



WHANGANUI
DISTRICT COUNCIL
Te Kaunihera a Rohe o Whanganui

HOUSING STRATEGY 2019



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Everyone in Whanganui
has the right housing
opportunities and a great
neighbourhood to live in

PURPOSE:

To support thriving communities,
with housing that meets the needs
of our people



OUR HOUSING STRATEGY – AT A GLANCE

VISION

Everyone in Whanganui has the right housing opportunities and a great neighbourhood to live in.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

WE WILL
DEMONSTRATE
LEADERSHIP AND
INFLUENCE

WE WILL
WORK IN
PARTNERSHIP

WE WILL
SUPPORT GOOD
HOUSING FOR
EVERYONE

WE WILL
FUTURE-PROOF
THE NEEDS OF
OUR PEOPLE AND
DISTRICT

SCOPE

This strategy is owned by Whanganui District Council but will require a collaborative effort to achieve its results. The Council will play an active leadership role by seeking out and promoting opportunities to increase the number and capacity of housing providers in Whanganui. The Council will also work in partnership with other housing stakeholders and agencies to **Collaborate, Advocate, Explore** and **Implement**. This will happen across the entire housing market, for all Whanganui residents.

GOALS



WHANGANUI'S
HOUSING
SYSTEMS AND
INFRASTRUCTURE
FUNCTION WELL



WHANGANUI'S
HOMES ARE GOOD
QUALITY AND
FUTURE-PROOFED



WHANGANUI'S
HOMES MEET THE
NEEDS OF OUR
PEOPLE



WHANGANUI'S
HOUSING NETWORK
SUPPORTS UNITED,
THRIVING AND
CONNECTED
COMMUNITIES

HOW WE WILL ACHIEVE THIS

COLLABORATE

Working in
partnership with
other housing
stakeholders in
Whanganui

ADVOCATE

Campaigning for
and promoting
improved ways of
doing things

EXPLORE

Investigating new
opportunities and
partnerships

IMPLEMENT

Delivering on our
action plan and
taking the lead on
Council initiatives

Action plans will set out who will do what - and when.
This is the community's strategy for housing in our district.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this strategy is to provide a vision and framework to address the housing issues in Whanganui.

Being a liveable district that works for everyone is a grounding priority in the Leading Edge Strategy, and having a home that is safe, warm, dry and affordable (within a great community) is a basic requirement to ensure that we can achieve this. If our residents are housed appropriately this provides an important foundation for people to live well and contribute positively - within their families, communities and wider district. As a result, improving housing outcomes is a critical factor in supporting the needs of our growing, and increasingly vibrant, district.

This strategy outlines the goals we will work towards and the ways we will achieve these.

Although this strategy is owned by the Council it will take a community effort to lead this change. This will see us Collaborate, Advocate, Explore and Implement in conjunction with other leaders and stakeholders in order to realise the best outcomes for our people, and our district.

It covers the housing continuum and uses the Housing Adequacy Framework - spanning from social housing through to affordable housing and the needs of the wider market. The housing continuum is a well-used tool by central and local government to demonstrate the differing needs of housing across a broad scale.



BACKGROUND

In the last several years Whanganui has seen growth in business and confidence and has been celebrated nationally as an easy place to live, with a culture of creativity and innovation and a beautiful natural landscape. As a result of people choosing to move to Whanganui, we have seen the largest population growth since 1996. This is estimated at around 700 new people per year.

With increased population, there is a growing need to rethink Whanganui's housing stock and availability - for example, to address the current shortage of rental properties. However, we also need a longer-term plan for housing and growth that meets the needs of everyone in our district. This is about having good quality, affordable housing across the board as well as the right systems in place to achieve this.

Whanganui has the highest level of home ownership in New Zealand but we have also been on the receiving end of national factors which have influenced a housing crisis. In the wake of this, Whanganui faces some particular challenges, such as being a lower socioeconomic community when compared to other regional centres while also dealing with rapid population growth over a short period of time.

