

Amenity values

Each of the district councils in the region works to ensure Taranaki residents and visitors enjoy a pleasant and enjoyable natural and built environment. Feedback from the public continues to be positive.

Amenity values are those natural and physical qualities and characteristics that contribute to people's appreciation and enjoyment of the environment. Taranaki residents and visitors enjoy very high levels of amenity values, characterised by the region's quiet, pleasant environment and the relative absence of noise, odours and dust. Taranaki has maintained an uncluttered, rural feel with well maintained and accessible parks, reserves and walkways; outstanding landscape features; and community and recreational facilities.

Regional values

People have different ideas about what constitutes a pleasant and enjoyable environment, which makes the management of amenity values challenging. A 2008 survey of Taranaki residents helped to identify the region's amenity values by asking what residents liked and disliked about where they live.



In 2008, residents of Taranaki identified the factors and values that they liked or disliked about where they live.

The survey revealed that 32% of New Plymouth residents most liked the close proximity to sea and beaches. In comparison, 27% of Stratford residents and 28% of South Taranaki residents liked the quiet, peaceful and relaxing environment, and lack of overcrowding. In all districts, one of the top three aspects residents liked most about where they live was the proximity to Mount Taranaki.

Almost a third of residents in each district said there was nothing they disliked about where they live. Aside from the weather and climate, most disliked in the New Plymouth district were traffic issues and the state of roads and footpaths (8% disliked these aspects the most). In the Stratford district (8%) and the South Taranaki district (10%) residents most disliked the shopping environment (lack of shops and/or late closing hours).

Community feedback

To assess community satisfaction with community services in their districts, the New Plymouth District Council and the South Taranaki District Council commission the National Research Bureau (NRB) to undertake community surveys. The Stratford District Council conducts its own research on community satisfaction in the Stratford district.

New Plymouth district

The New Plymouth district community has identified the spacious, low-density character of rural areas, pleasant urban environments and the natural character of the coast as having high amenity value in the New Plymouth district. The community also identifies vegetation and trees; landscapes, parks and reserves, recreational areas; and walkways and other open spaces as important, alongside traffic and pedestrian issues, and public views. Particular adverse effects such as light overspill, glare, noise and traffic are controlled to ensure the appropriate amenity values in the district are maintained.

The 2014 National Research Bureau survey showed residents of the New Plymouth district were highly satisfied with community services in the district, with 90% of respondents very/fairly satisfied that the quality of the district's living environment is being maintained (both natural and human environment).

'Amenity values ... contribute to people's appreciation and enjoyment of the environment.'

A large proportion—96%—was very/fairly satisfied with the quality of parks and reserves, including the Coastal Walkway and Pukekura Park, with 95% very/fairly satisfied with access to the natural environment, including the rivers, lakes, mountain and coast.

When asked about the library and museum at Puke Ariki, 80% and 85% of people respectively were very/fairly satisfied with these services. Within the district, 87% were very/fairly satisfied with the quality of entertainment, cultural and sporting events and 93% were very/fairly satisfied with the quality of venues for entertainment, cultural and sporting events.

Maintenance and presentation of urban landscapes and streets, particularly flowerbeds and displays, rated well, with 95% of people very/fairly satisfied. A total of 83% of respondents were also very/fairly satisfied with the ability to drive around the district quickly, easily and safely. Eighty-four per cent were satisfied with the quality of roads overall.

The number of notable trees protected in the *New Plymouth District Plan* exceeds 1,750. Many of these trees are good examples of their type, or have visual, landscape, heritage or botanical value that adds to the amenity values of the district.

The New Plymouth district has been the recipient of a number of high-profile awards, including the 'Best and most liveable community in the world' (population 20,001–75,000) at the 2008 International Awards for Liveable Communities. In recent times the district has also received the following accolades:

- 2014 Pukekura Park Green Flag Award: an international award that recognises well-managed, high-quality green spaces and good-quality public parks that are managed in environmentally sustainable ways.
- 2014 TSB Bank Festival of Lights was a finalist in the Community Event of the Year category.
- 2014 Bike Wise's 'NZ's Favourite Places to Cycle' competition: Coastal Walkway was voted third.
- 2012 Living Streets Aotearoa's Best Walking Facility Award for the Coastal Walkway extension to Bell Block, including Te Rewa Rewa Bridge.
- 2011 New Zealand Recreation Association's Outstanding Project Award to the Coastal Walkway extension.

