



WHANGANUI
DISTRICT COUNCIL
Te Kaunihera a Rohe o Whanganui

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY



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FOREWORD



It is timely to have adopted our Economic Development Strategy as we move into what should be an exciting 2019, following the last several years of economic and population growth.

Walking in the streets of Whanganui I feel, and I am sure others feel this too, that this is our time in the sun. What Whanganui & Partners, the Council, local businesses, entrepreneurs and creatives have put into this town is beginning to pay off with increased job prospects, new businesses and a visible vibrancy.

In the time I have been Mayor we have seen the largest population growth since the mid-1990s. Although I would like to take credit for this, I believe the growth is a combination of people coming to Whanganui from overseas and many Kiwis moving from elsewhere in Aotearoa for a better quality of life. Our small city has made an impression with its arts scene, heritage buildings, diversity, natural beauty and inexpensive house prices.

The current Council is almost unanimous in its support for economic development and this strategy sets out a ten-year vision for how we can build on what we already have.

I thank the many submitters who took the time to give us your feedback on the strategy and everyone who read it to find out more about where we are heading.

We know that not all the wisdom in the world comes from 101 Guyton Street and we want to continue to tap into the knowledge of the business and creative community.

If you want to talk more about this strategy, find out more about economic development or seek support for a business or creative idea, I encourage you to talk to our friendly and capable team at Whanganui & Partners. Visit whanganuiandpartners.nz

Hamish McDouall

Mayor of Whanganui District



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Whanganui in 2028 will be vibrant, prosperous and rich with opportunities - across the board, for everyone.

This strategy identifies the steps that will be taken to achieve this, within a framework that will prioritise retention, growth, and attraction for the best possible economic development outcomes.

It is informed by our district's needs, advantages and challenges - building on the opportunities we have as well as the ones we can make.

Central to this is a series of factors that will influence our success. We think that in order to increase our competitiveness we need to optimise our potential; partner and connect across boundaries; make the Whanganui River central; enhance our reputation; and be more enabling.

We have also identified five 'game-changing' priorities that will particularly drive our development potential. These are:

- A transport and freight gateway
- Training and education
- Agricultural development
- Tourism and events
- Food and innovation



These 'must-haves' sit alongside a number of other key actions and projects under our Business, Destination/Marketing and Education pillars. Achievement of these will require a Council-led, community inclusive approach with partnership at its core. A clear plan, strong commitment and belief in our potential will help us to realise our vision - taking us to 2028 and beyond.

The next step will be the development of specific strategic action plans. These will contain the detail and flexibility needed to be truly responsive to the economic development needs of the district - being reviewed on an annual basis and developed in conjunction with our partners and stakeholders.

This strategy forms our high level commitment and 'call to action', the strategic action plans will be the transformative road maps to take us there.



OUR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY AT A GLANCE

PRINCIPLES

Partnership, transformation, innovation

VISION

Grow Whanganui: vibrant, prosperous and rich with opportunities

PURPOSE

Supporting richness and opportunity through education, lifestyle and commerce

GOALS

RETAIN

- Providing compelling reasons to stay.
- Making things as easy as possible.
- Encouraging succession planning.
- Committing to what we do well.

GROW

- Building on what we have.
- Becoming more competitive.
- Enhancing our image and reputation.
- Boosting our population.
- Supporting innovation and expansion.

ATTRACT

- Generating more interest in Whanganui.
- Delivering on what people and businesses need.
- Knowing our advantages and selling them confidently.
- Being truly business friendly.

AIMS

BUSINESS

To be a location of choice for successful companies.

DESTINATION / MARKETING

To be a destination of choice for business and recreation.

EDUCATION

To be an education centre of choice for local, regional, national and international students.

This document is a revision of our district's existing Economic Development Strategy. It builds on the work of previous strategies, but sets a re-energised vision based on the sharpened focus of Council and its economic development arm, Whanganui & Partners.

It leverages off a period of positive growth - with our population having increased and employment numbers climbing - but remains acutely aware, and actively informed by, the reality of our particular challenges. As a result, while this strategy's responses are rooted in the economic and demographic circumstances of our community, its vision is firmly set on arresting these patterns and writing a new and more prosperous future for this district. This optimism is already reflected in the shifting mood of this district. There is a real sense that progress is being made, that new people are discovering what we have to offer and that vibrancy is being generated

through our streets, businesses and events. However, we know that Whanganui is capable of so much more.

Since the last Economic Development Strategy we have had sustained growth in the number of businesses choosing Whanganui as a location to open or relocate an existing business to. We are also establishing more accurate databases so that we can better support the businesses we already have here. Collaboration has grown too. We have formed a network with Tararua and Rangitikei district councils and development of our regional brand story is well underway.



Some recent highlights:

Some other recent successes are highlighted on this page.

- We have an Innovation Quarter - this is both a physical place (at 179 Saint Hill Street) and a virtual platform where people can share knowledge, get inspired and encourage innovation.
- Business Network meetings are now underway - the purpose of these is to connect with different sector groups (e.g. retail, industry and rural) to better understand their needs and encourage collaboration.
- A partnership has been established with Mainstreet - this has included strategy meetings around issues such as empty shops and providing workshops on basic business skills.
- Business Support Services have been set up to provide a 'business friendly' point of contact. Training, mentoring and information sessions are also being offered.
- We are working closely with UCOL and the New Zealand International Commercial Pilot Academy (NZICPA) to continue to develop quality tertiary education options that are unique to Whanganui.
- Study Whanganui has been established to grow the success of international education in our region.





KEY PRINCIPLES

This strategy is guided by a set of overarching principles. They set the scene for our economic development initiatives and the ways in which we will work to meet our strategic objectives.

Partnership

We value collaboration over competition

Innovation

We combine imagination with expertise

Transformation

We champion progress

These commitments also empower the Whanganui & Partners team to drive positive economic development under the broader Leading Edge framework.

In addition, Whanganui & Partners is committed to the principles of Communication and Focus.

PURPOSE

**Supporting richness and opportunity
through education, lifestyle and commerce**

Our purpose is clear - this strategy is about setting in motion the right conditions to achieve the best possible outcomes for our district.

WHANGANUI & PARTNERS

Whanganui & Partners is a council controlled organisation (CCO) that provides economic development functions for the district, with support provided by the Council.



“Without a sound economic base it is difficult to enhance other aspects of community wellbeing”

Delivery of these services is directly related to the achievement of our community's interests and recognises the community's consistent prioritising of prosperity and growth.

