



WHANGAREI 20/20 MOMENTUM

SUMMARY OF FEEDBACK REPORT

February 2016



WHANGAREI
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Contents

Executive Summary	3
The 20/20 Story	4
A new approach to consultation	4
Themes	6
Project Feedback	7
Notable New Projects	14

Executive Summary

The consultation program for the Whangarei 20/20 Momentum plan has been a great success. We have interacted with nearly 7000 people and received over 1000 items of feedback through the use of innovative engagement techniques.

It is clear that the feedback has been positive. Projects that seek to regenerate and revive our central area received the most support. People are passionate about well-designed development and user-friendly public spaces.

The feedback also presents a challenge. Empty shops, poor connectivity and an uninviting urban environment are issues that people want addressed. Not content with just highlighting problems, much of the feedback has offered new and interesting ways of addressing these issues.

Within the community, there are a range of priorities and differing views on the projects that should shape our city. What is apparent from all the comments received is the enthusiasm for progress and a clarity of vision for a more vibrant and prosperous Whangarei.



The 20/20 Story

Whangarei 20/20 Momentum provides an integrated vision for the future of central Whangarei. The vision is communicated through the 28 projects, which are tied together through six development themes:

1. Public spaces, connection to water and attractive streets
2. Sustainable growth, economic development and tourism
3. A well-connected urban environment for walking, cycling and public transport.
4. Liveable communities achieved through inner city living, community facilities and high quality design.
5. A resilient environment with improved water quality and ecological restoration
6. Culture and heritage as our point of difference, celebrating our unique identity and values.

The 20/20 program began in 1995 with a focus on infrastructure projects including a new Hatea crossing, the Walton Street roundabout and development of in Town Basin. The success of the original 20/20 document was followed by 20/20 Plus in 2006. The focus of 20/20 Plus shifted to the Town Basin and the importance of creating well designed spaces for people to enjoy. Many of the projects in the original 20/20 and 20/20 Plus have been implemented.

Whangarei 20/20 Momentum is a timely update of the program. It builds upon the success of recently completed projects such as the Hatea Loop, Canopy Bridge and Te Matau A Pohe. It is also well placed to address the significant issues faced by our central city:

- Vacant retail/commercial premises
- Lack of a central city residential population
- Poor quality urban form
- Connectivity and accessibility within the central city and between the core commercial area and the Town Basin

A new approach to consultation

The Whangarei 20/20 Momentum website received **6675** views.

We received **1108** pieces of feedback through our website, Facebook and Neighbourly.co.nz.

Council staff attended **31** separate stakeholder events

Staff received **27** phone call and one-on-one meeting requests.

Articles about 20/20 Momentum were published in the IPENZ transport magazine and on the TransportBlog website.

Summary of Feedback: Whangarei 20/20 Momentum

Whangarei District Council (WDC) wanted to explore a new approach to consultation. The key drivers for the consultation programme include:

- Focus on a 'conversational' style of consultation to get the community talking about what is important for them.
- Maximising the use of social media and websites
- Direct engagement with key stakeholders

Central to the consultation programme was the creation of a new website specifically for Whangarei 20/20 Momentum. This enabled people to look at key projects and provide feedback all within the one website. It proved to be a simple and low cost way of engaging with the community.

The website also uses distinct colourful branding which was intentionally distinct from the WDC logo. The branding was used to attract people who would normally be 'turned off' by Council documents.

The website was developed by WDC and a local business for cost comparable to a printing budget for document of this type. With the website in place, it can be updated easily and should be seen as an 'evolving' communication tool, where we can update on the progress of projects within 20/20 Momentum. WDC could also capitalise on the success of the website by using it to promote future projects and plans.

To support the website, the WDC Facebook page was used to create a new post every two days for each project. The post invited comments on a project and included a link to the 20/20 Momentum website.

We recognised that not everyone has the ability or wants to use the website or Facebook. We welcomed feedback via mail and had information available at our Libraries and Service Centres.

