

6 August 2023

Guy Holroyd
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Dear Guy,

For the past three years, and with increasing intensity over the previous 18 months, both Our Kerikeri and Vision Kerikeri have been persistent in advocating for the creation of downtown masterplans for Kerikeri and more recently Waipapa, and the completion of the spatial plan that started in October 2021. Unfortunately, we have attended numerous fruitless meetings with Council staff that yielded no progress. Our patience was tested due to the stagnation and repetitiveness of these meetings. We have expressed repeatedly that as volunteers, our time, dedicated to hundreds of hours of community service, is invaluable. We simply cannot afford to squander our time in unproductive meetings when we could be spending it with our families or tending to our businesses.

The prevalent culture at Council appears to be one that favours inaction - it's a culture of chasing perfection as an excuse for doing nothing. Such a situation is not conducive to our volunteer-driven efforts.

However, our optimism was high this year, as we believed we were on the brink of initiating a project that we felt would have the best chance of successful implementation - a truly community-led initiative that balanced strong commercial acumen, project management skills, and adherence to regulatory frameworks, through a partnership between community groups, Hapū, Far North Holdings and Council. However, this optimism was thwarted at the start of July when internal staff of the Far North District Council informed us that the initially intended plan was scrapped. The Council staff professed their capability to internally develop the masterplans, while simultaneously admitting to their shortage of resources, personnel and experience. They further stated that it would be up to the Councillors to guide them regarding their workload prioritization, with this project being one of many.

Clearly, our sentiment from this meeting was palpable, prompting an invite to a meeting with you.

As you are relatively new to this role and the Council, it's crucial that our upcoming meeting is not merely a recapitulation of past events, but a productive dialogue. To ensure this, I am dedicating my Sunday to writing this report that will provide you with the necessary context and background to make our conversation as effective as possible.

The Value of a Downtown Masterplan

A masterplan is critical for a downtown area because it provides a holistic, long-term vision that ensures organized, sustainable, and beneficial growth. By strategically outlining how to best utilize our towns resources, a masterplan can improve connectivity, foster economic development, and enhance the quality of life for residents. It also facilitates efficient land use, including public amenities, commercial and mixed-use developments and placemaking opportunities. Furthermore, a masterplan helps in preserving the cultural and historical identity of our towns, ensuring that development complements and enriches the existing and aspirational architecture and urban fabric. Therefore, a masterplan provides a comprehensive framework to guide urban development and provides a robust framework for the future development of our town. These Masterplans would not only serve as a blueprint for growth but also encapsulate the aspirations of our community.

The benefits of Masterplans:

1 Communication with Developers and Businesses

A comprehensive Masterplan acts as a roadmap that clearly demonstrates our community's vision to potential investors, businesses, and developers. It allows us to effectively articulate our growth strategy, land use principles, and sustainability goals, ensuring that any new development aligns with our community's needs and values.

2 Assist Council with planning strategies:

- Strategic Direction
- Resource Allocation
- Regulatory Framework
- Consistency in Implementation

3 Readiness for Funding Opportunities

Having a well-articulated Masterplan increases our readiness for funding opportunities. It provides a strategic framework that demonstrates our commitment to sustainable, planned growth, making us a more attractive candidate for grants and other funding sources.

4 Strategic Implementation

The Masterplan enables us to systematically implement individual components when opportunities and resources become available. This incremental approach allows for steady progress towards our overall vision without overwhelming resources. It also allows our community to be part of the implementation of the plan.

5 Collaboration and Consensus

Developing the Masterplan as a community encourages participation and ownership, fostering consensus on the town's direction. It also provides council with a clear mandate to move forward with the articulated vision.