In addition, central government has recently identified Whanganui as a resettlement area, with the first group of refugees arriving in March 2020.

In late 2018 Safer Whanganui produced a 'Housing Snapshot' to indicate where some of the housing issues lay, particularly for those on a low income. The snapshot revealed:

- An increase in people requiring social or emergency housing.
- An increase in the Housing New Zealand waiting list from 22 to 87 households in two years.
- A shortage of homes to rent and an increase in rental costs.
- Changing tenant legislation resulting in some landlords selling properties.

It is acknowledged that this housing shortage has had a particular impact on Māori. The Housing Snapshot can be obtained on the Council website.

WHAT IS SAFER WHANGANUI?

Safer Whanganui is a coalition of community agencies and groups working together to promote safety and reduce harm. This is managed by the Council and chaired by the Mayor.

CASE STUDY - HOUSING SNAPSHOT

"My client had to find accommodation, he applied for a 2-bedroom home along with fifty other people. He was unsuccessful so now lives in a sleep-out with whānau."

MENTAL HEALTH AGENCY

NATIONAL CONTEXT

The poor performance of New Zealand's housing market is well recognised. In Auckland, and other high growth centres, not enough houses are being built to meet the demand from strong population growth, investment preferences and other factors. The houses that are built have steadily increased in size, despite decreasing household sizes, and are often not close to well-functioning public transport and amenities. The mismatch between supply and demand has been a long-running trend over recent decades, leading to the urban development failure New Zealand faces today. In addition, much of New Zealand's existing housing stock is old, cold and damp, particularly in the private rental market. This is important because poor quality housing has ongoing impacts on physical and mental health and wellbeing. The under-supply of housing, driven by uncompetitive land markets, and high infrastructure, development and building costs, is contributing to high house prices relative to income. This has led to:

- Increasing rates of homelessness.
- Declining home ownership (particularly for Māori and Pasifika).
- Increasing rents and a shortage of rental properties.
- An increasing need for government housing assistance.



HOW DID WE GET HERE?

HOUSING NEW ZEALAND SELLING OFF HOUSES

Over the last several years Housing New Zealand stock in Whanganui has dropped from 720 to 559 due to a decrease in need. Former Housing New Zealand homes have been mostly sold to first-home buyers. With recent increased demand, Housing New Zealand is now building more homes in Whanganui. However, this can be a slow process. Traditionally, Housing New Zealand has planned for one or two-bedroom homes, based on the need at the time.

As part of the government's commitment to building new homes, Housing New Zealand have identified properties in Whanganui with large sections and older homes on them, with the view to demolishing the current home and building two or three in its place.

MEETING THE NEEDS OF VULNERABLE RESIDENTS

Anecdotal information from agencies which participated in the Housing Snapshot indicated that it was increasingly hard to get mental health clients into suitable accommodation. Others told us that it was hard to source housing for people with poor job histories, no referees and low incomes. With housing hard to come by, and vulnerable sections of the population in need, we need to increasingly watch out for those who may be taken advantage of.

Discussions with social agencies and the property sector during the development of this strategy indicated issues with inflated rents and properties in very poor condition. For some people in our community this may mean being charged rents of up to 75% of their income - potentially for substandard housing - leaving very little leftover for household and welfare essentials.

CASE STUDY - HOUSING SNAPSHOT

"Long-term tenants (6-7 years) get hit hard when the rental is sold and they have to find new accommodation and pay higher rent."

PRIVATE RENTAL PROVIDER

"We have some places where the rent for a bedsit leaves someone with only \$9.00 a week for food and living costs."

HOUSING REFERENCE GROUP

SHIFTING DEMOGRAPHICS

Aside from Whanganui's rapid population growth putting increased demand on our housing stock, we have also had a shift in the types of homes that people require. This means that not only is there a limited pool of homes available, but they are also not meeting the needs of our residents across the board.