The economic development services provided by Whanganui & Partners include:

- ➔ Economic development initiatives (including support for industry cluster groups)
- ➔ Business and sector development
- ➔ Business and investment attraction
- ➔ Tourism development
- ➔ Marketing and promotion
- ➔ Events and event funding
- ➔ Conference bureau

OVERVIEW OF ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

Whanganui's background is diverse. Our core strengths lie in tourism, food processing, medium-scale specialist manufacturing, and processing logistics sectors.



Our district is also strong in terms of primary sector production and related servicing industries. In addition, iwi Treaty Settlements may provide opportunity for iwi investment in the area.


Other priority focus areas have been identified through Accelerate25 - our region's economic development programme. This sets out a series of opportunities and enablers that will help realise economic prosperity across Manawatu-Whanganui. These nine elements are identified below.

For Whanganui these opportunities are likely to include things like our Class 1 and 2 soils and our transport hub potential, for example, because of our close proximity to Ohakea, our port and our position on two highways.

This strategy also responds to the opportunities available through the government's Provincial Growth Fund. This is because the Manawatu-Whanganui region has been identified as a surge region for significant investment. As a result, this document pulls together a series of strategic initiatives (developed in conjunction with iwi and key stakeholders) into one centralised framework and aligns these with Council's other economic development priorities.

Focus areas

1. Tourism and visitor services
2. Land use optimisation
3. Manuka honey
4. Poultry meat production
5. Quality care and lifestyle for older people
6. Business processing outsourcing: call centres
7. Business processing outsourcing: food HQ
8. Fresh vegetables
9. Realising Māori potential



Community Outcomes

- A deeply united community
- Connected
- Innovative and creative
- Safeguarding our place
- Works for everyone

These form the basis of the Leading Edge Strategy and drive the Long-Term Plan. The Economic Development Strategy is a key mechanism for realising these outcomes.



100% sweet

Whanganui & Partners have an education partnership with 100% SWEET - an organisation that engages with students, education providers and employers to steer school leavers towards positive career outcomes.

Specialist crops, nuts and fruit

Unlocking and enhancing productive land use (including under-utilised Māori land) will contribute to the Government Growth Agenda target of doubling the value of agricultural exports by 2025. This includes Manuka for honey and diversification of crops that can be readily grown in Whanganui to service off-season markets.

Port opportunities

In 2015, central government granted \$500,000 for a detailed blueprint of port revitalisation. A draft Master Plan was developed and shared widely with the community in 2017. In early 2018, the government announced that a further \$3M would be made available for port revitalisation, subject to a business case.

SNAPSHOT

An overview of the current state of the district and the benefits and opportunities this strategy is responding to.



Median age

Our median age is 42.4 years (for New Zealand as a whole this is 38 years).

Population

Our population has grown. We are now home to 44,500 people.



Education

We have an extensive range of quality education options - from private to special character, single-sex and kura kaupapa. We also have ten tertiary providers.



Assets

We are privileged to have a number of natural and built assets that put us at a distinct advantage. These include the Whanganui River, our proximity to the mountain, our coastal location and our variety of quality soils. We also have high levels of built heritage and significant regional sporting, cultural and health facilities.



Climate

On average we have 2,055 sunshine hours per year (making us sunnier than Auckland).



Business

Our 'open for business' approach makes things easy. A business-friendly facilitator is available to step people through the process of launching or expanding their business.



Connectivity

We are working on gateway improvements through the airport and sea port. We have daily one hour flights to Auckland, and Wellington is just over two hours away by car. In addition, Palmerston North airport is a significant regional hub and is only one hour away.



Infrastructure



Our infrastructure is solid. We have land available and quality network services in place.

Ultrafast Broadband

Our fibre is fast! This means that people can choose to live here and work anywhere.



