



**Ōpōtiki District Council**

STRONG COMMUNITY STRONG FUTURE

# The Ōpōtiki Town Centre Structure Plan Summary

JUNE 2020



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# BACKGROUND





The town of Ōpōtiki is located on the Bay of Plenty coastline between the Waioeka and Otara rivers. Around 3,879 people lived in Ōpōtiki in 2013 and Te Reo Māori is spoken by just over 20% of the population.

### What is the Ōpōtiki Town Centre Structure Plan?

It is important for the future prosperity of Ōpōtiki that its town centre is a thriving, authentic, and attractive place for residents, businesses, and visitors. To ensure this vision is achieved, the Ōpōtiki District Council has been working with Iwi and the community to develop a Structure Plan that will provide a framework for the development of the town centre.

The Structure Plan will guide future decision-making regarding the revitalisation of the town centre. This will provide certainty to business owners, the wider community, and stakeholders about what development activity is likely to happen, and when. It will also help Council, businesses and landowners to prioritise spending on activities within the town centre.

**The community has identified that the Structure Plan is a chance to create a town centre that is more than just a physical space. Instead, the town centre will be an expression of Ōpōtiki's unique identity and character, supporting its residents to thrive.**

The Structure Plan considers the opportunities and challenges facing the Ōpōtiki town centre and the feedback received through public consultation completed to-date. It includes general principles and strategies for revitalisation of the town centre, and describes three options for such revitalisation, for discussion with the community. Working together, revitalisation of the town centre can provide a catalyst for future development and investment within our town.

# Why do we need a Town Centre Structure Plan for Ōpōtiki?

Discussion regarding the revitalisation of the Ōpōtiki town centre has been ongoing, drawing on the thoughts and opinions of a number of stakeholders. The Structure Plan brings all of these voices together to identify three specific options for town centre revitalisation. This will target further discussion so that an endpoint can be reached, being a preferred option for the future development of the Ōpōtiki town centre.

The Structure Plan will then link to Council's Infrastructure Strategy and Long Term Plan to guide the implementation of the preferred town centre revitalisation option. It will be regularly reviewed to ensure that the vision for the Ōpōtiki town centre remains on-track and relevant as the needs of our town evolve over time.



**The town centre underwent an upgrade in 1996 which included underground infrastructure, paving and streetscape at a total cost of approximately \$1 million.**

It is now timely to revisit the look and feel of the Ōpōtiki town centre to capitalise on this earlier investment and ensure that the town centre reflects the aspirations and

needs of locals and visitors alike. This needs to be achieved within the Council's current budget of \$200,000 for town centre revitalisation activities.



The Ōpōtiki Town Centre Structure Plan will complement Council's existing suite of strategies, policies, and regulatory documents; a number of which already reference actions and priorities relevant to the town centre.

Ōpōtiki District Plan

Long Term Plan

Annual Plan

Infrastructure Strategy

Economic Development Strategy

Visitor Strategy 2014-2018

Walking and Cycling Strategy

Town  
Centre  
Structure  
Plan

Future Town  
Centre  
Master  
Plan?



*"Brand and develop the Ōpōtiki town centre as an historic precinct."*  
Economic Development Strategy, Action V6-4



*"Develop a walking and cycling route that effectively links Opotiki Township with Waitotahi and Te Ngaio beaches that is both functional and scenic."*  
Walking and Cycling Strategy, Goal 1 Priority action