This is the case for people of varying socioeconomic backgrounds and life stages. There needs to be greater flexibility and availability within our housing market - at all levels. This might include more central city apartment options for younger people or those who have retired and downsized; more family homes for our growing population; more higher end properties for those who have moved here from elsewhere; or more low maintenance smaller townhouses for a vibrant but aging population not ready for (or wanting) old-fashioned 'granny unit' living. This is particularly the case because older people are tending to stay in their own homes for longer.

WORKING WITH THE COMMUNITY

Extensive analysis and consultation has been undertaken to identify what objectives, outcomes and opportunities exist for housing in Whanganui. This has involved focus groups with a number of key stakeholders and agencies as well as research and investigation into best practice examples.

SAFER WHANGANUI HOUSING REFERENCE GROUP:

The Emergency and Social Housing Reference Group was established in 2017 in response to a growing need to understand 'how big' this issue was in Whanganui. This group:

- Provides leadership, information and direction.
- Contributes to initiatives.
- Advocates to central and local government.

In developing this strategy we spoke to:

- | | | |
|--------------------------|---|---|
| → Iwi | → Real Estate agents | → Planners |
| → Architects | → Engineers | → Housing stakeholders |
| → Developers | → Education sector | → Surveyors and valuers |
| → Builders | → Community groups | → Property managers (internally and externally) |
| → Health representatives | → Safer Whanganui Housing Reference Group | → Youth Committee |
| → Corrections | → Whanganui & Partners | |

Delivery of this strategy will rely on a collective approach - with the Council providing facilitation, leadership and support. After talking to our community partners it became clear that tackling this strategy was going to rely on four key delivery models for the Council.

1

COLLABORATE

The Council working in partnership with the community - or encouraging other agencies to partner together.

2

ADVOCATE

The Council speaking up and advocating for change locally, regionally and nationally.

3

EXPLORE

The Council looking for new opportunities - most often in conjunction with other stakeholders.

4

IMPLEMENT

The Council taking the lead and, in some cases, actioning the recommendations of this strategy (where appropriate).

WHAT DID OUR STAKEHOLDERS TELL US?

PARTNERSHIPS WILL BE KEY

It was recognised that it is going to take a collaborative effort to address these issues, with lots of stakeholders contributing where they can. This might include things such as cheap housing options, provision of short-term accommodation, freeing up land, applying for funding, taking a fresh look at underused buildings or making things easier for people who just want to 'get on and do it' in safe and sustainable ways. It was generally considered that the Council's role should be to lobby and facilitate - seeking partnership opportunities locally, as well as nationally, and calling on the government to tackle existing housing barriers.

'OUTSIDE THE BOX' APPROACHES ARE NEEDED

Many creative opportunities were suggested - with some requiring a shift away from more traditional housing frameworks and adoption of some 'social good' principles. Successful examples from other countries were raised, such as communal living arrangements, other agencies stepping in to build homes and joint ownership models.

IT HAS TO BE EASIER TO GET THINGS DONE

There were many examples of individuals and agencies wanting to get involved but not being able to get their projects off the ground. Although it was acknowledged that safety is key, there are inconsistencies within the regulations and some processes are not as enabling as they could be. This will require conversations nationally, a review of our own processes, and ongoing check-ins with our key stakeholders, to see what can be done to ensure all parties work together as effectively and efficiently as possible. For the Council this will continue to mean reducing red tape where we can, while also meeting our statutory requirements, and maintaining the wellbeing of our people.