2011 Roading NZ Excellence Awards Supreme Award and Minor Road Project category for the extension of the Coastal Walkway to Bell Block (comprising the pathway and Te Rewa Rewa Bridge).

The New Plymouth district has also received a range of awards recognising the outstanding aesthetics and engineering of Te Rewa Rewa Bridge.



Te Rewa Rewa Bridge was built over the Waiwhakaiho River in New Plymouth in 2010 and has received a number of awards.

Stratford district

The residential areas within Stratford district have a high standard of amenity based on spaciousness and access to daylight and sunlight, private outdoor space and off-street parking. The community also values maintaining a 'country feel' for rural/residential areas, with the density of development a significant contributor to amenity satisfaction in a predominantly rural district. The rural/residential areas of the district are also characterised by a low density of development, which contributes to a generally open landscape and an important buffer between residential and rural areas. Within Stratford's commercial centre, the visual and physical links created by the pedestrian areas are an important amenity feature.



Children make their way to school in a 'safe and healthy' community environment.

SDC conducts an annual survey to gauge the satisfaction of ratepayers and residents with community services and asset management. In the 2013/2014 year, residents were asked if they felt Stratford was an attractive, safe and healthy place to live. Overall, the response was positive—93% of respondents were satisfied with the attractiveness of the district, and 97% felt the district was both a safe and healthy place to live. Residents were also asked to rate the amenities in the district from 1=poor to 10=excellent. Parks in the district received a rating of 7.4 out of 10, roads 6.3 out of 10 and footpaths 6 out of 10.

There are 484 notable trees protected in the *Stratford District Plan*, unchanged since 2009. Management plans for notable trees are integrated with consent conditions. This management plan prompts landowners to annually assess the amenity and safety of the trees. Trees that are removed are replaced with the same species.

South Taranaki district

The *South Taranaki District Plan* notes that the South Taranaki community places considerable value on the character and quality of the residential and recreational environments in the district. The community perceives a number of factors as important for the enhancement of amenity values. These include reserves, protection of natural values, ecology, landscapes and the margins of lakes and rivers. Other important amenity issues in the district are the control of the adverse effects of signs and the control of noise emissions and industrial development which reflect the amenity values of surrounding environments.


A 2014 survey of residents in the South Taranaki district showed that 94% were satisfied with the appearance and maintenance of the district's parks and reserves; 77% were satisfied with local roads and 73% were satisfied with footpaths in the district. Overall results of the 2014 survey show most respondents are fairly or very satisfied with council services in the district.

There are 72 notable trees protected in the *South Taranaki District Plan*. Similar numbers of native and introduced species are identified and selected for protection on the basis of their condition (health), amenity (community benefit) and notability (distinction).



King Edward Park in Hāwera.

Find out more

 [New Plymouth District Council community survey tinyurl.com/TRC7g](https://www.tinyurl.com/TRC7g)
[South Taranaki District Council community survey tinyurl.com/TRC7j](https://www.tinyurl.com/TRC7j)
[Stratford District Council community survey tinyurl.com/TRC7i](https://www.tinyurl.com/TRC7i)

Len Lye gives New Plymouth a new gleam

Pioneer filmmaker and kinetic artist Len Lye was a colourful and unorthodox personality who couldn't be pigeonholed. Visually and architecturally, the new Len Lye Centre in New Plymouth is set to live up to the reputation.

Construction began in 2013, after years of community discussion and argument over funding, and the centre is due to open in July 2015. Even during construction, the futuristic sculptural building in gleaming stainless steel has been attracting much attention and comment.

It's a safe bet that Christchurch-born Lye would be delighted. According to Wikipedia, he was a maverick, never fitting any of the usual art historical labels. He is also remembered for his offbeat personality, amazing clothes and highly unusual lecturing style (he taught at New York University for three years).

Although he did not become a household name while alive, his work is familiar to many filmmakers and kinetic sculptors. He was something of an 'artist's artist', and his innovations have had an international influence. In 1977, he returned to his homeland to oversee the first New Zealand exhibition of his work at the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery in New Plymouth. Shortly before his death in 1980, he and his supporters established the Len Lye Foundation, to which he gave his work. The gallery is the current repository for much of this collection, employing a full-time curator to ensure its preservation and appropriate exhibition.