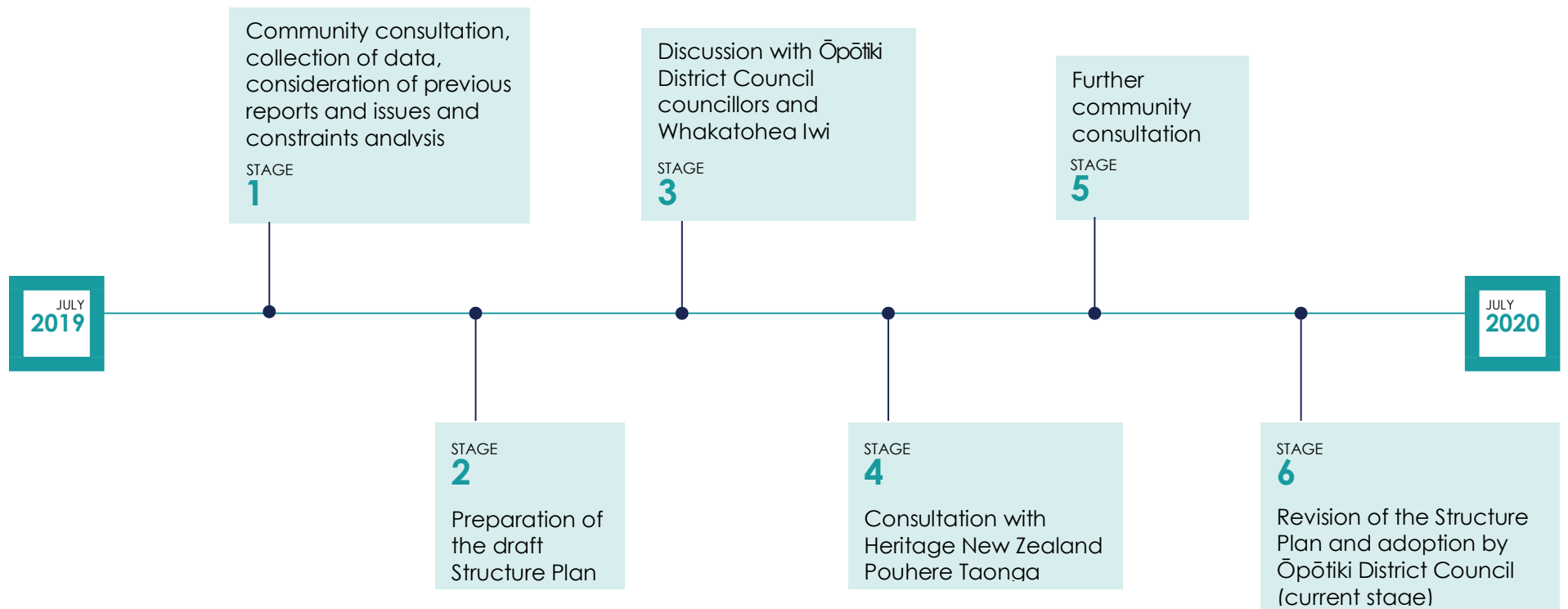


*"Establish Ōpōtiki town as a visitor hub. It does not currently have a presence as a visitor service centre and a lot of visitor traffic passes by."*  
Visitor Strategy 2014-2018, Strategic focus area



# How has the Ōpōtiki Town Centre Structure Plan been developed?

All good things take time, and the Structure Plan is no exception. It is important to Council that everyone has had an opportunity to have their say. The Structure Plan was developed over a 12-month period from July 2019 to July 2020 in six stages, as illustrated.





# Where is the town centre?

- The Ōpōtiki town centre is based on Church Street, and extends from Kelly Street in the north to Richard Street in the south.
- It encompasses a range of existing retail and commercial land uses, with car parking and pockets of open space.
- It also represents all of the land with the Town Centre Zone of the current Ōpōtiki District Plan.





# What is the Ōpōtiki town centre like now?

The current Ōpōtiki town centre is set on a traditional flat street grid. The southern entrance to the town centre is marked by a waharoa, while the northern end is characterised by a precinct of older buildings and a war memorial area. The intersection of Church and Elliot Streets contains a striking pou whenua which illustrates the history of both Tāngata whenua and Pākehā in the Ōpōtiki district. The buildings of the town centre have a predominantly government or commercial purpose with the majority being constructed in the late twentieth century. These are made of unreinforced masonry, many with verandahs. There are several timber buildings constructed in the mid nineteenth

century. The heritage and cultural value of most of the buildings however, is overshadowed by their tired appearance both at the front and rear, corporate colour schemes, and un-coordinated signage. Some of these buildings make a significant contribution to the streetscape particularly those at the intersection of Church and King streets and to New Zealand's history (for example, St Stephen's Church). Buildings have been constructed to the footpath line providing a uniform setback throughout the town centre. The footpath has a distinct pattern of red and stone tiles interspaced with bitumen reflecting traditional tukutuku patterns known as 'niho taniwha' and 'pātiki'. There

are several established Pohutukawa and Nikau trees at the northern end of the town centre. Newly planted areas provide a contrast to some of the footpath, street furniture, public art and banner poles art that requires refurbishment. Over thirty murals around the town centre depict the Ōpōtiki lifestyle and culture. The centre of Church Street contains a small tiled area where the Art Deco former Ladies Rest Rooms and public toilets are located. Behind these buildings is public car parking. Moody Place, to the east, provides the opportunity for outdoor markets, seats and tables.



# OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES





# Opportunities



## Harbour:

Potential development of Ōpōtiki wharf provides the opportunity to link the town centre to the wharf, connecting sea and land.



## Heritage and culture:

Tāngata whenua and Pākehā heritage and culture of the town is unique and more could be made of it.



## Residential activity:

could be encouraged above shops, to provide 'life' in town when shops and offices close for the day.



## New development:

by Council in Church Street, and upgrade of the former Ladies Rest Room, may stimulate private development.



## Library and internet:

The new library will provide a focal point within the town centre. Increased internet capacity will provide connectivity opportunities for locals and visitors alike.



## Natural environment:

Existing open space networks could be enhanced to draw people into town and provide connections to the harbour and creek.



## Community spirit:

Ōpōtiki is known for its public spirit, which could be harnessed to undertake improvements such as restoration of Tarawa Creek.



## Treaty settlement:

The Whakatohea Treaty Settlement may create town centre business opportunities.



## Visitors:

Specialist shops could draw visitors into town.



## Bridge Street commercial area:

Should appropriate buildings become available, opportunities exist to relocate light industrial activities outside of the town centre, to make way for retail or office space.



## Horticulture and agriculture:

could provide business opportunities given the diverse range of local produce.



# Challenges



## A tired town centre:

as a result of poor maintenance and dated streetscape furnishings.



## Advertising signs:

are un-coordinated and present an image of clutter.



## A limited retail offer:

means that people may shop elsewhere or online. There are very few clothing shops or tourism-related businesses.



## Earthquake prone buildings:

will require strengthening work and may impact the heritage value of some buildings.



## Recreation opportunities:

are limited, there are few places for people to sit and enjoy the town centre environment. The open space areas adjoining the town centre are rarely utilised except for the skatepark.



## Flooding:

primarily from stormwater runoff affects the town centre. Whilst there is a risk of a major flood event, a preventative approach needs to be taken. This includes the need for a raised floor level and flood protection devices which are likely to increase the construction cost of a building or substantial renovations.



## Heritage and culture:

receives little recognition in the town centre. While there are some taonga, there is no means of understanding the significance of these.



## Residential accommodation:

is limited and often does not meet fire safety and disabled access requirements.



## Economic development:

is limited within the town centre, which creates a negative image.



## Crime and safety:

requires addressing, in order to making the centre feel safer. This may include measures such as new lighting and the removal of vegetation in some areas.



## Lack of a clear theme:

The town centre does not present a clear theme, which results in businesses and building owners reflecting their own style. The result is incohesive and the town's unique culture and heritage is not obvious.



## Landscaping and connections:

Many of the mature street trees are in poor condition and provide limited shade. Public art including murals and sculptures is often 'hidden'. Coupled with poor lighting, there is no clear connection across the town centre to open space, car parking and laneways. Additionally, there is little clear signage leading to the town centre.



## Lack of connectedness:

Although Ōpōtiki is known for its enormous community spirit there is a lack of connectedness between members of the business community; there is no Chamber of Commerce or regular business forum.



# What do we want the Ōpōtiki town centre to be like in the future?

Church Street is the focal point of the town centre and the town street grid is retained. The grid provides the connection to surrounding precincts such as the open space and wharf areas. Additionally, there are multiple pedestrian and bike connections throughout the town centre and surrounding open space areas such as Tarawa and Volkners Island/Whitakau parks, the ocean and hinterlands.

The opportunity for some current and new buildings to have entrances and business and residential uses from Potts Avenue and the western laneway off King Street is utilised.

The well maintained and clean buildings, taonga, street furniture, public art, memorial items and footpaths, value and reflect the culture and heritage of both Tāngata whenua and Pākehā. This is the dominant element in the built

environment. They do not include the clutter of signage and distraction of corporate colours. The buildings are painted in colours that are inviting and allow their features to be clearly visible and experienced.

There is the opportunity for residents and visitors to identify and understand the heritage and culture of the town and surrounding area through the use of interpretative signage throughout the town centre. Local art is part of the built environment but does not dominate the existing heritage.