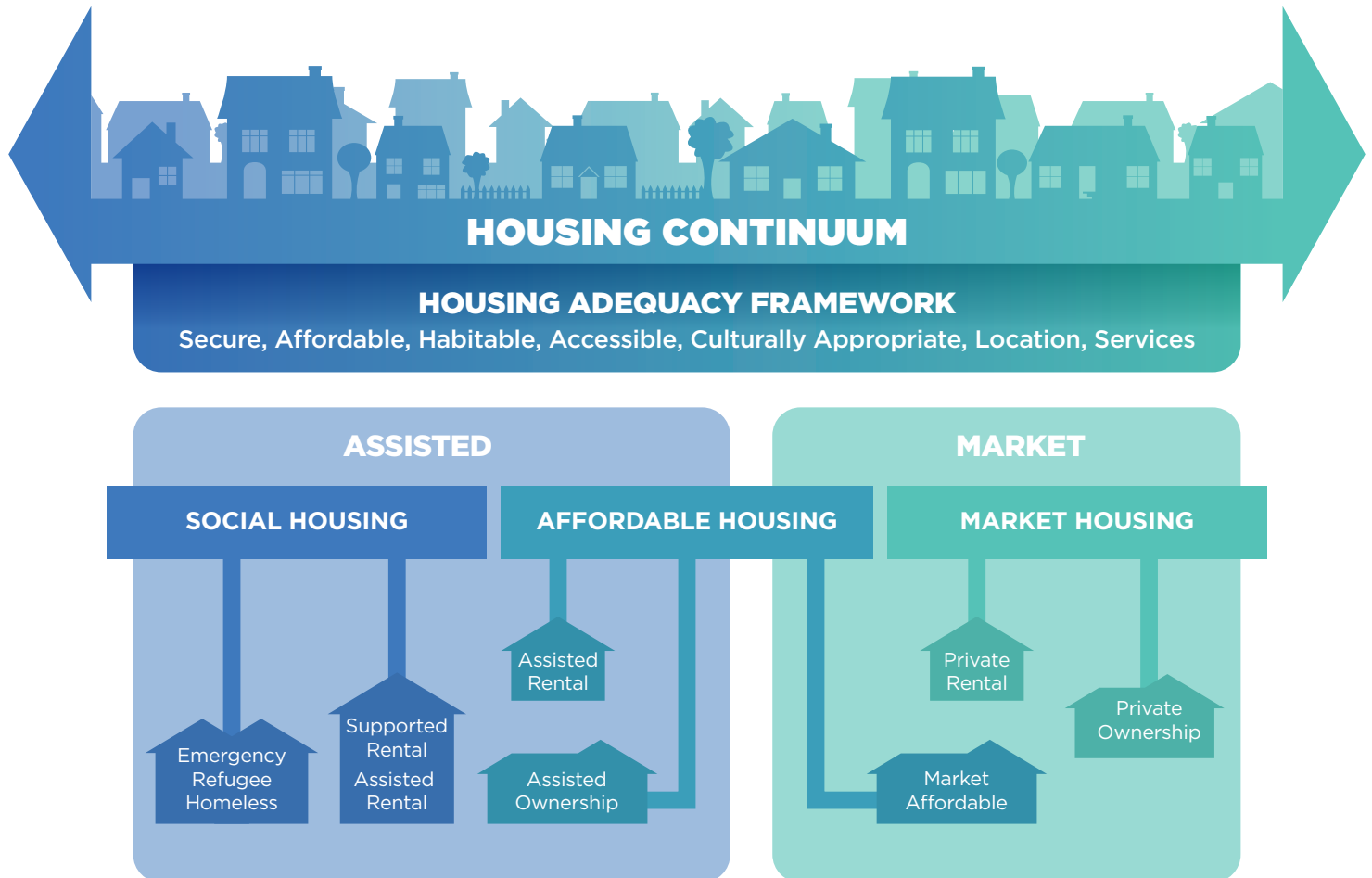


CASE STUDY – HOUSING SNAPSHOT

"Social housing will continue to be in demand as people reach retirement age without local family support or other options. Kaumatua flats are a good example of what can be done to include older people in a wider socialised support setting."

MENTAL HEALTH AGENCY

THE HOUSING CONTINUUM



Improving housing outcomes (such as accessibility and affordability) across the housing continuum is essential for our vision to be achieved. As a result, we have focused our attention on the key issues and gaps demonstrated across all elements of the continuum.

Emergency housing:

Short-term temporary accommodation for individuals and families in urgent need of accommodation. Includes transitional housing, and generally is a place to stay while searching for longer-term accommodation.

Social housing:

Public rental housing provided for people in housing need for as long as their need exists. In most instances rent is subsidised.