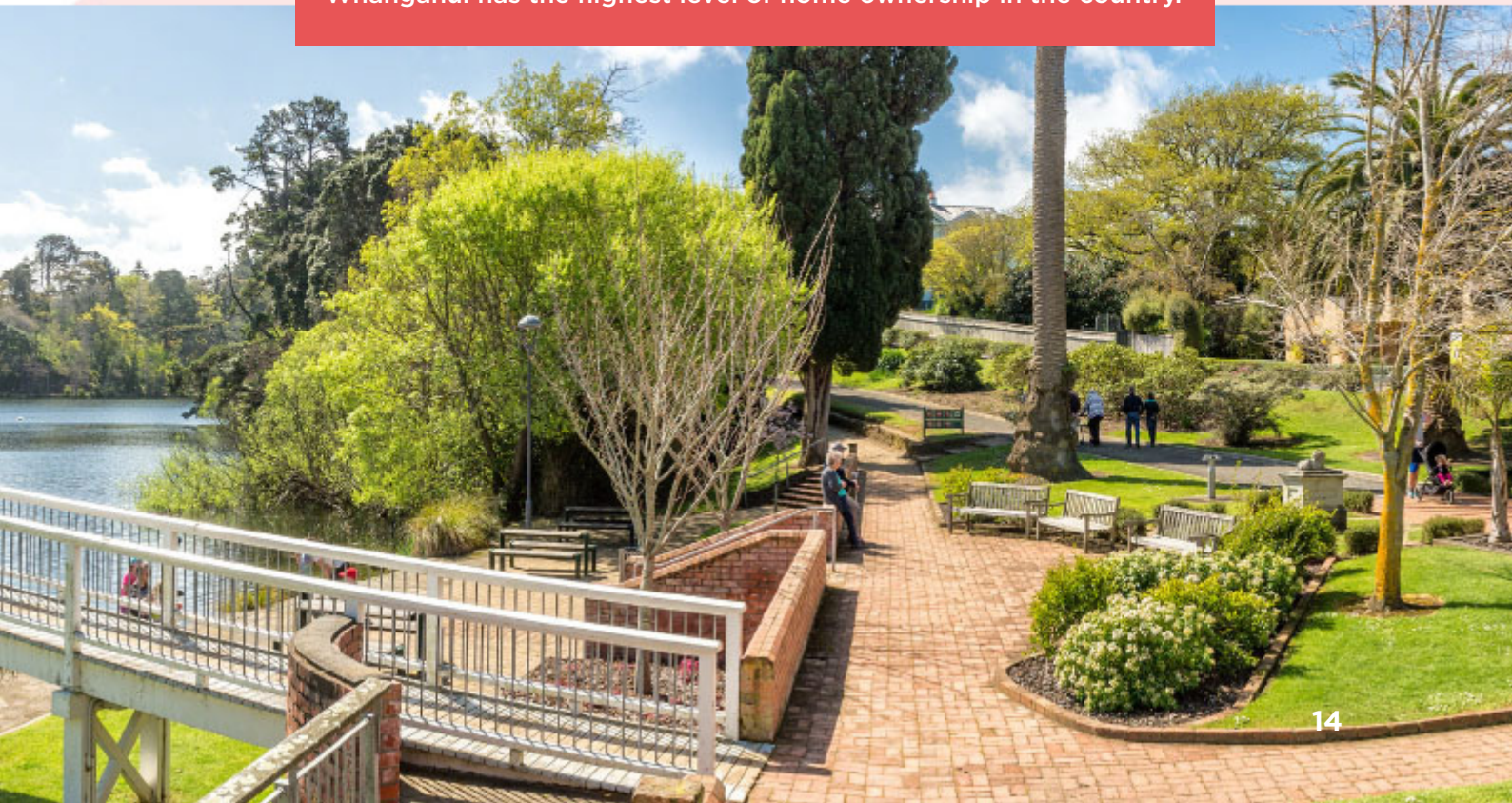
Income



Our household median income currently sits at \$61,700. This compares to \$89,100 for all of New Zealand. However, the annual percentage change in this figure is greater than that nationally. We have had 9% growth, while the rest of New Zealand has had 8.3%.

Affordable Property

The average housing value (in 2018) is \$238,248. We also have commercial, industrial and office real estate available at prices much lower than many other places. Whanganui has the highest level of home ownership in the country.



OUR APPROACH TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

This Economic Development Strategy is owned by the Council. It will primarily be driven by Whanganui & Partners - in conjunction with the Council and other key stakeholders.

Whanganui & Partners is structured according to three key focus areas:

→ **Business**

Innovative, collaborative, open for business


→ **Destination / marketing**

Rich stories, heartfelt hospitality, legendary river

→ **Education**

Future-focused learning, pathways to employment





“Our job is to imagine the brightest possible future for our district and lend a hand to anyone who wants to help make it a reality.”

Industry

Every day, New Zealand cats and dogs eat breakfast made at Mars Petcare in Whanganui. Firefighters in Australia depend on safety gear from Whanganui's Pacific Helmets. Boats made at Q-West shuttle commuters between Auckland and Waiheke Island and locally-made Open Country milk powder is bought at supermarkets in China. We're award-winners too - with GDM expanding to fit out stores in the US and taking out the international category in the New Zealand Retail Interiors Association Awards for 2017.

Works for everyone

This strategy sets out Whanganui's economic goals and priorities to 2028. It is closely linked to Council's Long-Term Plan and Leading Edge Strategy - in particular the Economy pillar. This is about providing boundless opportunities so that we can truly become a place of choice for all. When we achieve this we will be a district that is thriving and full of jobs, development and lifestyle opportunities. This will mean that anyone can (and will want to) call us home. Whanganui will be welcoming, empowering and enabling - supporting everyone to flourish.

Working in partnership

We are committed to working in partnership and will need to actively do this in order to realise this strategy's goals. As a result, this strategy not only outlines the projects that are either underway or planned, but also the agencies and organisations we will work with to achieve them.

STRATEGIC CONTEXT

The Whanganui district possesses a number of advantages, however, these are not necessarily unique to us - nor are the kinds of impediments to growth that we face. Our district is the same as many other similarly-sized provincial centres in that we offer all the benefits of a smaller centre, but also have the constraints of an ageing population and limited employment opportunities for those who choose to remain here, or return.

As a result, the ways in which we overcome these limitations and position ourselves as the best option for businesses, residents, students and visitors will be critical. We have all that is needed to deliver on this - we just need to be clever and targeted about getting these messages out. This strategy is committed to achieving these gains.

Strengths

Beautiful and rugged natural environment. Temperate climate. Water availability for industry. Heritage, arts and culture. Large range of recreational activities / facilities. Strong events portfolio. Low cost of living and affordable housing. Excellent quality of life. Creative thinkers and successful business people. Established relationships. Cost effective operating environment for businesses. Good land for cropping. Quality and variety of education options. Central location. Critical mass for creative industries.