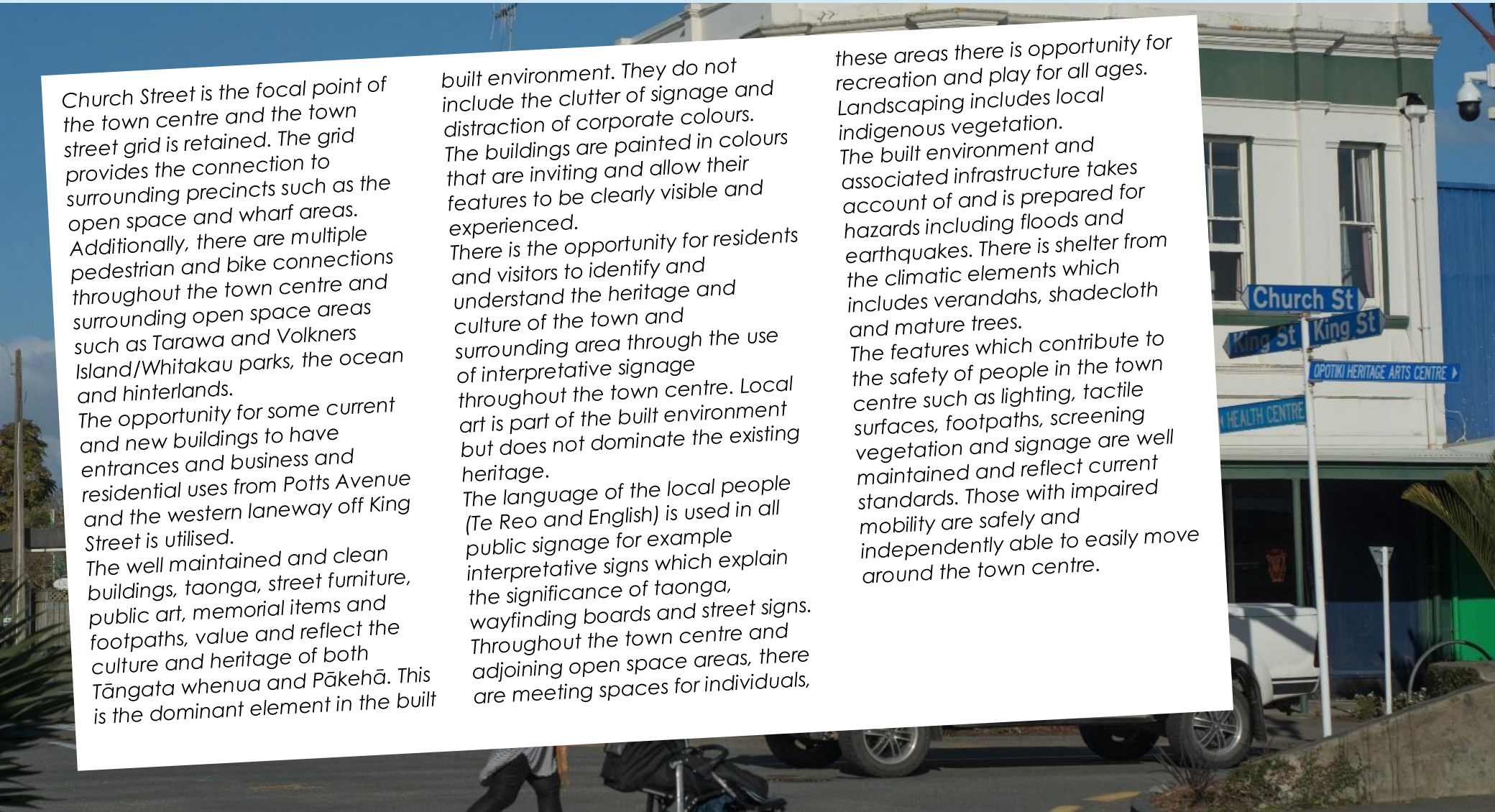
The language of the local people (Te Reo and English) is used in all public signage for example interpretative signs which explain the significance of taonga, wayfinding boards and street signs. Throughout the town centre and adjoining open space areas, there are meeting spaces for individuals,

these areas there is opportunity for recreation and play for all ages.

Landscaping includes local indigenous vegetation.

The built environment and associated infrastructure takes account of and is prepared for hazards including floods and earthquakes. There is shelter from the climatic elements which includes verandahs, shade cloth and mature trees.

The features which contribute to the safety of people in the town centre such as lighting, tactile surfaces, footpaths, screening vegetation and signage are well maintained and reflect current standards. Those with impaired mobility are safely and independently able to easily move around the town centre.



# Principles for revitalising the Ōpōtiki town centre

## Mana - Respect

- the status of iwi and hapū as mana whenua is recognised and respected.
- Mana whenua and iwi are involved in the design of public buildings, street furniture and open space.
- Mana whenua, iwi and the designers of private buildings are encouraged to work together on the design of a building or item.
- the maintenance and sensitive development of the built environment is a primary consideration for the custodians of the town centre.