The new Len Lye Centre will be New Zealand's first art museum dedicated to a single artist, and

is set to be an iconic New Plymouth attraction. It will display some of the world's most spectacular pieces of kinetic art, offering extraordinary experiences with art that provoke new ideas and enrich the imagination. It will be a unique point of difference for New Plymouth and Taranaki and a catalyst for further development of the surrounding precinct. It will also bolster the regional economy—an independent economic assessment estimates that visitors to the Centre will spend up to \$9.5 million a year in Taranaki.

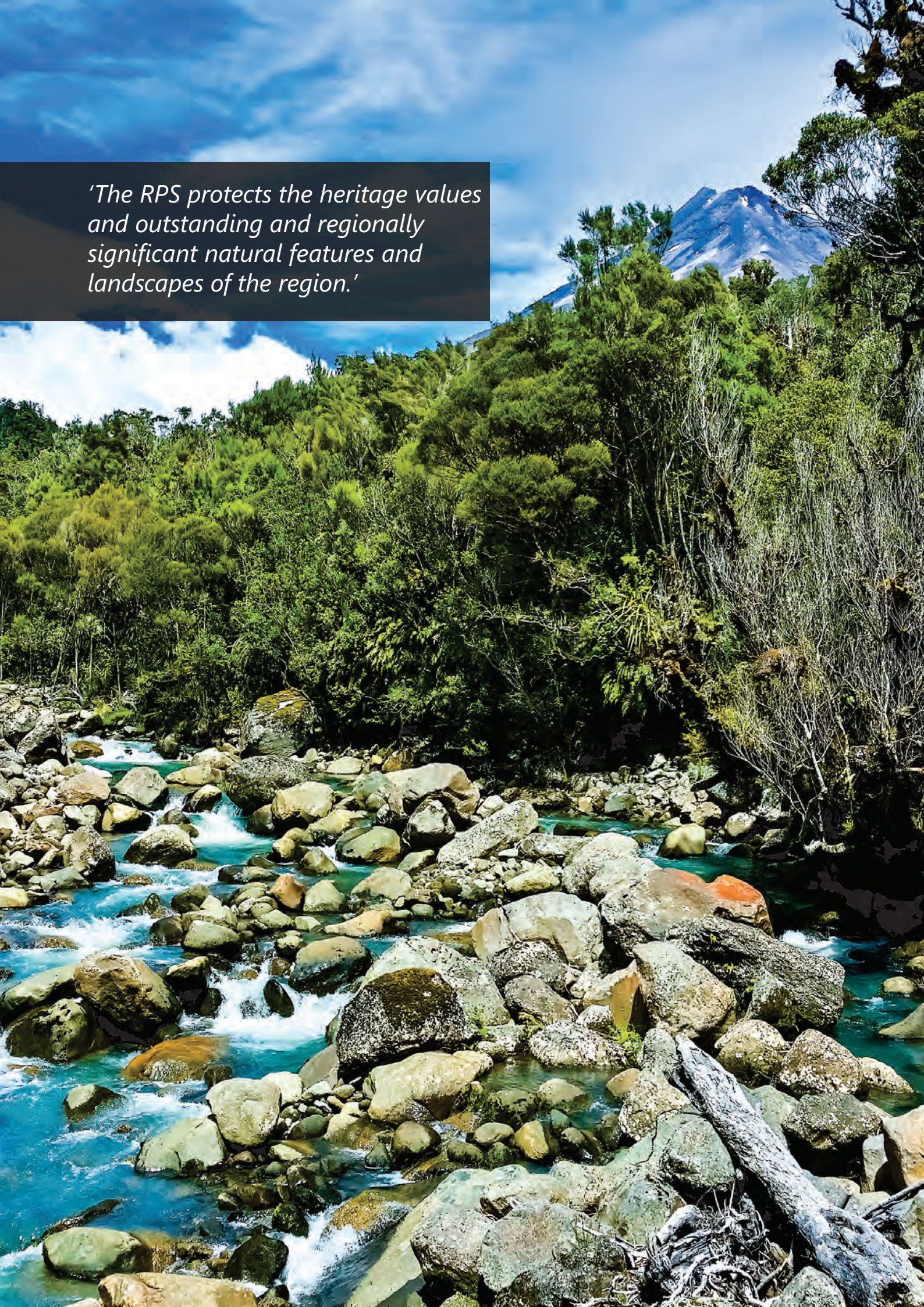
Offering a focal point for creative and engineering excellence, the Len Lye Centre supports NPDC's strategic intent to offer 'an attractive living environment that compares favourably nationally and internationally' and will help Taranaki take even more advantage of a major growth in art and museum tourism. For example, 48,000 tourists visited art galleries and museums in Taranaki in 2010, compared with 10,000 in 2000.