Opportunities

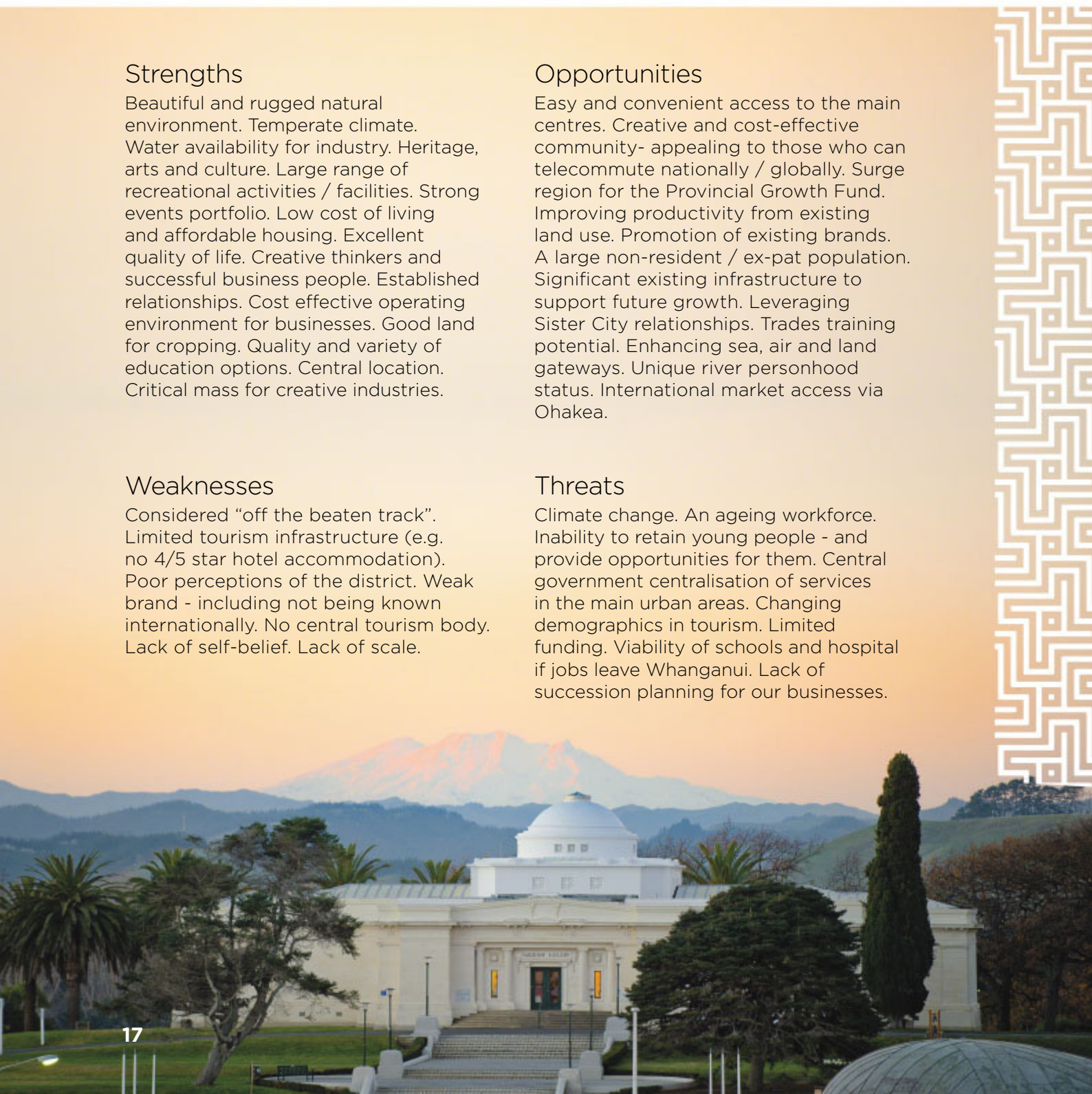
Easy and convenient access to the main centres. Creative and cost-effective community- appealing to those who can telecommute nationally / globally. Surge region for the Provincial Growth Fund. Improving productivity from existing land use. Promotion of existing brands. A large non-resident / ex-pat population. Significant existing infrastructure to support future growth. Leveraging Sister City relationships. Trades training potential. Enhancing sea, air and land gateways. Unique river personhood status. International market access via Ohakea.

Weaknesses

Considered "off the beaten track". Limited tourism infrastructure (e.g. no 4/5 star hotel accommodation). Poor perceptions of the district. Weak brand - including not being known internationally. No central tourism body. Lack of self-belief. Lack of scale.

Threats

Climate change. An ageing workforce. Inability to retain young people - and provide opportunities for them. Central government centralisation of services in the main urban areas. Changing demographics in tourism. Limited funding. Viability of schools and hospital if jobs leave Whanganui. Lack of succession planning for our businesses.



WHAT THE COMMUNITY IS TELLING US

We undertook pre-engagement on a draft strategic framework and received constructive feedback on its aims. This feedback was supported by some general themes, which were incorporated into a draft document. Formal consultation followed, with the community's views taken into account in the development of a final strategy.

- We need to attract people to Whanganui - this means having quality jobs with competitive salaries.
- We should build on what we currently have - recognising that we are a desirable place and have huge potential in our existing business, tourism, education and innovation offerings.
- Planning for the future will involve recognising and responding to the needs of young people - particularly in terms of providing quality education and being able to retain them (or attract them back).
- We need to be a place where everyone can choose to stay, work and live - and where people want to be.
- There must be an openness to new opportunities, with us jumping on these when we can - including being proactive about what we can attract here, rather than just expecting things to come to us.
- Growth shouldn't come at any cost - we need to be mindful of sustainability factors.
- Excitement is needed - a groundswell of positivity and enthusiasm to drive our district forward.
- Being business-friendly and enabling is essential. We need to walk the talk when we say we are 'open for business'.



“We need to tell the story of how and why we are different - we are not just another regional service hub.”

FUTURE-FOCUSED

This strategy is about setting a clear course and investing in shared goals in order to retain, grow, and attract the right economic development outcomes.

Our focus is on the best interests of Whanganui as a whole.

This means that everyone will have the opportunity to participate - whether through training, education or employment or just by enjoying the lifestyle and tourism advantages that a prosperous and thriving community presents. Jobs and growth are central to this, but we have to be strategic, sustainable and smart in our approach if we want to generate widespread and long-lasting prosperity. In essence, we need the **right** jobs, the **right** growth and the **right** opportunities to safeguard the best of what we have and build on the rest. In order to do this we need to own our advantages, value and promote what we can offer and be proactive and enabling with what we need to retain, grow, and attract.

Te Pae Tawhiti

Te Pae Tawhiti sets out an inter-generational strategy for Māori economic development in our region over the next twenty-four years. Its purpose is to provide direction and support for Māori to pursue economic development as whānau, hapū, iwi, enterprises and communities, individually and collectively. The idea is that collaboration through alliances among Māori could accelerate growth for the benefit of Māori and non-Māori within our region.

Ngā Tihi Taumata The Priorities

Te Pae Tawhiti identifies 10 priorities:

- ➔ Land utilisation
- ➔ River and seafood
- ➔ Tourism
- ➔ Honey
- ➔ Forestry and plant-based products
- ➔ Māori digital enterprise
- ➔ Whānau cooperatives
- ➔ Entrepreneurship and innovation
- ➔ Older Māori vitality
- ➔ Housing



Māori Economy

A Māori economy overview is being developed by and with Māori. This work is being led by Council in conjunction with Te Puni Kōkiri and other key contributors. This will be a separate, but related, strand to this strategy and its development - alongside its ultimate outcomes and aspirations - will be important to the achievement of our broader economic development aims.

This work is already underway. We are connecting with existing businesses on their succession needs and protecting what we already have - for example, our Class 1 and 2 soils. We are also on the lookout for new opportunities in line with our Leading Edge vision.

These include those available through high value crops and our advanced aviation hub plans but there are many more too.

We also need to think about what might impact on this strategy so that we can be prepared to capitalise on and identify new initiatives. For example, having available land earmarked and ready to go, responding to climate change outcomes and establishing authentic partnerships so that we can be agile when opportunities present themselves - or front-foot fresh ideas, together.

What are Class 1 and 2 soils?

Class 1 and 2 soils are considered the highest quality and most fertile. They are basically the best of the best. Our region has a significant concentration of these soil classes in the rural area. This gives us a real advantage and means this high quality land should be protected and our use of it enhanced.

