

# PART A

## OUR DISTRICT PLAN

ADVICE NOTE: This section is for information only and does not form part of the statutory District Plan

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

This section provides a non-statutory discussion of the vision for Rotorua. It summarises the unique aspects of our district that have been considered in the development of this plan and demonstrates how the District Plan is improving the way we live, work, and play in our community.

This section also highlights how the District Plan is enabling economic growth by supporting four key economic drivers.

Every district in New Zealand has a district plan, prepared under the Resource Management Act (1991) to manage land use, subdivision and development within the district. It identifies where activities can take place, what land can be developed and what natural and cultural features should be protected. The District Plan is the foundation for all land use decisions.

The Rotorua District Plan not only helps council fulfill its legal obligations, but through considering the significant resource management issues, also supports the community's vision for Rotorua into the future.

This District Plan enables Rotorua's 2030 vision through considering the environmental sustainability and other obligations under the RMA. It aligns with Rotorua's key economic drivers as outlined in the Rotorua Sustainable Economic Growth Strategy (2011).

Rotorua Lakes Council acknowledge Te Arawa as key investors and partners to the Rotorua District Council during the life of this District Plan. Te Arawa has been at the forefront of tourism development, sharing the geothermal landscape with visitors from all parts of the world and gifting substantial areas of land to benefit the entire Rotorua community.

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### 2.1 OUR UNIQUE DISTRICT

Rotorua has many features that set it apart from other districts. This section summarises the unique aspects that have been considered in the formation of this District Plan. These unique features create constraints but also offer opportunity for the continued growth of our district.

Māori were the first inhabitants of the district and continue to make up a significant proportion of the population. This Māori heritage brings both a deep historical significance and a proud, welcoming spirit of hospitality, or manaakitanga, which attracts over three million visitors a year.

The Rotorua district covers 261,906 hectares, and falls almost equally into the Waikato and Bay of Plenty regions. With 41% of land use in forest, 43% in agriculture, and 8% made up of lakes. Natural resources abound; their sustainability is a priority for our District Plan.

Founded on the Taupo Volcanic Zone, Rotorua has the most geothermal fields in New Zealand. They provide a unique source of energy as well as a base for tourism. Geothermal activity is highly visible throughout the district with numerous steam vents, hot mud pools and geysers. The volcanic landscape presents opportunities but also risks that need to be factored into land use decisions. Our District Plan takes a practical approach to assessing and addressing these risks and balancing them with the desire for community development.

Rotorua boasts 16 lakes, 120 wetland areas, three major rivers, and the Hamurana pure water spring. The lakes are of importance to our community for their recreational opportunities, fisheries and significance to tangata whenua. Lake water quality is a key concern for the community, and its improvement is one of the goals of this District Plan.

The geothermal flavour of the area also means the district's vegetation is unique. The pastoral history has had a significant impact on native vegetation. While there are some large areas of native bush, generally our native remnants need protection.

Rotorua boasts many outstanding natural features, from the caldera Rotorua is formed in, to islands, mountains, landscape features and geothermal areas. The District Plan takes a pragmatic and incentivised approach to their management and protection.

The principal of kaitiakitanga guides the District Plan to ensure the stewardship of our unique district for future generations.