New Plymouth Mayor Andrew Judd has told the *Taranaki Daily News* he believes that the double attraction of the Govett-Brewster ("a cornerstone of contemporary art globally") and the Len Lye Centre will make New Plymouth "a key destination in the arts landscape".



'The new Len Lye Centre is set to be an iconic New Plymouth attraction.'

'The RPS protects the heritage values and outstanding and regionally significant natural features and landscapes of the region.'



Our responses

Regional policies and plans

The *Regional Policy Statement for Taranaki* (RPS) contains objectives, policies and methods to manage historic heritage, significant landscapes and amenity values in the region—namely to protect the heritage values and outstanding and regionally significant natural features and landscapes of the region. The RPS also has objectives to maintain and enhance the amenity values of the Taranaki environment.

The Council's regional plans and resource consent processes also recognise and provide for landscape protection and for protection of heritage and amenity values in relation to the Council's functions and responsibilities. These plans include the *Regional Fresh Water Plan for Taranaki*, the *Regional Coastal Plan for Taranaki* and *Regional Air Quality Plan* (the *Regional Fresh Water Plan* and the *Regional Coastal Plan* are both currently under review).

District policies and plans

The New Plymouth, Stratford and South Taranaki district councils are responsible for managing land use. They play an important role in the protection of Taranaki's heritage, natural features and landscape, and amenity values through provisions in district plans and related land-use and subdivision consents.

The district councils also provide information, and are engaged in environmental education initiatives to raise awareness of these issues.

New Plymouth District Council

The *New Plymouth District Plan* (currently under review) contains rules relating to structures, earthworks, outdoor storage of materials, vegetation and subdivision of land to provide for the protection of historic heritage landscape, and amenity values. The plan also provides criteria for, or explanation of, the selection of Category A heritage buildings and items, wāhi tapu and archaeological sites in the region. It also outlines the selection of outstanding and regionally significant landscapes and notable trees in the district.

The New Plymouth District Council considers rates relief for historic heritage protection initiatives. NPDC is also currently reviewing wāhi tapu and archaeological sites in the district to ensure information is accurate. In the current plan review, sites not already in the *New Plymouth District Plan* are also being considered for inclusion.

A coastal policy area has been defined to protect the natural character and amenity values of the coast. Other non-statutory provisions include education, provision of information and advice, and advocacy.

In relation to broad amenity values, the New Plymouth District Council has identified different areas within their plan and established standards for each area (such as residential, industrial, open space). These standards specify requirements in relation to building height and coverage, light and noise, signage, landscaping, hours of operation, traffic generation and parking.



In early 2014, work commenced on the Len Lye Centre. Facilities such as this contribute to the amenities enjoyed by the people of Taranaki and visitors alike, and promote the economic and social well-being of the community.

NPDC has also developed a number of strategies relating to community development and amenity values:

The draft *Open Space, Sport and Recreation Strategy* has six goals for open spaces, including locating spaces appropriately. The overall goal is to promote an active and healthy community, ensuring NPDC provides usable, sustainably managed spaces, well connected to other amenities and services. The draft strategy has been released for consultation.

'NPDC has developed a number of strategies relating to community development and amenity values.'

In 2013, NPDC prepared the Central Area Urban Design Framework, a 30-year shared vision for New Plymouth's central area. The Framework draws on public feedback on improvements residents want in the city's central area gathered in 2012 and 2013. The Framework will give greater confidence to landowners, developers and NPDC in decision-making which should, in turn, lead to good urban design outcomes, including increased vibrancy, efficiency and accessibility in the central area.

To deliver on the New Plymouth District Mayor's Shaping our Future Together vision for New Plymouth, the NPDC is developing a long-term 'big picture' 30-year strategic plan, the *Shaping our Future Together Blueprint*. NPDC will use the *Blueprint* as a starting point for reviewing the NPDC District Plan, to help determine where and how New Plymouth district develops and grows. The *Blueprint* will be a key strategic tool in delivering more integrated social, economic and environmental outcomes for the community.