Assisted rental:

Housing schemes that support targeted groups to access and afford private market rentals.

Private rental:

Rentals on the private market, regulated by supply and demand.

Assisted ownership:

Schemes that support individuals into home ownership through financial support and / or capped purchase prices.

Private ownership:

Properties purchased in the private market.

NOTE: The housing continuum is a well-used tool by central and local government to demonstrate the differing needs of housing across a broad scale.

PRINCIPLES – WHAT UNDERPINS THIS STRATEGY?



WE WILL DEMONSTRATE **LEADERSHIP AND INFLUENCE**

The Council needs to play a key role in how we address housing in our community. There are many ways we can do this, including making changes to our District Plan to free up space for housing development; building on our business-friendly commitments; making sure that people understand our processes and the ways in which we can help – and looking at different approaches to housing. We will support a coordinated approach across the housing and social services sectors to achieve the right results.

WE WILL WORK IN **PARTNERSHIP**

We already work in partnership with a number of organisations locally who are involved in housing – from Iwi to housing developers, social and emergency housing providers, and central government. We will develop our existing partnerships and bring more people and agencies into our planning.



WE WILL SUPPORT **GOOD HOUSING FOR EVERYONE**

Having somewhere to live is important to everyone. We want to make sure there is adequate social housing provided by a range of community services, as well as through the Council's pensioner housing units. We also want to make sure people who want to build have confidence they can work with the Council to invest in our district. Having more options at the higher end of the housing market may free up existing housing stock as homes for those in need. Every Whanganui resident should have a safe home to live in.

WE WILL **FUTURE-PROOF THE NEEDS OF OUR PEOPLE AND DISTRICT**

While we may be dealing with a problem now due to increased population and a national housing crisis, we also want to make sure we are planning for Whanganui's shifting make-up. This will include anticipating and being prepared for further population gains, the changing needs of different age groups and a growing diversity of cultures – as well as addressing physical changes to our district's landscape as a result of climate change.

STRATEGIC RELATIONSHIPS

This strategy is closely linked to our Leading Edge commitments as well as the Safer Whanganui Strategic Plan. There is also a clear relationship between this document and our district's Economic Development Strategy – for example, its focus on a growth strategy for well planned and sustainable development. The 30-Year Infrastructure Strategy is relevant too due to its long-range planning for growth and its

consideration of climate change impacts. In addition, the Council has a policy which governs pensioner housing provision.

Central government policies and initiatives also strongly influence what can (and cannot) be achieved by the Council. We will identify and create opportunities for strategic alignment and partnerships here to better meet the needs of our district. This will include working with neighbouring local authorities where appropriate.

HOUSING STRATEGY GOALS

This strategy is focused on four key outcome areas.



How we develop our housing

1 WHANGANUI'S HOUSING SYSTEMS AND INFRASTRUCTURE FUNCTION WELL

This means:

- Council processes are as enabling as possible.
- Land use planning and management of growth is proactive.
- Homes are safe and well built.
- Regulations are efficient, effective and clearly understood.
- Partnerships support sustainable development.
- Council decisions reflect the housing need in Whanganui.



What our homes are like

2 WHANGANUI'S HOMES ARE GOOD QUALITY AND FUTURE-PROOFED

This means:

- Homes are warm, dry and energy efficient.
- There are more homes available.
- Housing and development options reflect our changing demographics.
- Development is resilient and responsive to the impact of climate change and natural disasters.



What housing opportunity is provided

3 WHANGANUI'S HOMES MEET THE NEEDS OF OUR PEOPLE

This means:

- More people in Whanganui can access a home.
- More people in Whanganui can sustain a home.
- There are a broad range of housing options across the housing continuum.



How our communities live

4 WHANGANUI'S HOUSING NETWORK SUPPORTS UNITED, THRIVING AND CONNECTED COMMUNITIES

This means:

- Housing supports Our community's well-being - particularly for the most vulnerable - including those living with a disability.
- Housing supports safer and more resilient communities.
- Housing supports people to connect with others.
- Our neighbourhoods take into account placemaking and Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles.