There is a strong desire in this strategy to have Whanganui & Partners engage with our key businesses and report back to Council so that we can better understand and respond to these needs and opportunities.



SUCCESS FACTORS

In order to remain competitive with other provincial centres, this strategy has identified the following core ‘economic development essentials’ as critical to its success.

Optimising our potential

We possess significant untapped talent and opportunity. We are a district of achievers, creatives and innovators. Our size sometimes means we have to find new ways of delivering things and making our own success. We also have a large (and often passionate) non-resident or ex-pat population. Harnessing these strengths, ideas and resources can give us a real economic advantage, but this requires thought and investment.

Partnering and connecting across boundaries

Partnership is central to our economic development approach and our Leading Edge focus. However, it is acknowledged that a history of limited collaboration has constrained progress. These connections need to occur across organisational, community, industry, national and international boundaries to bolster our pulling power, grow our capacity and open new doors.

Making the river central

Stakeholders have identified the importance of ensuring that our natural environment is sustainably managed, preserved and respected. Legal recognition of the Whanganui River’s own unique identity (a world first) provides a powerful platform for tourism, research and education - positioning Whanganui as an exemplar in cultural and environmental protection.

Enhancing our reputation

Our reputation needs work. At best there is limited knowledge of who we are and what we offer - at worst these perceptions are damaging. Telling our stories in authentic ways, getting the right messages out and re-building our recognition as a centre for education excellence will all be important. In addition, new opportunities in tourism, cultural and environmental sustainability will form part of this strategy.

Being enabling

Doing business in our district should be easy. We have made gains but there is still more to be done. This relates to our focus on building our reputation and this strategy’s particular commitment to attracting, growing and retaining our business base. The Council and Whanganui & Partners are working together on this so that new and existing opportunities can be progressed.

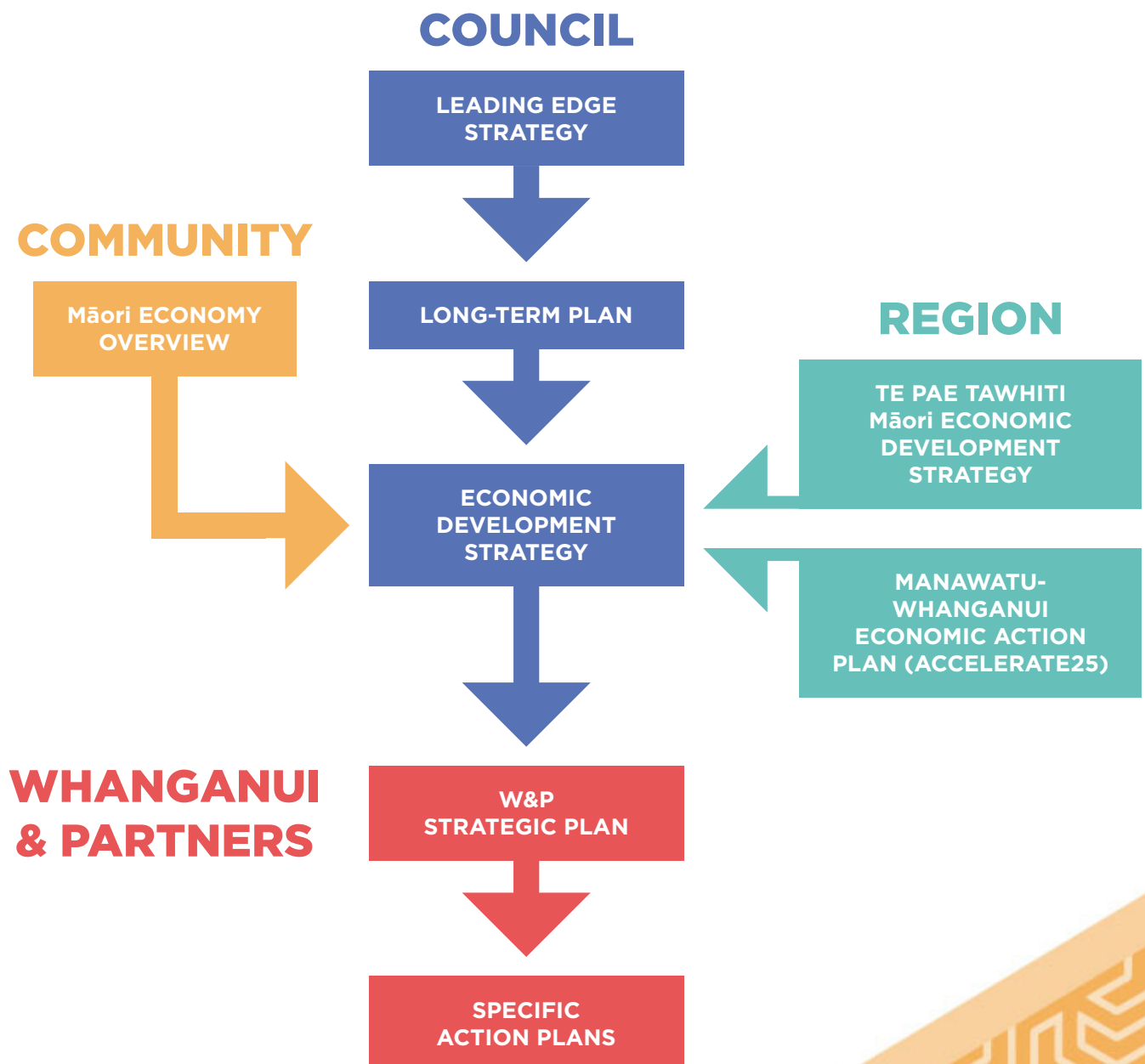
“We’re here to help... with energy, an emphasis on collaboration and free-flowing movement”

STRATEGIC RELATIONSHIPS

“A regionally aligned approach underpins meaningful partnerships and community impact.”

This strategy is connected to a number of other key documents - both within the Council and across the region. This is because in order to be successful, economic development must be well integrated into our social, environmental and infrastructural commitments - as well as our business and tourism priorities. It also needs to be positioned within the context of the wider region - enabling us to work effectively across boundaries and ensure that alignment, scale, collaboration, and information sharing occurs to provide the best opportunities for growth.

These relationships are outlined below.



WHANGANUI TODAY

In order to move forward we need to take stock of where we are now - this includes learning from current limitations and leveraging off our advantages. The following summary was provided by stakeholder feedback during a workshop on economic development strategic drivers.