### 2.1.1 The Built Environment

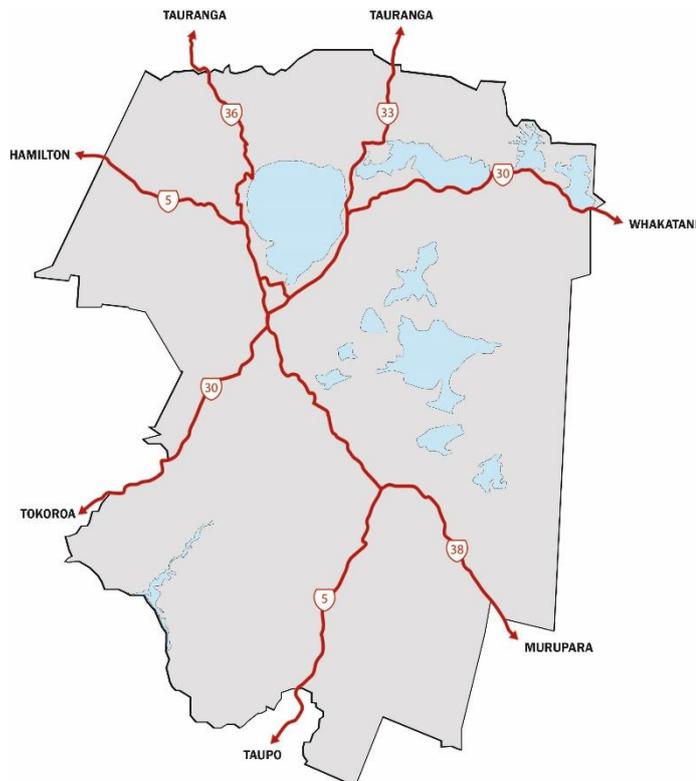
The city was established in 1880 close to the Māori villages of Ōhinemutu and Whakarewarewa. The central business district started taking shape during a period of expansion in the 1920s. The built residential areas expanded further, surrounded by geothermally active sites which were set aside as reserves for the benefit of residents. Much of this land, such as Government Gardens and Kuirau Park, is still close to the city and remains in reserve.

The city and its residential suburban belt generally follow a traditional north-south grid pattern from the southern edge of Lake Rotorua. The city is at the intersection of five major state highways and is a key junction in the network of roads linking Hamilton, Taupo, Whakatane and Tauranga.

Recreational settlements containing a mix of permanent and temporary residents have developed around the edges of the larger lakes.

## 2.1.2 Infrastructure

Rotorua is in a strategic central location and has excellent infrastructure to facilitate the transfer of goods, energy and information. Five major state highways converge in Rotorua: 5, 30, and 30A near the city centre and 33 and 36 on the outskirts of the city. Most of the industrial and manufacturing activities are concentrated on the northern, eastern and southern highway routes.



The state highway network has a major influence on land use planning in the district and the efficiency of this network is crucial for our district's future economic growth. A balance needs to be maintained for tourists to easily reach our city, and for freight to be efficiently transported through and from Rotorua. Aspects of the District Plan and many of the roading projects are aimed at reducing friction between local and through traffic.

The Rotorua airport, 9km northeast of the city centre, off State Highway 30 and close to large residential areas, is the gateway for the wider Bay of Plenty Region. It is a focal point of the city with significant on-going investment and development planned.

Part 1 of the District Plan gives a detailed summary of Rotorua's on-going infrastructure development. Map 101 identifies the state highways.

## 3.1 THE VISION FOR ROTORUA

The Rotorua Sustainable Economic Growth Strategy (RSEGS) has been developed to support the district vision. It does this by targeting sectors where the district has a competitive advantage.

Through considering its legal obligations relating to sustainability, the environment and significant resource management issues, the District Plan supports the RSEGS in these objectives:

1. Improve the Reputation of Rotorua as:
  - a. A leader in agriculture, forestry, geothermal, tourism and wood processing.
  - b. A preferred lifestyle destination.
  - c. An attractive and easy place to invest and do business with.
  - d. A district with an enabling regulatory environment.

- e. Enabling agricultural performance through innovation.
2. Lift the Performance of the Local Economy by:
- a. Achieving growth of new businesses in the area.
  - b. Retaining and developing existing businesses.
  - c. Creating new jobs.
  - d. Attracting new residents.

This section shows how the District Plan supports these strategies and gives guidance for how we can live, work, play, and grow in our district.

### 3.1.1 Live, Work and Play in Rotorua

#### 1. Live

Rotorua's population is expected to grow steadily in line with the latest census data and growth assumption during the life cycle of the District Plan. In addition, the Rotorua district hosts an average of 8,500-10,000 visitors each day. Rotorua has modern infrastructure and services capable of supporting an increase in population. The District Plan is committed to ensuring living options remain ahead of projected residential and visitor growth.