Far North Holdings Limited, the commercial arm of our Council, presents an excellent candidate for the role of Project Manager in the creation of our Downtown Master Plan. Their close affiliation with the Council ensures a comprehensive understanding of our town's needs, opportunities, and challenges. This knowledge, coupled with their commercial expertise, will be invaluable in identifying development opportunities that could help fund the execution of the masterplans. Furthermore, Far North Holdings will help ensure that our plan is not just theoretically sound, but also financially viable and sustainable. It's also crucial that our plan is community-led, embodying the aspirations, feedback, and wellbeing of our residents – an excellent complement to Far North Holding's more commercial lens. The plan for the creation of the masterplan (as agreed at the beginning of the year) meant Council, Far North Holdings, Hapū and key Community groups, would all be involved in driving this masterplan through to its completion.

This structure would thus strike a balance between commercial feasibility, public participation, statutory requirements and the broader objectives of our town's growth and development.

Far North Holdings Limited's role as the Project Manager also adds a degree of stability and consistency to the planning and execution of the Downtown Master Plans. As the commercial arm of the Council, they operate with a level of autonomy that insulates them from the volatility of political cycles. Unlike the Council, they are not subject to the potential changes in priorities that can occur at election time, and in fact what seems at any monthly meeting throughout the election cycle. This characteristic is especially vital in ensuring that the development and execution of the masterplans remain uninterrupted, even if there are changes in Council personnel or shifts in their policy focus. This consistency will prevent potential starts and stops in projects, a scenario that could otherwise occur if councillors decided to deprioritize certain initiatives. The involvement of Far North Holdings provides a layer of resilience against political uncertainties. Having community groups truly lead this would also mean that political instability or influence would be limited and would not be allowed to halt the project.

Implementing a Bypass: Building a Grid Network for Growth and Enhancing Liveability in Our Fastest-Growing Town in the North

As our town experiences significant growth, effective traffic management is critical to maintain and enhance the quality of life for our residents. Currently, the lack of alternative routes and absence of a grid network forces all traffic through our town's core. Hone Heke Road is sometimes used as an alternative road, however this road is not suitable as it has all of our main schools, kindergartens, kohanga reo's and childcares on that road (2,000 + students at the high school and primary school alone), and efforts are currently in place to convert this road into a pedestrian and cycling-friendly zone, which further minimizes its use for vehicular traffic. Our main road through town results in congestion, noise, pollution, and decreased pedestrian safety. The proposed construction of a bypass or ring road around the town centre helps alleviate these issues and prepares our infrastructure for the continued growth. Our masterplan must incorporate future connectivity in order to unlock the potential of our towns and increase modal shift and enhancing our residents' wellbeing.

Our town's current road design lacks a grid network, concentrating both local and through traffic on a single, central thoroughfare or 'stroad'. This arrangement has several consequences:

- Traffic Congestion
- Safety Risks between people, alternative transport options and vehicles
- Reducing Quality of Life from a town choked by vehicle domination
- Discourages Sustainable Practices

Proposed Solution: Bypass/Ring Road and Grid Network

Constructing a bypass or ring road around the town centre, coupled with developing a grid network as growth requires it, presents a multi-pronged solution to these challenges:

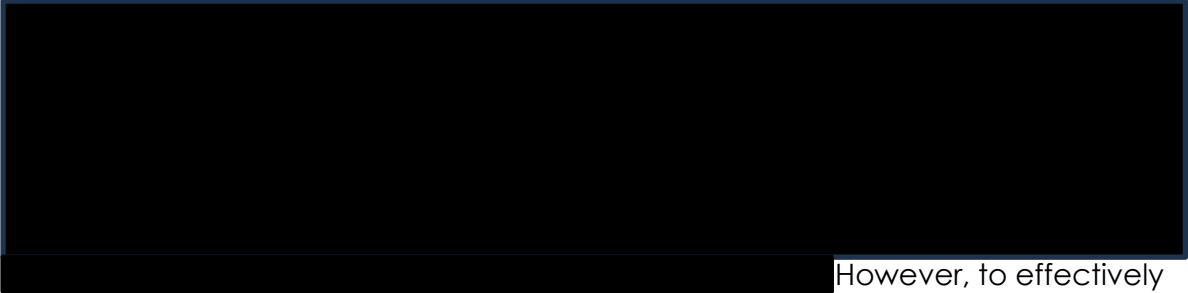
- **Improved Traffic Flow:** The bypass would serve as an alternate route for through traffic, easing congestion on the stroad and facilitating more efficient travel. Developing a grid network would further distribute traffic evenly across the town, preventing bottlenecks.
- **Enhanced Safety:** By diverting the bulk of vehicular traffic away from the town centre, streets become safer for pedestrians and cyclists.
- **Unlocking the Potential in our Downtown:** This transformative step of eliminating the stroad will allow us to reimagine and repurpose this vital urban space, possibly creating a network of public spaces, green parks, and safer, pedestrian-friendly streets as well as increasing placemaking opportunities.
- **Quality of Life:** A decrease in traffic will mitigate noise and air pollution, improving the health, tranquillity, and overall atmosphere of the town centre.
- **Grid Network Supporting Growth:** The grid network, in conjunction with the bypass, provides a scalable infrastructure that can accommodate our town's fast growth, mitigating the impact of increasing vehicle numbers.
- **Promotion of Sustainable Practices:** With a decrease in central traffic, the town can be semi-pedestrianized, fostering a more conducive environment for walking and cycling, thus reducing the town's carbon footprint.