Today we have:

- A unique and important world first in Te Awa Tupua
- Momentum to kickstart the port redevelopment
- Significant population growth for the first time in decades
- A wealth of education infrastructure and a past history of success
- Affordability that will rival anywhere and can cater to anyone (industry, businesses, residents and visitors)

Now we need to:

- Invest in and protect our unique assets and strengths
- Develop a foundation of quality infrastructure to support growth, tourism and development
- Support local business and opportunities to generate more value
- Create the environment and pathways for young people to thrive



FACTORS INFLUENCING THE STRATEGY

Key factors influencing the district's growth and prosperity over the period of this strategy and beyond include:

- Overcoming capacity challenges
- Addressing skill gaps
- Providing quality jobs
- Retaining our population
- Growing our business base
- Making the district viable for young people
- Responding to an ageing population
- Instilling pride in our community
- Competing for skilled people
- Delivering succession planning
- Being creative with the opportunities available
- Investing in our people and our infrastructure
- Growing the Māori economy
- Attracting people here
- Marketing what we have - with authenticity and pride
- Managing a positive reputation
- Encouraging confidence in our ability to deliver
- Adapting to global trends
- Being our own best spokespeople
- Ensuring environmental sustainability
- Seeking a high wage economy
- Identifying what our residents need to contribute to, and participate in, a thriving 21st century community
- Ensuring that businesses have the skilled labour and infrastructure they need to operate



If we can do these things - and do them well - there is every opportunity for a vibrant, prosperous and rich future.

GROW WHANGANUI:

**Vibrant, prosperous
and rich with
opportunities.**

This vision takes a broad view of richness - covering the economic wealth we intend to generate, as well as the energy and opportunity that comes from a district that has a lot going on.

We want to be a district that is dynamic, thriving and open to new things - whether we make our own success or have people and ideas come to us. Our prosperity will mean that there is widespread accessibility and opportunity.

Whanganui in 2028 will be a place that truly works for everyone.



STRATEGIC GOALS

In order to achieve this vision we need to focus on retaining, growing and attracting people and businesses to Whanganui. These goals underpin our purpose and will drive our strategic initiatives.



RETAIN

This is about:

- Providing compelling reasons to stay.
- Making things as easy as possible.
- Encouraging succession planning.
- Committing to what we do well.
- Engaging with existing businesses.

We want to **RETAIN**:

- Industry and employment opportunities.
- Existing businesses.
- Our usually resident population.
- Our points of difference.



GROW

This is about:

- Building on what we have.
- Becoming more competitive.
- Enhancing our image and reputation.
- Boosting our population.
- Supporting innovation and expansion.

We want to **GROW**:

- The value of real exports.
- Our average real Gross Domestic Product (GDP).
- Our permanent population base.
- The number of fulltime students.
- The number of international students.
- National and local perceptions of Whanganui.
- Our employment statistics.
- The district's median incomes



ATTRACT

This is about:

- Generating more interest in Whanganui.
- Delivering on what people and businesses need.
- Knowing our advantages and selling them confidently.
- Being truly business friendly.

We want to **ATTRACT**:

- More businesses.
- More students to study in Whanganui.
- New permanent residents.
- More visitors to the district.
- Events and conferences.
- Sustainable, well-paying jobs.

Achievement of these goals will be supported by three strategic pillars. These match the focus areas of Whanganui & Partners and actively funnel the strategy's aspirations around choice and prosperity into a clear plan of action.

Each pillar's aim is simple but strong in its intention to deliver the right conditions and infrastructure to position this district as a place that works for everyone.

Inherent in each is a focus on retaining what we have, growing our base and attracting further opportunities.

AIMS

→ **Business**

To be a location of choice for successful companies

→ **Destination / Marketing**

To be a destination of choice for business and recreation

→ **Education**

To be an education centre of choice for local, regional, national and international students

THE BIG 5

These are our 'game-changers' - the priorities we particularly need to focus on.

These projects are central to our strategic goals to **RETAIN, GROW** and **ATTRACT** and will help drive maximum economic development benefit.



TRANSPORT AND FREIGHT GATEWAY



TRAINING AND EDUCATION



AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT



TOURISM AND EVENTS



FOOD AND INNOVATION



RETAIN

KEY OBJECTIVES



- providing compelling reasons to stay
- making things as easy as possible
- encouraging succession planning
- committing to what we do well
- engaging with existing businesses

PILLARS	PRIORITIES We will:	PURPOSE Because we want to:	PARTNERS We will work with:
BUSINESS	1.1 Deliver business retention and succession planning initiatives	Understand the particular needs of our business community and provide pathways for retention and development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whanganui & Partners • Chamber of Commerce • Te Manu Atatu • Central Economic Development Agency (CEDA) • MBIE Business Mentor • Media Works • UCOL • Mainstreet • Iwi • Heads Road Group
	1.2 Forge and sustain strong relationships with the business community - with a particular focus on industry, manufacturing and agriculture.	Support the viability and success of our existing businesses and significant industries by knowing and anticipating their requirements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town Centre Regeneration • RESONA • UCOL • Wanganui Rural Community Board
	1.3 Understand how well we are delivering for existing businesses and providing what they need.	Know where any gaps are in terms of support and infrastructure so that we can deliver the right services.	



PILLARS	PRIORITIES We will:	PURPOSE Because we want to:	PARTNERS We will work with:
DESTINATION / MARKETING	1.4 Maintain our existing tourism advantages.	Support our current providers and continue to promote our key strengths for maximum benefit.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whanganui & Partners • Tourism Network Group • Individual tourism operators • Education partners as listed below
	1.5 Promote opportunities for young people to remain in the district for study and employment.	Retain our population, build capacity and recognise our distinct lifestyle advantages.	
EDUCATION	1.6 Grow the capacity of current education and training.	Deliver valid and appealing reasons for young people to remain and contribute to our district – arresting the ‘brain drain’ to other regions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whanganui & Partners • UCOL • 100% SWEET • Whanganui District Employment and Training Trust • Te Wānanga o Aotearoa • YMCA • Ag Challenge Ltd • Land Based Training • Training for You • Whanganui Learning Centre • Trade and Commerce • Tupoho Whānau Trust
	1.7 Encourage the retention of rural school leavers for land based training.		
	1.8 Develop Te Wānanga o Ao – a long-term strategy to promote research, innovation and education in Whanganui.	Build on our traditional education strengths and bring jobs, vibrancy and sustainable skills to the district.	
	1.9 Ensure the retention of our existing education options and promote these widely.	Maintain the quality and diversity of our education offerings and their continued viability.	