Rotorua is a well-designed district, offering easy access to work, the city centre, education, health, sporting, recreational and transport services. A key point of difference is the range of lifestyle options the district offers – including inner city, traditional suburban and rural residential – with lake views a common feature. The District Plan aims to create a compact city and therefore encourages urban infill, whilst considering retaining residents' privacy, usable outdoor space and views. Changes to rural land use, designed to improve lake water quality, will result in further options for semi-rural lifestyle blocks and lakeside living.

There are over 34 marae and many important cultural and historical features in the district. These ancestral lands, water, sites, waahī tapu and other tāonga are carefully protected in the District Plan.

Unique to Rotorua are the residential areas located in, or on, areas of geothermal activity, with Ōhinemutu and Whakarewarewa the main examples. There are strong cultural links between these villages and the surface features. It is one reason that both villages are international tourist attractions.

Tourist accommodation is also a focus of the District Plan, which allows specific commercial zones for tourism activities and accommodation and policies that promote additional accommodation, particularly towards the lakefront.

The District Plan clearly defines residential, non-residential and commercial zones to provide certainty to residents and maintain a high level of residential amenity.

See Parts 4, 5 and 6 for more detail.

## 2. Work

The city centre is the main retail, commercial and entertainment precinct. It is also the focal point of community social and cultural activities. The District Plan aims to encourage a vibrant, modern city centre for residents and tourists alike.

Rotorua's key economic drivers are the tourism, forestry and wood processing, geothermal and agricultural sectors. Tourist attractions have been given specific zoning to encourage further development in concentrated areas, including accommodation, especially towards the lakefront.

Further forestry and wood processing development is also encouraged via land use changes towards forestry and the creation of education, forest administration and research zones at the Scion and Waipa sites.

The District Plan protects productive rural land for agriculture operating within environmental limits, recognizing the key economic and employment contribution to the district from this sector. Key considerations are the environmental impacts of this industry on the reduction of nutrients into Rotorua's water. The plan allows for geothermal exploration and development of geothermal fields, while protecting the tourism industry and environment.

The district has a strong manufacturing and service industry to support these key sectors. The District Plan encourages further development of innovation parks where related businesses can co-locate. The District Plan also enables education and research with special provisions for the Scion campus and Waiariki Bay of Plenty Polytechnic.

Careful thought has also been given to ensuring support infrastructure is well maintained and prepared for future growth. This means continued development of Rotorua airport, and ongoing maintenance and development of major roadways, gas and geothermal energy pipelines, telecommunications, electricity and sewerage services. Infrastructure and support services are covered in Parts 1 and 15.

While the plan supports economic growth, it also considers noise, dust and traffic impacts, especially where industrial and residential zones meet. Rural areas, which contain most of the important natural landscapes and sites of significant cultural heritage, are also managed to balance the protection of these values within the working rural landscapes they are part of. See Parts 4, 7 and 9 for more detail.

## 3. Play

Rotorua has a reputation as New Zealand's "playground" with abundant tourist attractions, and recreational and entertainment opportunities. The city centre boasts world-class dining, retail and entertainment options and the surrounding environment offers an array of adventure and leisure activities.

Strengthening a vibrant, strong and compact city centre is one of the key improvement goals for the District Plan. The urban design framework is aimed at creating a central entertainment hub. Initiatives within the District Plan that support this include restaurants and alfresco dining on footpaths, and zonings to encourage further tourism accommodation near the lakefront.

Rotorua is second only to Auckland in the number of events and conferences it hosts. The District Plan allows for temporary events to be held in most zones. For large events, it provides guidelines for high use reserves.

Rotorua's extensive natural features create a perfect environment for outdoor activity. The forested hills surrounding Rotorua are ideal for walking, running, and mountain biking. The National Cycling Centre of Excellence for mountain biking is located in Rotorua's internationally renowned Whakarewarewa forest.

The district's many lakes, lakeside settlements and lakeside resources provide opportunities for swimming, camping, fishing, boating and other outdoor pursuits. Rotorua has 16 natural lakes, three major rivers and numerous waterways, which hold cultural significance to Te Arawa and require careful management to ensure water quality is enhanced.