## Taonga tuku iho and whakapapa - Heritage and culture

- Mana whenua and iwi are consulted on the history, spelling and use of Tāngata whenua names.
- Tāngata whenua names are used for unnamed public roads and laneways.

- public signs and wayfinding signs use both Te Reo and English.
- places of heritage and cultural significance have bi-lingual interpretative signage.
- the use of a Tāngata whenua name for a public building is encouraged, mana whenua and iwi are to be involved in determining the name.
- town centre and surrounding precincts have Tāngata whenua names.
- the street grid is retained.
- the design and history of listed buildings is respected.



## Tohu - The wider cultural landscape

- Mana whenua significant sites and cultural landmarks are acknowledged.
- Mana whenua and iwi are involved in the wording of interpretative signage.
- archaeological sensitivity is practiced during construction works.

## Ahi Kā - Iwi/hapū have a living and enduring presence and are secure and valued within their rohe

- open space areas are designed to allow for tūtakitanga (informal meetings).
- the pūtahi (meeting place) in the centre of the Church Street precinct is developed by the community as the town centre meeting place.

## Taiao - The natural environment is protected, restored and or enhanced

- Tarawa Creek is restored.
- stormwater discharges are rubbish free and contain low levels of pollutants.
- water sensitive design is encouraged .
- the dominant species in the landscape is indigenous vegetation, possibly Pohutukawa.
- open space areas in the town centre are planned and include indigenous vegetation.





# Principles for revitalising the Ōpōtiki town centre

**Mauri Tu** - *Environmental health is protected, maintained and or enhanced. Health refers to the built and natural environments and humans*

- create a safe and stimulating environment for the whole whānau that nurtures, educates and inspires.
- the use of recycled materials where possible for new or building additions is encouraged where the Building Code can be complied with.
- the recycling of demolition buildings or materials encouraged.
- local materials are used where possible.
- the adaptive reuse of buildings is encouraged.
- new buildings and substantial alterations should incorporate energy efficient features.
- the painting of buildings and signage is encouraged but

bold corporate colours are not supported.

**Nga Matepā** - *hazards*

- hazards are recognised addressed as part of development and the management of infrastructure.
- buildings will be maintained and constructed in accordance with legislation and the Building Code.
- flood (including stormwater) will be managed in accordance with the latest modelling and policy.

**Mahi Toi** - *Iwi/hapū narratives are captured and expressed creatively and appropriately*

- narratives can be captured through; street furniture, public art, bi-lingual interpretative signage for items of heritage and cultural value, building walls, display walls and murals.

**Hangarau** – *technology*

- new development should be designed to accommodate information technology.
- public space should enable information technology, connection and opportunities
- technology opportunities are encouraged including for remote business and education, community activities and tourism.

**Ngā hononga** – *connections*

The town centre has strong connections to:

- the Volkners Island/Whitikau Park and Tarawa Park.
- the wharf/harbour area. If development in this area occurs, a master plan should be developed with linkages to the town centre.
- the district's rural whenua, nga awa and moana are connected to the town centre.

- movement within the town centre is unobstructed and encouraged.
- people with a disability are able to access town centre features and buildings.



# REVITALISATION OPTIONS





# Options for town centre revitalisation

Consultation undertaken with the community and stakeholders has identified three main options for revitalising the Ōpōtiki town centre within Council's initial \$200,000 budget. These options include:



## **'SPRUCE IT UP'**

Council and building owners work together to smarten up the town centre, potentially including activities such as painting facades, repairing verandahs, and decluttering sianaae.



## **'HERITAGE AND TAONGA'**

Council works with stakeholders to develop a heritage and taonga trail into, and around, the town centre. This would include interpretive signage and streetscape improvements to aid wayfinding.



## **'CONNECTING SEA AND LAND'**

Council works with stakeholders to develop a walkway/cycleway between the town centre and the wharf. This could be supported by streetscape improvements such as interpretive/wayfinding signage, landscaping, and recreation opportunities.

## OPTION



# SPRUCE IT UP

In this option Council and building owners will work together to smarten up the town centre. This could include activities such as painting building facades, repairing verandahs, and decluttering signage.

Activities could be prioritised between Council and building owners, in accordance with the principles and strategies of this Structure Plan.