KEY OBJECTIVES



- building on what we have
- becoming more competitive
- enhancing our image and reputation
- boosting our population
- supporting innovation and expansion

PILLARS	PRIORITIES We will:	PURPOSE Because we want to:	PARTNERS We will work with:
BUSINESS	2.1 Revitalise the Port and provide enhanced air, sea and land gateways.	Optimise local infrastructure and create greater trade and tourism connections.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whanganui & Partners • Chamber of Commerce • Te Manu Atatu
	2.2 Respond to Māori economic development aspirations in ways identified by Māori.	Support the economy to thrive for the benefit of Māori and non-Māori.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central Economic Development Agency (CEDA) • MBIE Business Mentor • Media Works
	2.3 Grow Whanganui's rural sector through the Rural Enterprise Project.	Focus on the opportunities available through high value crops, optimise our land use and look for value-add opportunities for existing producers. We also want to promote economic growth based on the district's existing major rural industries.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UCOL • Mainstreet • Iwi • Heads Road Group
	2.4 Align with the rural economic growth priorities outlined in the Whanganui Rural Community Board Strategic Plan.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town Centre Regeneration • RESONA • UCOL • Positive Ageing Forum
	2.5 Establish Whanganui as an 'Age Friendly City' and attract lifestyle opportunities.	Address needs in this space, build on Whanganui's existing advantages to support ageing in place, and respond to our ageing demographics.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural Community Board • Waste Minimisation Working Party • GHD
	2.6 Investigate options around developing Clean Waste and Recycling Facilities.	Respond to market gaps, leverage available assets and encourage local innovation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PopUp Business School • Te Wānanga • Massey University
	2.7 Actively encourage a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship.	Support business growth and fresh ideas within an existing climate of smart approaches.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whanganui Rural Community Board • Thrive Whanganui

PILLARS	PRIORITIES We will:	PURPOSE Because we want to:	PARTNERS We will work with:
BUSINESS	2.8 Work alongside existing businesses to improve our industrial and infrastructure offerings.	Make sure that our land, networks and services are capable, functional and business-ready.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whanganui & Partners • Chamber of Commerce • Te Manu Atatu
	2.9 Provide support for current businesses to expand.	Help current businesses to explore new opportunities and find new markets by leveraging off what they already have.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central Economic Development Agency (CEDA) • MBIE Business Mentor • Media Works
	2.10 Develop an engagement plan for working with and supporting large scale industry and manufacturing businesses.	Establish a clear channel for engagement that makes this a critical priority and ensures that large businesses have an important voice for sustained growth.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UCOL • Mainstreet • Iwi • Heads Road Group • Town Centre Regeneration
	2.11 Focus on retail needs and growth within the town centre.	Understand what big chains and independent retailers require and ensure our town centre is flourishing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RESONA • UCOL • Positive Ageing Forum • Rural Community Board
	2.12 Develop our capabilities around food and innovation.	Unlock and enhance productive land use as well as our potential as a food hub and in medicinal agriculture.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waste Minimisation Working Party • GHD • PopUp Business School
	2.13 Support industry cluster, niche and 'centre of excellence' opportunities.	Be ready to work with industry when good opportunities present themselves, while also supporting innovation and expansion – for example, in meat processing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Te Wānanga • Massey University • Wanganui Rural Community Board
	2.14 Foster the development of creative industries, design innovation, performing arts, and visual and object arts.	Build on our strength and reputation as a dynamic arts community and look for additional opportunities (across business, tourism and education) to enhance this economic potential.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thrive Whanganui
	2.15 Undertake Growth Strategy work so that our growth is targeted and sustainable.	Be clear about the level and type of growth we need and want – as well as any infrastructure and capacity requirements.	

KEY OBJECTIVES



- building on what we have
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PILLARS	PRIORITIES We will:	PURPOSE Because we want to:	PARTNERS We will work with:
DESTINATION / MARKETING	2.16 Grow our brand recognition nationally and build our community pride.	Generate the right kind of interest in Whanganui and provide a platform for the district to jointly work from.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whanganui & Partners • Tourism Network Group • Individual tourism operators • Mainstreet • Chamber of Commerce • Te Manu Atatu • Conference venues • Event providers • Venture Taranaki • Visit Ruapehu • Central Economic Development Agency (CEDA) • Tourism New Zealand • MBIE
	2.17 Develop Whanganui's competitiveness as a centre for business events and conferences.	Grow our appeal as a place to live, visit, and do business through positive event and conference connections.	
	2.18 Grow Whanganui's attractiveness and identity through key drawcard events.	Cement our standing as a diversely interesting place, raise our profile and increase visitor numbers and spend.	
	2.19 Enhance existing visitor experiences and tourism infrastructure.	Support tourism operators to be 'trade ready' and leverage off existing local and regional attractions.	
	2.20 Develop partnerships and products that will strengthen our tourism offerings.	Build on existing partnerships and seek out new opportunities to sell the district - including through increased sector engagement and the development of commissionable products.	



PILLARS	PRIORITIES We will:	PURPOSE Because we want to:	PARTNERS We will work with:
EDUCATION	2.21 Promote Whanganui as an eco-education leader.	Re-establish our reputation for educational excellence and build on our cultural and environmental points of difference.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whanganui & Partners • UCOL • 100% SWEET • Whanganui District Employment and Training Trust
	2.22 Consider the potential to become a regional or national hub for specific training options.	Provide an immediate and practical solution to skills gaps and labour shortages – giving local youth employable skills and enhancing their opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Te Wānanga o Aotearoa • YMCA • Ag Challenge Ltd • Land Based Training • Training for You • Whanganui Learning Centre
	2.23 Develop an advanced aviation hub.	Expand our existing world-class pilot academy facilities and potentially become an internationally significant training organisation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trade and Commerce • Tupoho Whānau Trust • New Zealand International Commercial Pilot Academy • Massey University Business School • Ministry of Social Development

ATTRACT

KEY OBJECTIVES



- generating more interest in Whanganui
- delivering on what people and businesses need
- knowing our advantages and selling them confidently
- being truly business friendly

