work on over time.	ODC	Iwi
EC4	Eastern Corridor	3.6	Marae as emergency hubs Establish formal agreements between ODC and civil defense agencies to support marae as emergency service hubs in the event of natural disasters.	ODC	Iwi, hapu, BOPRC
EC5	Eastern Corridor	3.5	Investigate areas for managed retreat Partnership between BOPRC and iwi to identify, investigate, initiate and support coastal retreat in areas subject to coastal inundation and future sea level rise. As part of this, assess and identify infill opportunities in smaller villages along the coast east of Ōpōtiki where it is safe from natural hazards.	BOPRC	ODC, iwi and hapu
EC5	Eastern Corridor	2.1, 2.2	Structure planning for pāpakainga Partner with iwi to consider structure planning for development to enable comprehensive planning of papakāinga, including infrastructure provision. For larger scale proposals.	ODC, Iwi	

Southern corridor actions

Table 4: Implementation actions, Southern Corridor

ID	Activity group	Relevant key moves	Description	Lead agency	Collaborators
SC1	Murupara	6.4	Pāpakainga and commercial area Explore the planning processes for developing pāpakainga on Evan's Park and consider a business case for a new commercial area on Te Urewera Rainforest Route, with care to consider impact on the existing commercial uses.	WDC	Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Manawa
SC2	Murupara	6.4	Murupara masterplan Develop a Masterplan led by Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Manawa and the Murupara Community Board. Review the Whakatāne District Plan to support masterplan outcomes.	Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Manawa	Murupara Community Board, WDC
SC3	Murupara	2.1	Housing Develop a 30 home proposal at 5 Miro Drive, Murupara pending funding approval. The proposal is a combination of 2, 3 and 4 bedroom homes and resource consent has been granted.	Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Whare	
SC4	Minginui and Te Whaiti	2.1, 2.2, 5.4	Minginui masterplan Develop a masterplan led by Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Whare and the Minginui Village Incorporated Society and review the Whakatāne District Plan to support masterplan outcomes.	Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Whare	Minginui Village Incorporated Society, WDC
SC5	Te Awa O Tauranga, Ruatoki, Ruatāhuna	2.1, 2.2	District plan review / pāpakainga Support the implementation of Ngāi Tūhoe's spatial planning and housing blueprint, ensuring the district plan review considers if the plan is sufficiently enabling and sufficient natural hazards information can be made available.	WDC	Ngāi Tūhoe

Natural hazards and climate resilience actions

Table 5: Implementation actions, Natural hazards and climate resilience actions

ID	Activity group	Relevant key moves	Description	Lead agency	Collaborators
NH 1	Natural hazards	3.3	Improved natural hazard information Co-ordinate and report back on any National Direction & RPS Natural Hazard implementation including natural hazard modelling, mapping and risk assessments undertaken by all.	BOPRC	ODC, WDC and KDC
NH 2	Natural hazards	3.3	River Scheme sustainability Progress and complete the River Scheme Sustainability Project.	BOPRC	ODC, WDC, Iwi and hapu, stakeholders and the community
NH 3	Natural hazards	3.1	Integrated stormwater and risk management planning For priority growth areas (Awakeri, Hukutaia and Matata) and Regional Councils to undertake integrated stormwater and risk management planning through master planning to inform the design, form, and location of detailed structure planning to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • protect agreed levels of service of the flood schemes, • manage the effects of climate change over the next 100 years, and • avoid increases in risk to people, property and infrastructure; and • protect sensitive receiving environments including the Te Awa o te Atua. 	ODC, WDC and BOPRC	Iwi and hapu, stakeholders and the community
NH 4	Natural hazards	3.2	Climate change risk assessments Develop, prepare and implement localised climate change risk assessments to inform community-led adaptation planning initiatives across the eastern bay sub-region including the Whakatāne District Climate Change Risk Assessment.	ODC, WDC and BOPRC	Iwi and hapu, the community

ID	Activity group	Relevant key moves	Description	Lead agency	Collaborators
NH 5	Natural hazards	3.3	<p>RPS natural hazard risk assessments</p> <p>Progress natural hazard risk assessments prepared under the Regional Policy Statement (RPS) to inform future risk management planning and decision making:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As a priority, Whakatāne and Ōpōtiki townships; and • In other locations including Taneatua, Te Teko and Edgecumbe. <p>Share the outcomes of the RPS natural hazard risk assessments and other relevant information to inform the community and consider risk reduction measures for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The River Scheme Sustainability Project for the relevant flood scheme. ▪ Civil Defence and Emergency Management Planning. ▪ Climate change adaptation planning. ▪ Asset management planning by territorial authorities. ▪ Land-use planning including district plan changes. ▪ Asset management planning for life-line utilities providers. 	ODC, WDC and BOPRC	Iwi and hapu, the community