For the consultation to be a success, it was necessary to target key stakeholders such as business groups, charitable organisations and community groups. WDC talked directly to these stakeholder groups but also encouraged them to have a conversation with the community about specific projects and the wider vision for central Whangarei. Nearly 30 of these presentations took place. Council also offered follow-up sessions if there were particular projects they wished to discuss in more detail. Five follow-up sessions were organised.

Alongside stakeholder engagement, Council had a stall dedicated to 20/20 Momentum at this years A&P Summer Show.

We received very positive comments on our style of engagement. The mix of social media and online resources with more direct conversations with stakeholders has resulted in an effective and efficient means of consultation.

Themes

From the feedback received, it is clear that there a number of reoccurring themes:

Experience

People want more interesting and vibrant experiences within our central area. They want art, fun spaces to play, cafes and places meet. This aligns with changes many towns and cities are experiencing. They are moving away from a retail and office focused Central Business District (CBD) to one that provides a variety of activities and experience to attract people. This is a key draw card that shopping malls and out of town retail struggle to compete.



Design

People are demanding better quality design. We see this through the positive comments on the iconic Te Matau a Pohe and Kotuitui Whitinga. From the landscape design in our parks to the appearance of new apartment buildings, getting the design right is seen as fundamental to the success of projects, which will shape the future of Whangarei.



Movement

The ease of movement or the connectivity within the central area and between the central area and the Town Basin are important outcomes. People think that busy roads, the lack of pedestrian crossings, poor quality footpaths and inadequate signage are problems. Solutions put forward include more pedestrianised spaces, expanded cycle networks and better linkages to the Town Basin.



Inclusiveness

A central area for everyone. A successful centre is one that welcomes people of all ages and abilities, that recognises our cultural heritage and that acknowledges our diverse community. People want to see better parking for the disabled and families with young children. There is need to provide activities which are free for those on a limited budget. Support is shown for projects which celebrate our culture. There is recognition that many who come to our central area do so by car.



Project Feedback

Parking to Park.

The feedback was positive. Many people see the benefit of turning the waterfront car park into a space that everyone can enjoy. Suggestions for the new park include a playground, water park, café and an outdoor theatre space.

There were a number of people concerned about the removal of the car parking. They question where people who normally park there will go and the need to ensure there is adequate parking for the disabled. Many people thought ease of pedestrian access across Dent Street and connectivity to the CBD was important.

Cameron and James Street Laneway.

Overwhelmingly positive feedback for this project. Comments generally focused on how the laneway could be improved.

A number of people were concerned about cars using this space, which make it feel unsafe and uninviting. Some suggest removing the cars and car parking to turn the space into a pedestrian only environment.

Some suggested extending the laneway down James St to the Town Basin. Others wanted to see more seats, cafes and restaurant in the space.

Civic Centre.

This project has two options. Firstly to accommodate WDC in a new development with the CBD or secondly to redevelop the existing site at Forum North.

People were split between those who support a new Civic building in the CBD and those who think it should remain at Forum North. Although most people agree that WDC should be housed in one building.

Those in support of the moving to the CBD acknowledge both the positive impact this would have on the regeneration and vibrancy of the CBD and that it would free up the Forum North site for other development such as a new performance space. Others have suggested locations, such as Vine St, the former Toyota site or cheaper industrial land.

Those who favour the Forum North site see it as the better location for WDC due to its proximity to the Library and the availability of car parking. A new civic space and better connectivity to the CBD have been suggested as projects to complement the redevelopment of Forum North.

Arts, Culture, Education and Conference/Expo Precinct.

A new theatre received a lot of positive comments. Many people are suggesting a performance centre, not just a theatre. People think that Whangarei misses many arts, music and performance events due to the size and standards of the current venues

A conference centre also received support. However, some people cautioned whether Whangarei can support a large facility and whether our hotel accommodation is adequate. Sport Northland

Summary of Feedback: Whangarei 20/20 Momentum

suggests that a new conference centre would mean that ASB Stadium would lose almost all of its income from non-sporting events. For 2015, this amounted to approximately \$35k. The loss of income would mean that WDC would have to review its annual subsidy.

Education facilities did not receive many comments. People who did comment would like to see a new Northtec campus in the central area of Whangarei.

CBD Regeneration.