Let's Go—New Plymouth District Council

In June 2010, the New Plymouth and Hastings district councils were recipients of a combined \$7 million (over two years) to develop walking and cycling initiatives to encourage people out of their cars and onto the city's shared pathways and streetscapes. NPDC branded their project 'Let's Go'. Funding has been used to run events, and for travel planning, training programmes and infrastructure projects. Some significant recent initiatives are:

- Brougham Street Shared Space—various design concepts and materials were used to create an environment where pedestrians and motorists share the space equally.
- Pendarves Street upgrade—a resident-led street makeover designating the area a 'people first' street.
- Te Hēnui Bridges—two bridges have been constructed to make walking and cycling easier. Previously, users had to negotiate steps and a narrow pathway.
- 30 kph speed zone—speed lowered from 50 kph to 30 kph in certain streets in the New Plymouth CBD to encourage pedestrians and motorists to better share the space.



Pedestrians and motorists share the Brougham Street space equally.

Stratford District Council

The *Stratford District Plan* controls adverse effects on landscape, heritage and amenity values through rules, and standards resource consent conditions relating to structures, excavation, filling planting, noise, vegetation clearance, and lighting and glare close to important heritage or amenity sites. The Plan is currently under review.

In recognition of what is required to maintain heritage features, some owners of heritage buildings receive rate remissions for land with heritage structures. This includes the Whangamōmona Hotel, the Douglas School, the Douglas Boarding House, and the McCluggage Brothers General Store in Whangamōmona.



The Whangamōmona Hotel, the second hotel on the site, was built in 1911.

'Some owners of heritage buildings receive rate remissions for land with heritage structures.'

SDC promotes awareness of historic heritage, encouraging landowners and developers to take into account historic heritage, significant landscapes, and amenity values in the planning and design phases of proposals. SDC also maintains public parks and spaces such as King Edward Park and the Percy Thomson Arboretum on Cloten Road.



King Edward Park in Stratford.



Sandy Bay, near Opunake, is one example of the rich beauty of the Taranaki landscape.

South Taranaki District Council

The *South Taranaki District Plan*, currently under review, includes a schedule of heritage items (buildings, objects and areas and notable trees) for protection and a range of regulatory and non-regulatory methods to protect the district's heritage resources. These include district plan rules, education and information, rates relief and the ability to waive fees for heritage order requirements that may have community benefit.

STDC has adopted a number of methods for maintaining and enhancing amenity values. This includes the use of district plan performance standards and requirements for landscaping, provision of yards and controls on noise, lighting and signage. The district plan also identifies a defined pedestrian area with standards that encourage the development and retention of retail and business activities. The South Taranaki coastline and Lake Rotorangi have been identified as areas where significant amenity values exist, and protection of these areas has been addressed in the plan.

'STDC has adopted a number of methods for maintaining and enhancing amenity values.'

- ▷ Over the past five years the South Taranaki District Council and Community Boards have approved \$70,000 for the protection of the district's heritage.
- ▷ STDC is also investigating reasonable incentives to offer the owners of earthquake-prone buildings that could ease some of the pressure on heritage and amenity values in South Taranaki towns.
- ▷ STDC is currently working on redeveloping the Hāwera town centre.
- ▷ To ensure the retention of coastal dune areas in the district, in the *South Taranaki District Plan* review (2015) intends to address the issue of landfarming affecting coastal dune systems. As part of this plan review STDC is likely to include a landscape assessment and initiate some form of regulation of control over earthworks in coastal areas.

Facing the facts and fixing the CBD

What do you do if your CBD is dying? In the case of Hāwera, the South Taranaki District Council has firmly faced the facts and figured out what to do about them.

In late 2014, the South Taranaki District Council adopted the *Hāwera Town Centre Revitalisation Strategy*, following a year of work that saw the public, the business community and planning experts offering opinions, input and expertise.

"We know that the current town centre is just not meeting the needs of retailers or residents," says project manager John McKenzie. "It was essentially developed over 100 years ago and our community's social and retail needs have changed considerably over that time.

"We have seen this with some retailers moving out of the town centre, which has left a number of vacant buildings. This has been exacerbated by the growing trend in online retail and now we also have earthquake-prone buildings impacting on the commercial sector," he says.

"However, we aren't alone. These are issues facing town centres all around New Zealand and we are no exception. The great news is we have the opportunity to do something about it, and we are taking that opportunity."