Funding the Bypass/Ring Road

A crucial element of the masterplan is the construction of the ring road, which is a fundamental step towards unlocking the full potential of our town. Given the likely expenses associated with this, there is an impression that the Council is hesitant to move forward with the masterplan. They seem concerned that such a step would lead the community to expect a firm commitment from the Council towards the ring road's construction, funded entirely by general rates. As a result, there appears to be an effort by the Council to sidestep the entire masterplan project to avoid these perceived obligations.

A carefully costed proposal, detailing the different stages for the bypass/ring road not only lays out the infrastructure's financial requirements (per stage) but also enables us to seek multiple funding avenues. This budget clarity increases our readiness to leverage different financial mechanisms for sustainable development:

- **Targeted Rates:** A proportion of the bypass cost could be funded by a targeted rate. This mechanism ensures those who benefit directly from the bypass, such as local businesses and landowners, contribute to its construction. It must be noted too however, that this ward contributes just under 50% of the total general rates revenue in the district.
- **Development Contributions:** Developers bringing new projects to our town can be asked to contribute towards the ***growth-related*** costs of the bypass. This is an equitable way to ensure those contributing to the need for the bypass also help fund it.
- **Central Government Funding:** With a well-articulated and costed plan, we can apply for central government funding. These programs often prioritize sustainable growth including increasing modal options for transport, and infrastructure projects, making our bypass a strong candidate for funding. The resulting reduction in vehicular traffic would significantly enhance our capacity to improve pedestrian and cycling amenities in the heart of our town, fostering a healthier, more sustainable, and community-focused urban environment.
- **Public-Private Partnerships (PPP):** We could consider partnerships with private entities interested in infrastructure development, reducing the financial burden on the community while ensuring the timely completion of the project.
- **Grants and Philanthropic Contributions:** Depending on the final plan, grants and philanthropic contributions can also be sought. Environmental, transportation, or community development grants may be available to help fund aspects of the project.



However, to effectively leverage this potential, a comprehensive plan including costings needs to be drafted. Failure to do so could lead to a missed opportunity to secure this significant contribution. The development of such a plan would not only streamline the construction process but also provide a tangible basis for negotiation and commitment from these developers.

The construction of a bypass and the establishment of a grid network, combined with a comprehensive Masterplan, sets the stage for accommodating our town's rapid growth. Our community has made it abundantly clear that they want us to prioritise a pedestrian-friendly liveable downtown in Kerikeri.

Waipapa, an area experiencing rapid commercial growth, currently lacks structure and a distinct identity, with growth occurring on an ad hoc basis.

We can shape sustainable, vibrant communities, each with their unique character through careful planning and structure as well as implementation plans. The masterplans will serve as a blueprint for structured and sustainable growth, aligning future developments with our community's needs and aspirations.

Yours sincerely,



Annika Dickey
Chairperson

Our Kerikeri Community Charitable Trust