Feedback was generally positive for this project. People raised a wide range of issues. This includes the availability of parking, safety and ease of movement. Projects identified to address these issues include:

- Creating a continuous pedestrianised space from the CBD to the Town Basin
- Less cars in the CBD and more public spaces (parks, civic spaces, water features)
- Improved lighting around the CBD to encourage night time activity
- A city of colour. Paint the grey buildings in bright colours
- Focus on the public realm to improve footpaths
- Re-use empty buildings as pop-up spaces
- Late night shopping
- Focus on the waterfront with more activities.

Additional Street Canopies.

There was a mixed response to this project. People expressed concerns over the design and appearance as well as ongoing maintenance. In particular, how to keep the canopy clean and free from birds.

Support for the canopy highlighted that a large covered space can enable more outdoor activities to take place. There was strong support for enabling more alfresco dining. This would help to create more vibrancy around Cameron Street and James Street.

Laurie Hall Park Green Space and War Memorial.

Many people raised concerns about the loss of car parking spaces, particularly if Farmers is to stay in that location. Others have questioned whether this is the right location for a formal civic park, but suggest it would work well as more informal recreational space.

Those in support of the project like the idea of a flexible green space that complements the war memorial. The space could be used for civic events, performances and an outdoor cinema.

Transit Centre Gateway.

Most of people are very dissatisfied with current bus depot. Comments highlight the poor appearance, upkeep, safety and lack of lighting.

The feedback has provided three options:

- Revitalize the existing site with new lighting, CCTV cameras and a new coat of paint. Add other land uses like a diary or florist.
- Develop a new depot elsewhere in the central area – such as the Town Basin or next to the old Railway Station

Summary of Feedback: Whangarei 20/20 Momentum

- Move away from the idea of single bus depot/transit centre to a model of bus stops around the CBD.

Other notable comments highlight that current location is 'gateway' to the central city, in particular to Bank Street and therefore should be more welcoming.

Park Hill Hotel.

A majority of people think that a new hotel is needed and that current quality and quantity of accommodation is not adequate. Some support a 'high-end' boutique hotel whilst other suggests the need for larger hotel in the lower price range.

It terms of location, some comments points towards the waterfront as a more desirable location for new hotel rather than Dent St.

Central City Car Park.

Some people suggest that the car park is too small and difficult to drive around. Others suggest that its appearance could be improved with colourful paint or a green wall.

A number of comments question whether council should be running a parking building and whether rates subsidize the operating costs. Some people would also like to see more car parking, particularly disabled parking spaces and spaces for those with young children.

Reyburn House Lane.

The feedback is very positive. People think that a waterfront location will be desirable. Many people think that the quality of the design of any new development is crucial to its success. An urban design review panel and attracting quality developers are two ways to achieve this. Also, some comments are in support of a mix of uses at the ground floor such as cafes and boutique retail.

People would like to see better connectivity, through laneways and pedestrian connections, to the waterfront and to the CBD.

Mixed Use Residential

Similar to Reyburn House Lane, the feedback is very positive. Many people draw the connection between more inner city living and improving the vibrancy of the central area. To enable more inner city living some people would to address the leasehold titles or the high commercial rates.

A small number of comments question the approach and suggest that WDC should concentrate on core infrastructure. Others suggest that apartments would look 'tacky'.

Bascule Park.

A popular idea for the park is to include a formalized space for campervans. Others see it as a great place for a café. Some suggest that a café should stay open into the evenings to capitalize on the users of the walkway. Not all feedback is supportive of this. A number of people want to see the free parking retained.

Hatea Drive Parking Facility.

Summary of Feedback: Whangarei 20/20 Momentum

There is general agreement for a new parking building. A number of people suggest that a parking building is a better use of land rather than lots of parking in spread around the city.

There is support for a privately run parking building because many feel that ratepayer money should not be used to build a car park. Other comments suggest that a private developer would charge too much for parking.

50m Swimming Pool.

There was a mixed response to this project. A number of comments do not see this as a priority. Those in support suggest that it would be a valuable facility to support competitive swimming.