Some of the key proposals include:

- ✓ development of a new library/cultural/civic centre and green space in the CBD
- ✓ improved pedestrian access and car parking facilities
- ✓ lighting improvements that will highlight heritage buildings
- ✓ redevelopment of the existing town square for retail and office development
- ✓ measures to encourage people to visit the town centre
- ✓ guidance for heritage preservation
- ✓ improved district plan provisions to guide new development
- ✓ better support and information for those planning events and activities in the CBD.

Mayor Ross Dunlop says implementing the strategy will benefit the whole district and will also be a model for future upgrades in smaller communities.

"Significant community developments such as this town centre development not only benefit the local community, adding significant amenity value, but they also provide real potential to attract new residents, businesses and visitors to South Taranaki," he says.

An artist's impression of a possible future Hāwera town centre.



Working with others

The Department of Conservation (DOC) plays an important role in managing landscape, historic heritage and amenity values through its management of national parks and other conservation land in Taranaki. Under a number of acts, the Department of Conservation manages 146,973 hectares of public conservation land in Taranaki—21% of the total land area of the region. Management plans are prepared for these areas and activities within them controlled to manage natural and historic resources for conservation purposes or for purposes consistent with the *National Parks Act* or the *Reserves Act*.

Established under the *Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014*, Heritage New Zealand has a number of functions in the area of historic heritage. This includes responsibilities to identify, record, investigate, assess, list, protect, and conserve historic places, historic areas, wāhi tūpuna, wāhi tapu, and wāhi tapu areas, and to advocate the conservation and protection of these areas. It also includes fostering public interest and involvement in historic places protection. Heritage New Zealand manages historic places, buildings and other property owned or controlled by the Trust or vested in it.

All archaeological sites are afforded protection under the *Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014* and it is unlawful for anyone to destroy, damage or modify an archaeological site without first gaining approving from Heritage New Zealand.

Community development

All district councils are involved in providing, developing or upgrading community facilities within their districts. The development of such facilities contributes to the amenities enjoyed by the people of the Taranaki and visitors alike. It also promotes the economic and social well-being of the community.

Over the past six years there have been continuing upgrades of business districts or streetscapes in New Plymouth with construction of the Huatoki Plaza and the Brougham Street shared space development, and commencement of the Len Lye Centre (see case study on *page 205*). The TSB Showplace was earthquake-strengthened in 2012. The *Hawera Town Centre Revitalisation Strategy* is set to add significantly to the amenity values of the town and will be a model for future upgrades of smaller communities in the South Taranaki district (see case study on *page 211*). The Stratford District Council completed the Broadway streetscape beautification with landscaping throughout and new public toilets. In the next five years, Prospero Place, in Stratford, will undergo further development including an extension to the community facilities within the area.



Broadway in Stratford has undergone streetscape beautification and landscaping.



TET MultiSports Centre in Stratford hosted the Oceania Hockey Tournament in 2014.

There has also been ongoing community investment in recreational and cultural facilities over the reporting period, including further development of the Coastal Walkway in New Plymouth. In 2010 the walkway was extended from New Plymouth to Bell Block with the Te Rewa Rewa Bridge picking up a number of awards. The most recent development, opened in late 2014, has seen the Coastal Walkway extended from the Taranaki velodrome across Hickford Park to Bell Block beach. The total length of the walkway is now 12.7 kilometres with plans for further extensions in future.

New Plymouth's Todd Energy Aquatic Centre was upgraded over the summer of 2014/2015, including replacing the tiles of the indoor pools and other aesthetic or operational upgrades. The King Edward sporting area in Stratford received four new tennis turfs and a new water-based hockey turf of international standard. The area has been tidied up and the car parking capacity increased. In addition, the Whangamōmona Camp Ground received a new playground and the facilities upgraded.

'All district councils are involved in providing, developing or upgrading community facilities within their districts.'

The Hub, South Taranaki District Council's \$21 million MultiSports, leisure and events centre located at Hicks Park, Hāwera, was completed in March 2010. Alongside Hāwera's King Edward Park and the PowerCo Aquatic Centre, the facility gives an intensive sport, recreation and leisure and events focus for the South Taranaki district. The Hub has also hosted international level events such as Davis Cup tennis, when New Zealand played host to Pakistan in 2010, and the Philippines in 2011.

While serving the sporting, recreational and cultural needs of their local communities, the TET MultiSports Centre in Stratford, and the Sandford Events Centre in Opunake, have both hosted national events in recent years. Stratford's TET MultiSports centre has also hosted international events.