HOUSING STRATEGY ACTIONS





1. WHANGANUI'S HOUSING SYSTEMS AND INFRASTRUCTURE FUNCTION WELL

Our housing system is under pressure, and as demand continues to increase, we need to work together to make sure our processes are enabling, and growth is well planned for.

What we're doing to develop housing

SOCIAL HOUSING

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

MARKET HOUSING

PLANNING FOR SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

- 1.1 Develop a residential growth strategy to ensure Whanganui's growth needs can be sustainably met.
- 1.2 Increase housing land supply by completing the Springvale Structure Plan rezoning process.
- 1.3 Increase housing land supply by rezoning land around the Castlecliff Golf Club.
- 1.4 Investigate the suitability of northwest Springvale for residential growth.
- 1.5 Promote urban consolidation and infill housing.
- 1.6 Investigate the feasibility of infrastructure upgrades in conjunction with Horizons Regional Council to allow for residential expansion and intensification in Whanganui East.

SUPPORTING SOCIAL HOUSING OPTIONS

- 1.7 Establish a working group to investigate the development of a Strategic Housing Investment Plan.

FREEING UP SUITABLE LAND FOR DEVELOPMENT

- 1.8 Investigate under-utilised land for housing development.
- 1.9 Continue to work with central government to facilitate intensification of under-utilised social housing land.

MAKING THINGS EASIER

- 1.10 Investigate rates remission options - including for first-home builders and for residential conversion of town centre buildings.
- 1.11 Streamline the Council's consenting process for key development sites.
- 1.12 Advocate to central government for legislative changes that will make building and development easier (for example, changes to earthquake legislation and reform of the Resource Management Act and building regulations).
- 1.13 Continue with initiatives to make applying for consent easier and more efficient - and encourage more people to take advantage of these options.

"The building code is quite restrictive - needs to be modernised - Council can advocate".



2. WHANGANUI'S HOMES ARE GOOD QUALITY AND FUTURE-PROOFED

Good quality housing is an essential element for ensuring that our community can live well and contribute positively. This planning has to match the demands of our people, land and environment now, as well as into the future.

What we're doing to make sure we have the right housing stock

SOCIAL HOUSING

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

MARKET HOUSING

ENCOURAGING CONSISTENT QUALITY STANDARDS

- 2.1 Support the development of a 'Whanganui Housing Standard' - a voluntary scheme for in-home assessment of the health and safety aspects of a property (building on the roll-out of the voluntary Rental Warrant of Fitness).
- 2.2 Promote and monitor universal design and sustainability principles.

FINDING WORKABLE SAFETY SOLUTIONS

- 2.3 Respond effectively and innovatively to earthquake-prone building issues - including looking for new conversion opportunities.
- 2.4 Develop an earthquake-prone buildings support guide to help building owners navigate the regulations and ensure compliance.

PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE

- 2.5 Ensure that the potential impacts of climate change inform our planning (e.g. in line with the Infrastructure Strategy and Climate Change Strategy).
- 2.6 Enable growth of our housing stock through infrastructure investment and proactive planning (e.g. through the Infrastructure Strategy, Asset Management Plans and Long Term Plan).

KEEPING OUR HOMES WARM AND DRY

- 2.7 Encourage new, and publicise the availability of existing, energy efficiency and insulation programmes.
- 2.8 Promote low cost, practical solutions to warming homes.

"Properties should be fair and reasonable for the price and condition".



3. WHANGANUI'S HOMES MEET THE NEEDS OF OUR PEOPLE

One size does not fit all when it comes to housing. We have to work together to make sure that we understand and respond well to the needs of the different segments of our district - whatever their background, and wherever they are on the housing ladder.

What we're doing to provide a variety of housing opportunities

SOCIAL HOUSING

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

MARKET HOUSING

PROACTIVELY LOOKING FOR PARTNERSHIPS

- 3.1 Seek partnerships with government departments and other agencies at both a national and local level to address housing issues in our district.
- 3.2 Work with iwi on housing opportunities.
- 3.3 Appoint an elected member 'Housing Strategy champion' to support achievement of the action plan.
- 3.4 Work with a wide array of groups on housing opportunities – including the private sector, NGOs and other social and community agencies.