Sport Northland and the WDC Youth Advisory Panel show strong support acknowledging the range of aquatic activities that could be accommodated including large-scale competitions.

Whangarei Aquatic Centre

People like and use this centre, but some suggest that it needs a 'facelift' and better signage and connections to the CBD. In particular, to better incorporate the centre into the walking track network.

Basin View Accommodation

People support the project and like its waterfront location. Some people would like to see berths incorporated into this project. Similar to the Reyburn House Lane and Mixed Use Residential projects, quality design is important. A number of people questioned whether this would be an apartment development or a hotel.

Te Matau a Pohe

Very positive feedback, many feel this is a landmark and an iconic bridge. One comment suggests more landscaping could enhance the entrances to the bridge.

Hatea Loop.

Comments are all generally positive. Some comments suggest that the loop walkway approach should be implemented in other areas of the city.

There are a number of projects identified that could enhance the walkway:

- More lighting by the old BMX track
- Distance markers on the path or posts adjacent to the path
- Large trees
- Widening the walkway – Particularly on Riverside Drive and next to the playground.
- Picnic tables
- Shower facilities
- Mini golf course
- Activities for children, such as a sandpit or playground next to the exercise equipment so parents can exercise while their children play.
- Art work, including lifesize ceramic cows.
- Gardens/landscaping.
- Fruit trees

Summary of Feedback: Whangarei 20/20 Momentum

- More places to sit
- Shade sails

Kotuitui Whitinga

As with the Hatea Loop and Te Matau a Pohe, the comments are very positive, particularly on its design. The WDC Youth Advisory Group suggest a direct link from the bridge to Okara shopping centre.

Canopy Bridge

There were very positive comments about the bridge. Some people suggest improvements including beanbags and deck chairs similar to those in Wynyard Quarter, Auckland.

Hundertwasser Wairau Maori Art Centre

This project received very positive comments. Some people offered ideas how the surrounding area could be enhanced, including a sculpture park and improve access by foot and bike. A number of comments suggest WDC should be supportive of the project.

Hihiaua Cultural Centre

As with the Hundertwasser Wairau Maori Arts Centre, this project has received strong support. Some suggest that this is more important than the Hundertwasser project because it speaks about our cultural past.

WDC Youth Advisory Group recognizes that this could become a cultural hub and deliver positive impact on our community.

Whangarei Art Museum

Although the comments were positive, many point towards inadequate promotion. Others suggest the gallery should find a better location, which is more prominent.

Riverbank Theatre

Most people think the theatre is a good venue but is in need of a refurbishment.

Claphams Clock Museum

Comments were mixed. Some suggest that the museum location is too prominent and that it is only of interest to those who like clocks.

Reyburn House

People were positive in their comments about the space and condition of the building.

Heritage Art Walk

Summary of Feedback: Whangarei 20/20 Momentum

The heritage art walk received positive comments. Some people suggested the walk should be expanded around the city and should be better promoted.

One comment suggests more temporary exhibitions so that it is constantly changing to interest regular visitors.

Expanded Growers Market

The expanded growers market received very positive comments. However, there were a number of suggested improvements:

- Open Forum North toilets when the growers market is on
- Mural of vegetables on the railway overbridge
- Open the market later (12noon) and start it later in the morning (9am instead of 6am)
- Some more places to sit
- Better connections to the botanical gardens and the Youth Space
- Provide a cover for the mark which gives it a permanent base but still enables car parking

Emerald Necklace

Most people are supportive of increase emphasis on physical activity and cycling. Others welcome the project and suggest connections need to be made with other networks, such as Kamo and Onerahi.

Comments on how this project can be enhanced include:

- Ensuring it feels safe
- Improving water quality
- Better wayfinding and maps
- Remove graffiti and rubbish

Old Boys Large Format Retail

The project received negative comments. People suggest that out of town retail will undermine WDC objectives for regeneration and will take further business out of the CBD. One comment suggests that park land should not be used for private development.

Parihaka Interpretive Centre.

More clarity needed on the nature of this project. One comment suggest toilets and drinking fountain at the top of Parihaka

Glassworks Promenade

Generally positive comments. People would like to see a safe place for families to spend the day; others would like a ramp for easy launching of kayaks. One comment suggests a lock and weir system to maintain the water level.