The Taranaki Regional Council has made significant investments in the internationally recognised Pukeiti Gardens since taking over ownership of the gardens in 2010. Continual improvements by the Regional Council have also been made to Hollard Gardens (including a new visitor's centre) and to Tūpare in



Pukeiti is an internationally recognised garden renowned for its rhododendron collection. Pictured is 'Lemon Lodge' rhododendron.

New Plymouth, further cementing their place as gardens of national significance. The Taranaki Regional Council has also continued to financially support Puke Ariki, New Plymouth's regional museum and library complex. In 2013 it agreed to provide funding for the ongoing development of Yarrow Stadium as one of New Zealand's premier regional sporting stadiums and venue. The Taranaki Regional Council and the New Plymouth District Council formed a joint venture arrangement over Yarrow Stadium, with the Taranaki Regional Council assuming effective ownership of the asset and the New Plymouth District Council retaining operational management to ensure Yarrow Stadium is retained as a first class regional facility.

The public transport services contracted by the Taranaki Regional Council are also important for development of the region's communities. These services ensure people continue to have a reliable and convenient yet affordable public transport system that connects people with where they want to go. Together with its funding partner the New Zealand Transport Agency, the Regional Council spends about \$3.5 million each year on public transport services, providing daily, scheduled urban bus services in New Plymouth, Waitara, Bell Block and Oākura. A rural once-a-week bus service operates between many of the towns in the region and the daily Connector bus service operates between Hāwera and New Plymouth, along State Highway 3 (see case study *opposite*). The Regional Council also financially supports the Total Mobility Service—a taxi or driver-based service offering discounted fares for people with impairments who cannot drive or who do not have access to a motor vehicle or have difficulty using buses.

The development of such facilities and services contributes to the amenities enjoyed by the people of Taranaki and visitors alike, and promotes the economic and social well-being of the community.

Find out more

- 🔗 *Len Lye Centre project (NPDC website)*
tinyurl.com/TRC7m
- Len Lye (Wikipedia)* tinyurl.com/TRC7n
- New Plymouth District Plan* tinyurl.com/TRC7a
- NPDC Draft Open Space, Sport and Recreation Strategy 2015* tinyurl.com/TRC7r
- Regional Policy Statement for Taranaki*
tinyurl.com/TRC7k
- South Taranaki District Plan* tinyurl.com/TRC7c
- Stratford District Plan* tinyurl.com/TRC7b
- STDC Hāwera Town Centre Strategy* tinyurl.com/TRC7s
- The Let's Go project (NPDC website)* tinyurl.com/TRC7q

Rochelle rides Connector on journey to her dream

For Rochelle Jakeman, the launch of the Hāwera-New Plymouth Connector bus service couldn't have come at a better time.

The daily service allows the Hāwera mother-of-two to attend WITT in New Plymouth as she pursues her dream of being a registered nurse.

The first-year nursing student is an enthusiastic Connector commuter who appreciates both the flexibility allowed by the service's four return trips daily, and the fact that WITT students can travel for free.

"I was coming to WITT before to do some pre-university courses, and I had to use a school bus service from Hāwera to New Plymouth. It was expensive and it wasn't flexible—there was only one trip a day, before and after school," she says.

"The Connector service started as I began the three-year nursing course. It really does make it possible for me to study at WITT, while allowing me to stay in South Taranaki."

She says she enjoys the commuting and has established a good rapport with the drivers. "They are friendly, and they will wait if you're a bit late and running down the road."

She also thinks it's good that she can email the operator, Pickering Motors, if she knows she's not going to make the trip on one of her usual days.

WITT is one of the funding partners for the Connector service, along with the Taranaki Regional Council, Taranaki District Health Board and the New Plymouth, Stratford and South Taranaki district councils. The service is also sponsored by Contact Energy.

'I think it's a great thing, not only for students but the whole community.'

Rochelle has already sent feedback to WITT saying how much she appreciates the new service, and also promotes it to fellow students. "I think it's a great thing, not only for students but the whole community."

Rochelle has had her heart set on nursing since having her two children. She has been awarded one of two 2014 Māui Pomare Nursing Scholarships, for academic excellence and potential contribution to Māori health.



Rochelle Jakeman, an enthusiastic user of the Hāwera—New Plymouth Connector bus service.