Rotorua also has over 800 hectares of council-maintained reserves, gardens and parks available for community use. Within this area are more than 110 public reserves with a wide range of amenities, playgrounds and walking tracks that contribute to the recreational value of Rotorua.

See Part 10 (Reserves, Community Assets and Water) for more detail.

## 3.2 GROW ROTORUA

The Rotorua Sustainable Economic Growth Strategy has defined four key priorities for economic growth - agriculture, forestry, geothermal and tourism.

The Rotorua District Plan is designed to uphold the Resource Management Act (1991) by creating an enabling regulatory framework that balances the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the community.

This section summarises how the District Plan supports economic growth in each sector.

### 3.2.1 Forestry

Rotorua has over 64,000 hectares of forest including Kāingaroa – the oldest and largest production forest in the Southern Hemisphere. Forestry and wood processing contributes to the local GDP and is the district's second largest employer. Rotorua is part of the Central North Island (CNI) area which contains 30% of New Zealand's plantation and produces 45% of the country's annual wood harvest. Due to the vast amount of available raw material, Rotorua is home to leading companies such as Red Stag Timber, Lockwood, Hayes International, Timberlands and Verda. Scion, the Crown Research Institute is also located within our district, providing science and technology support for this highly productive industry.

The District Plan supports the forestry sector with a permissive approach to development. Resource consent is not required for forestry as a primary industry in the rural zone. To further promote the industry, a specific business and innovation zone for the forestry sector is defined, with the Scion and Waipa sites as primary anchors.

### 3.2.2 Tourism

Tourism is also a major contributor to Rotorua's GDP and is our district's largest employer. Rotorua is an iconic domestic and international visitor destination, providing world class tourist attractions, events, facilities and amenities. Rotorua is a global brand based on Māori culture, geothermal attractions, lakes and adventure activities.

The region hosts approximately 3 million visitors every year. On any given day, there can be 8,500-10,000 tourists in our district. An increasing number of events and conferences attract visitors to our many accommodation, restaurant, retail and tourism options.

The District Plan includes new policy frameworks that promote additional tourist accommodation in the city centre, particularly towards the lakefront. Increased building heights and removing the requirement for on-site car parking are features of this District Plan. Tourist attractions have also been given specific zonings to encourage similar activities in concentrated areas, particularly along the entranceways to Rotorua.

### 3.2.3 Geothermal

The Rotorua geothermal field and its features are culturally significant national and local treasures. Our district is located on some of the highest temperature geothermal fields in the country. The development of geothermal energy for heating, electricity generation and emerging bio-fuel processes is expected to have a significant and positive impact on Rotorua's economy. The Ohaaki Geothermal Power Station is a major feature of the southern part of our district and will be followed by others. On-going exploration may result in further fields being developed.

Rotorua is part of a Bay of Plenty regional strategy that considers new approaches to cleaner and more responsible energy. The District Plan classifies and maps the district's geothermal systems according to regional council requirements identifying where development can occur. The District Plan allows for geothermal exploration and development of geothermal fields in specific areas, while protecting the tourism industry in others. This natural resource needs to be carefully managed to ensure standards, stability and monitoring are in place to ensure resource sustainability and safety.

### 3.2.4 Agriculture

Agriculture plays a major role in the local economy. Most agricultural land is used for dairy, sheep, beef and deer farming. The region also boasts a number of sustainable farming systems. Profitable operations that also demonstrate reduced environmental impacts will be an increasing focus.

Nutrient release into our lakes and waterways is a key concern, and the Lake Rotorua catchment is a major priority. Rotorua District Council, Regional Councils, Central Government and Te Arawa Lakes Trust are collaborating on initiatives to mitigate the effects of nutrient runoff from pastoral farming. The District Plan must align with regional plans and policy statements on this important issue.

The District Plan recognizes the need to develop incentives which encourage landowners to change land management or land use to recreation or tourism related activities that result in a reduction of pollutants entering waterways.