Northland Events Centre

There was support for the Fritter Festival and more outdoor music events.

Summary of Feedback: Whangarei 20/20 Momentum

There were two negative comments about the limited range of events held at the events centre and the overall cost of the projects with 20/20 Momentum. Furthermore, the focus should be on water quality in the harbour and promoting the markets, much like the Matakana markets.

Pohe Island Enhanced Sports Fields and Facilities.

There were positive comments, particularly about the walkway. One comment has raised concerns about mitigating the noise and light from the playfields for those living in the area.

Pohe Island – Whangarei Activity Centre.

A number of ideas have been put forward through the feedback:

- Mountain bike track around the Pohe Island and the dog park
- A cycle way just for kids
- Upgrade of the BMX track
- A 5 star hotel (infer that this relates to the sites to the south)

Pohe Island – Expanded Planting

The comments are positive with suggestions on how to enhance the project:

- Ensure all the planting is native and provides habitat for native bird life
- Include information signs about tree species
- Parkour/free-running activity zone
- Drinking fountains
- Improve water quality
- Gardens
- Small café/food outlet

Pohe Island – Hatea Loop Corridor

The comments are positive with suggestions on how to enhance the project:

- Planting and landscaping similar to Hamilton Gardens
- Art installations/visual interest
- Sensory garden for the blind and visually impaired
- More lighting and litter bins
- Public showers
- Water clean enough to swim in
- Parkour area
- Easy access to the water for kayaks
- Educational Maori history panels
- Coffee cart
- Seating

Pohe Island Pop-up Retail and Activity Space.

A mixed response was received through the feedback. Some suggest that the area would be better without retail activities and there is a risk of it feeling too cluttered.

Others suggest that the Pohe Island could be enhanced with the following ideas:

- ‘Friday night food trucks’ similar to those in Christchurch

Summary of Feedback: Whangarei 20/20 Momentum

- Night markets similar to those in Auckland
- Youth activities (extended skate park, parkour, flying fox)
- Cafes and food stalls
- Complementary businesses around the loop, not just in one place
- Small in scale
- Botanical gardens
- Mini golf course
- Shade trees and shrubs (not palms)
- Seating
- Picnic areas

Notable new projects

A New Marina and Yacht Facilities

A number of comments and more detailed information from the Marina Trust suggest a new marina on the seaward side of Te Matua a Pohe. The reasons for this project include:

- The current marina is a capacity
- Parking shortages in the town basin
- No space available for any land based activities

Bank Street Regeneration

The Bank Street Revitalisation Group has provided detail information on a program of projects, which aim to revitalise Bank Street. This includes projects relating to Council assets such as the street and footpaths to projects that would be supported by the businesses on Bank Street.

The reasons for putting this project forward is to acknowledge the unique character of Bank St and its role on the fringe of the CBD, particularly for office/commercial and entertainment activities.

Retirement Village

A small number of comments would like to see a retirement village in the city, so that people of all ages can enjoy urban living and close proximity to the Town Basin.

Economic Regeneration

Feedback included number of projects that relate to economic activity and regeneration:

- Night markets
- Reusing the old boat sheds as restaurants
- Moving the Growers market to the CBD
- A new tourist information centre in the CBD
- A targeted CBD rate which is used solely for CBD regeneration projects
- Move the artisan market to James St
- Turn the town basin into 'Eat Street' like Rotorua
- Activities for teenagers – skate rink, internet café etc

Summary of Feedback: Whangarei 20/20 Momentum

Transport

Connectivity within the CBD and between the CBD and the Town Basin attracted many ideas for new projects:

- Remove lanes or Close Dent Street because it is the biggest problem for connecting the CBD and the Town Basin
- More wayfinding maps
- Pedestrian prioritization at the Bank St/Rust Avenue junction
- Shared space along Bank Street, between Rust and Vine St
- Treat pedestrians with respect and improve footpaths and crossings
- A link bus between Okara and Town
- Park and ride scheme
- Phase traffic lights to favour pedestrians