Council could undertake some activities itself utilising its current procurement processes and/or provide funding (loans) to building owners to undertake work themselves.



### Advantages

- Likely to immediately improve the look and feel of the town centre, which consultation has indicated is currently tired in appearance.
- Activities could be undertaken relatively quickly (within 12 - 24 months).
- Council could leverage its current procurement processes and contractor pool to get work completed quickly.



### Disadvantages

- Could result in uncoordinated, or piecemeal, town centre improvements. May not necessarily create a cohesive 'theme' for the town centre.
- Requires ongoing maintenance to avoid a tired appearance in another 10-15 years.
- Council would need to establish, and monitor the outputs of, a loan process for building owners to access necessary funding.
- Doesn't realise opportunities to maximise the heritage and taonga of the town centre, nor to connect with the wharf.



## OPTION

# 2



# HERITAGE AND TAONGA

**In this option Council could work with stakeholders to develop a heritage and taonga trail into, and around, the town centre.**

This would link existing heritage and taonga and include activities such as the design and construction of interpretive signage and streetscape improvements to aid wayfinding (for example, paving to indicate the direction of the trail).



### Advantages

- Accords with the outcomes of previous community consultation and the Economic Development Strategy action to 'brand and develop the Ōpōtiki town centre as an historic precinct'.
- Likely to draw visitors into the town and improve the vibrancy and character of the town centre.
- Could be staged, as Council funding becomes available, to include additional elements in the future (such as a link to the wharf area and/or the Waiotahi and Te Ngaio beaches).
- Would provide a focal point for the town, providing a clear 'theme' for building owners and businesses to expand on as finances become available.
- Could form an initial part of any future master plan for the town centre.
- Is a long-term improvement to the town centre which will have an ongoing impact; it is not a short term solution.



### Disadvantages

- Likely to take between 2 – 3 years, as a trail would need to be researched and supporting elements (i.e. interpretive signage) designed and constructed. Extensive consultation with Iwi, the wider community, and Heritage NZ would also be required.
- Doesn't immediately address the current tired appearance of the town.
- Could be expensive, Council's current budget may not be enough.

## OPTION

# 3



## CONNECTING SEA AND LAND

**In this option Council could work with stakeholders to develop a walkway/cycleway between the town centre and the wharf, potentially extending to the Waioatahe and Te Ngaio beaches.**

This could be supported by streetscape improvements such as interpretive/wayfinding signage, landscaping, and recreation equipment (benches and/or tables).



### Advantages

- Accords with the outcomes of previous community consultation and the Walking and Cycling Strategy goal to 'develop a walking and cycling route that effectively links Opotiki Township with Waioatahe and Te Ngaio beaches that is both functional and scenic'.
- Provides outdoor, active and passive recreation opportunities and may draw visitors into the town centre.
- Creates a strategic non-vehicular link between the town centre and the wharf and beaches, particularly useful for when any redevelopment of the harbour occurs.
- Could be staged, as Council funding becomes available, to include additional elements in the future (such as a link into a later town centre heritage and taonga trail).
- Activities could be undertaken relatively quickly (within 1.5 – 2.5 years).
- Could form an initial part of any future master plan for the town centre.
- Provides opportunities for Council, Iwi, and the wider community to work together to design any walkway/cycleway.



### Disadvantages

- Doesn't immediately address the current tired appearance of the town nor realise opportunities to maximise the heritage and taonga of the town centre.
- Requires design and construction stages of work, Council's current budget may be stretched.
- Is not an immediate 'town centre' solution, but rather a useful amenity for the whole town.



# NEXT STEPS







# NEXT

# STEPS

To ensure a cohesive approach to revitalisation of the town centre, Council could take one of the following approaches:

### Short term

**Complete a master plan for the town centre revitalisation.**

- This would use the information provided in the current Structure Plan and ensure that any upgrade works are undertaken in a coordinated and efficient manner.
- A master plan provides the level of detail necessary to turn the vision for the Ōpōtiki town centre into a reality, while ensuring the efficient allocation of Council funds.

### Medium term

**Consider progressing Options 2 and 3 as initial outputs of a master plan.**

- This would ensure that progress is being made towards improving the town centre, while at the same time ensuring that any advance activities do not compromise the outcomes of the master planning exercise.

### Long-term

**Consider progressing Option 1 to spruce up the town centre and achieve a quick-win for the community.**

- Council would need to consider how funding could be allocated to ensure this exercise remained rates-neutral.

# A BRIGHT AND VIBRANT FUTURE AWAITS

