

Submission on Rodney Local Board Plan 2026:

Community-led development Planning

Residents want to shape growth — not be passengers to it

With population growth and no matching Auckland Council (Council) asset investment, people are frustrated by planning done to them rather than with them. A community-led Development Plan gives locals a structure to express shared priorities and expectations so Council investment aligns with what the community actually needs and supports.

Who we are:

This submission is made on behalf of the Mahurangi Community Planning Group (MCPG) - a group of experienced professionals who want to see proper community-led development planning embedded into the Rodney Local Board Plan as an ongoing activity.

We represent - and are supported by - different liaison, resident, business, and community groups who want better outcomes for Rodney people through improving the way Council works to recognise and support their needs in an environment of growth and change.

Warkworth/Mahurangi District has many place-based and functional community groups, volunteers and professionals, which makes it ideal in Rodney to pilot stronger community engagement.

What we seek:

Our request: Include a funded line item(s) in the Rodney Local Board 2026 Community Activity Programme to support the Mahurangi pilot for community-led development planning.

Embedding community-led development planning activity in the Local Board Plan builds directly on Council's existing investment in community placemaking and engagement.

For reasons we set out in attached submissions made to the Rodney Local Board (RLB), Council's existing tools do not produce integrated District development plans that can be implemented collaboratively by all stakeholders. Only comprehensive community-led planning and activity, supported by Council, can achieve that.

We want the Council's new Community Facilitators, working with communities, to integrate their placemaking roles (bringing communities together, arranging common events, improving utilisation of council community assets and personal and community

connections) with facilitating communities as contributors to plans for Rodney's development that they want and support.

We are starting with a pilot, initially based around a plan for development of the Warkworth Town Centre, to demonstrate the model and refine the engagement approach.

We have requested funding from the RLB in the Annual Plan to support the pilot. If successful, we ask that the activity then be embedded into ongoing Local Board Plan funding for extension district-wide.

Key considerations:

1. Responds to a recognised planning gap that Council itself cannot fill

Rodney has no District Development Plans that integrate spatial, environmental, social, economic and infrastructure needs for the Mahurangi area. Current planning tools are limited to regulatory zoning and land use restrictions together with prioritised project and budgeting. They do not match what is actually happening on the ground **or when it is happening**.

2. Aligns with Council's existing strategic direction

Council has already acknowledged the need for local place-shaping through its investment in community organisers. This initiative enables that investment to deliver actual planning outcomes by connecting those organisers to a structured community-led plan process.

3. Provides scope-limited, accountable funding

The project is managed by a charitable incorporated group (MCPG), ensuring proper accountability and no waste. The first-year \$100,000 is for administration and professional coordination to support community engagement and production of the Town Centre concept plan. MCPG will fully account for all spending to the RLB.

4. Maximises voluntary community expertise

Local knowledge, participation and input are free. What requires funding is coordination, facilitation and technical planning support — the specialist work necessary to translate community priorities into an implementable development plan.

5. Pilots a scalable model that reduces risk

The project has clear, staged **deliverables in year one**: a completed Town Centre concept plan validated through structured community engagement, giving Council a workable blueprint to support future asset planning.

Subsequent years' **deliverables** include: a Mahurangi-wide development plan, independent review, and, if successful, a model for extension to other settlements such as Kumeū, Riverhead, Helensville and Wellsford.

The Proposal

This work bridges the gap between Council regulatory planning and planning for the timely funding and provision of Council's infrastructure and facilities assets, alongside private development.

Council has already recognised elements of this disconnect and proper engagement and empowerment of communities can fix it. Better governance and management require both vertical alignment and horizontal integration, alongside community-based decision making on local matters (local knows local).

We have set out our case to the RLB requesting its support for our communities through this project (initially as a pilot).

We attach our original proposal and associated slides which accompanied our September 2025 Deputation, and our slides from the follow-up November 2025 Deputation. The presentations and discussion from those meetings are available from Council's Local Board meeting stream. These provide a record of Local Board support for progressing the pilot to implementation.

To give effect to our project it now needs to be a formal part of the Community Activity Programme in the RLB Plan approved by the RLB.

Our initiative is consistent with all current research, empirical evidence and academic thinking on improving the way local government delivers better outcomes (as perceived by communities) for communities. We hope that Council's Community and Engagement teams actively support our efforts and engage and work with us, and all of Rodney communities on this pilot.

Success means a community-endorsed development plan that reduces future infrastructure risk, improves trust, and ensures Council investment is aligned with growth in the right places, at the right time.

Pete Sinton: (Chair, Warkworth Area Liaison Group, Mahurangi Community Planning Group),

Bill Foster: (Chair, Northern Action Group Inc)

Dave Stott: (Chair, OneMahurangi Business Association)

6 December 2025