PILLARS	PRIORITIES We will:	PURPOSE Because we want to:	PARTNERS We will work with:
BUSINESS	3.1 Drive digital innovation and opportunity in partnership with the community.	Enhance our connectedness locally, nationally and internationally and grow our digital capacity – making it easy to do business here.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whanganui & Partners • Chamber of Commerce • Te Manu Atatu • Central Economic Development Agency (CEDA)
	3.2 Actively attract more businesses based on identified opportunities.	Fill gaps, grow our prosperity and strengthen the Whanganui business brand.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MBIE Business Mentor • Media Works • UCOL
	3.3 Know our availability, capacity, gaps and needs – including in relation to land.	Ensure that planning, infrastructure and economic development is well integrated so that we are ready for new opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mainstreet • Iwi • Heads Road Group • Town Centre Regeneration
	3.4 Ensure that business friendly approaches are used.	Make things as easy as possible for business expansion, retention and attraction.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RESONA • UCOL • WSP Opus • Tech-Week (MBIE)
	3.5 Attract new investors and buyers for our heritage buildings.	Safeguard our buildings and distinct heritage and ensure downtown vibrancy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whanganui Regional Heritage Trust • Business Brokers • Wanganui Rural Community Board

PILLARS	PRIORITIES We will:	PURPOSE Because we want to:	PARTNERS We will work with:
DESTINATION / MARKETING	3.6 Deliver reputation management initiatives.	Improve our image and enhance our appeal as a great place to come, stay and invest.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whanganui & Partners • Tourism Network Group • Individual tourism operators • Mainstreet • Chamber of Commerce • Te Manu Atatu • Iwi • Ngā Tāngata Tiaki • Investors • Venture Taranaki • Visit Ruapehu • Central Economic Development Agency (CEDA) • Tourism New Zealand • MBIE • Sport Whanganui • Sporting organisations and clubs • Town Centre Regeneration • Whanganui Regional Heritage Trust • Arts community • Public Art Steering Group • Cultural institutions
	3.7 Embrace the unique personhood status of the Whanganui River.	Shift our focus from a 'city on a river' to a 'river city'.	
	3.8 Create a Whanganui River ecotourism focus.	Leverage new strengths and create sustainable new industries.	
	3.9 Secure a four – five star hotel in Whanganui	Grow the potential for visitors to come to Whanganui and stay longer – with a focus on international visitors and our appeal as a place for conferences, events and facilities.	
	3.10 Promote the district broadly – both in terms of reach and appeal.	Generate more interest in Whanganui, attract more people and influence positive coverage, including selling our standing as a welcoming, inclusive and safe community. This will include finding different markets – and different ways to market.	
	3.11 Use heritage as a catalyst for identity-building and attraction initiatives.	Build on our cultural and historical depth in authentic and creative ways.	
	3.12 Capitalise and build on the value of our coastal location.	Make the most of our appeal as a coastal community – both in terms of visitor attraction and in our relationship to other coastal districts along the western seaboard.	
	3.13 Sell Whanganui's unique passion and identity as a sports and arts hub.	Recognise our unique points of difference – especially for our size – and identify opportunities around being a centre of excellence.	
	3.14 Realise the current economic benefits, as well as supporting the future potential, of our cultural institutions.		

ATTRACT

KEY OBJECTIVES



- generating more interest in Whanganui
- delivering on what people and businesses need
- knowing our advantages and selling them confidently
- being truly business friendly

PILLARS	PRIORITIES We will:	PURPOSE Because we want to:	PARTNERS We will work with:
EDUCATION	3.15 Sell Whanganui as a quality education destination.	Increase the number of international students and encourage the choice of Whanganui as a spin-off holiday destination.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Iwi • Ngā Tangata Tiaki • Investors • Venture Taranaki
	3.16 Foster Sister City relationships in the education sector.	Strengthen international connections and promote our education offerings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visit Ruapehu • Central Economic Development Agency (CEDA)
	3.17 Facilitate the development of new education ideas and offerings.	Position the district as an education centre of choice for local, regional, national and international students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tourism New Zealand • MBIE • Sport Whanganui • Sporting organisations and clubs • Town Centre Regeneration • Whanganui Regional Heritage Trust • Arts community • Public Art Steering Group • Cultural institutions



MONITORING

Please see the Council's Long-Term Plan and the Whanganui & Partners Strategic Plan for more information on the objectives and key results that these indicators are measuring. These indicators will be used alongside the measurements for each strategic goal in this document to track progress. We will also make sure to tell the story of our success and actively celebrate our milestone achievements.

BUSINESS

1. Number of employees in the Whanganui district
2. Number of businesses in the Whanganui district
3. Number of self-employed in the Whanganui district

DESTINATION / MARKETING

1. Tourism spend in Whanganui
2. Number of guest nights in Whanganui
3. Number of residents in Whanganui

EDUCATION

1. Number of students registered in tertiary training in Whanganui
2. Number of international students choosing Whanganui as a study destination
3. Funding (\$) being injected into specific education projects in Whanganui
4. Number of students transitioning from education to employment in Whanganui
NEETs rate (NEET stands for 'not in education, employment or training')

Implementation

A collaborative approach will be essential to the success of this strategy. This will involve the Council working closely with Whanganui & Partners as well as the key stakeholders identified in the action plan. There will be other opportunities for partnership too, and for inclusion of the wider community in achieving our district's economic development aims.

Following adoption of this strategy, annual implementation plans will be developed. These will align with the Whanganui & Partners strategic plan - as well as the Council's Letter of Expectation, annual planning processes and the Whanganui & Partners Statement of Intent. They will outline the specific actions to be delivered, as well as any indicative time frames and budget requirements.

Measurement

Measurement will happen by tracking progress against this strategy's indicators, the indicators in the Council's Long-Term Plan and in telling the story of our economic development successes through the Annual Report. The Leading Edge Strategy also has a specific focus on the economy, as well as this district's unique selling points in relation to the arts, recreation, diversity, culture, education and innovation. This means that progress against our Leading Edge aspirations will reap rewards for our business, destination / marketing and education goals too.

Review

Review will be ongoing as annual business planning requirements are developed for the Council and Whanganui & Partners. This will enable the Council to remain responsive to emerging and shifting priorities, with a comprehensive review undertaken after five years.

Any Council funding requirements across the life of this strategy will be considered through the Council's annual planning process.





WHANGANUI
DISTRICT COUNCIL
Te Kaunihera a Rohe o Whanganui

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY



06-349 0001



whanganui.govt.nz



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