DEVISING CREATIVE SOLUTIONS

- 3.5 Liaise with housing stakeholders on innovative approaches to housing supply and development.
- 3.6 Work collaboratively with developers to facilitate quality infill housing solutions that meet the needs of the community.
- 3.7 Work with the Ministry for Culture and Heritage on establishing a coordinator role to broker upgrade outcomes for town centre building owners.
- 3.8 Work with others, including developers, to facilitate residential conversion of under-utilised town centre buildings.

PUTTING MORE HOMES WITHIN REACH OF MORE PEOPLE

- 3.9 Encourage our partners to investigate the provision of more accessible housing models (e.g. pre-fabricated homes).
- 3.10 Advocate for the exploration and development of a range of new ownership options for modest income households, such as assisted home ownership.
- 3.11 Work with, and advocate to, central government and community agencies to deliver an increased supply of social and affordable housing.

"We need to advocate for partnerships at the central government level".



4. WHANGANUI'S HOUSING NETWORK SUPPORTS UNITED, THRIVING AND CONNECTED COMMUNITIES

You told us through our Leading Edge Strategy consultation that feeling a sense of belonging to a diverse and vibrant community is important. Housing that works for everyone within safe and well-connected neighbourhoods builds social inclusion and supports the aspirations we share for our district.

What we're doing to encourage safe, vibrant and resilient communities

SOCIAL HOUSING

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

MARKET HOUSING

RESPONDING TO AN AGEING POPULATION

- 4.1 Establish Whanganui as an age friendly district - with the right social and physical infrastructure in place.

SUPPORTING BETTER OUTCOMES FOR VULNERABLE RESIDENTS

- 4.2 Support investigations into, and solutions for, homelessness and transience.
- 4.3 Support the capacity and capability of community housing providers to more easily undertake housing developments or initiatives, especially for vulnerable groups (including people with disabilities).

FOCUSING ON WELL-BEING

- 4.4 Proceed with the development of a Youth Plan to ensure that the needs of young people are considered in our planning.
- 4.5 Encourage and, where appropriate, deliver programmes that aim to increase wellbeing and resilience through empowerment, connectedness and cohesion.
- 4.6 Continue with suburban revitalisation initiatives through the Leading Edge Strategy.

FACILITATING BETTER URBAN DESIGN

- 4.7 Formalise adherence to the principles of Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) in Council's planning.
- 4.8 Commit to the creation of quality urban design as a signatory to the urban design protocol.
- 4.9 Continue with Town Centre Regeneration initiatives.
- 4.10 Develop an Urban Design Strategy to enhance our streetscapes and urban reserves.

"It's not just about making more sections available, it's about making a close, safe community".

Implementation

A collaborative approach will be essential to the success of this strategy. This will involve the Council partnering with the community on delivery of the actions identified. Once the strategy is finalised a detailed action plan will be developed with our community partners.

If funding is required this will be sought in various ways - including from external sources and through partnership opportunities. Any Council funding commitments across the life of this strategy will be considered through the annual planning process.

Monitoring and review

Measurement will happen by tracking progress against this strategy's indicators and in telling the story of our journey and success through the Annual Report. These indicators will be developed alongside the strategy's action plan but will likely include things such as increases in satisfaction with our standard of living and positive changes in healthy homes data. Monitoring performance in relation to other key strategic documents will also help our community to see where we have done well and if there are areas that need additional support. As delivery of this strategy will be achieved in partnership with the community, we will weave the housing successes of our stakeholders and the wider district into our monitoring.

This strategy was adopted by the Council in July 2019. It is due for review in 2022.





WHANGANUI
DISTRICT COUNCIL
Te Kaunihera a Rohe o Whanganui

HOUSING STRATEGY 2019



06-349 0001



whanganui.govt.nz



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