

Placemaking Strategy

Building communities and creating local places

Council Vision:

“To be a recognised leader in creating a district that prides itself on economic excellence, local participation and sustainable communities.”

A critical component of the local participation in the vision is to enable our communities to help themselves. Placemaking is a means of achieving this participation.

2020 Challenge:

“By 30th June 2020 Our Community is the Most Engaged in New Zealand”

The Council vision is a long term goal. In order to achieve this it is recognised that Council and communities need to work together. The 2020 challenge is a measure in meeting this vision. To help with meeting the 20/20 Challenge, staff have been tasked to create a model that will enable groups or individuals to develop spaces that are representative of the community in which they live and build civic pride.

Placemaking Vision:

“Building communities and creating places by helping our community groups have a direct influence over their built environment.”

“Building communities and creating places” outlines a plan of action that will guide communities and Council in creating vibrant, caring, creative and sustainable public places around the district. This strategy provides the foundation for a positive and proactive approach to Placemaking in the Waikato District.

What is Placemaking?

Placemaking is a people-centred approach to the planning, design and management of public spaces. Put simply, it involves looking at, listening to and asking questions of the people who live, work and play in a particular space, to discover needs and aspirations. This information is then used to create a common vision for that place. The vision begins with small-scale, do-able improvements that can immediately bring benefits to public places and the people who use them.

Why we have developed this strategy?

The community has informed us through their community plans how they would like their areas to look and develop over time and projects to be implemented that would support this development. Many of these projects fall outside the core business of Local Government and because of legislative and budget restrictions may fail to be achieved in Council’s normal work programme. Placemaking is a means by which groups can work within their individual communities, often keeping costs to a minimum by utilising “reusable materials” and local resources and people such as youth. The result is that communities have input into what is happening in their areas, taking ownership of projects by becoming involved thus building the community spirit. By embarking on a strategy of creative community enhancement, Waikato District is striving to improve its image and residents’

quality of life. The private realm, semi-public spaces and how these interact with the public realm have a significant effect on how people experience the district.

The purpose of the Placemaking Strategy is to ensure linkages between the Council goals in the 10 year plan, the work of individual units within the Council and the Council's aspiration for the district.

Goals of the strategy

The strategy is based on three goals.

Goal One *Engage the community in Placemaking initiatives locally*

Council wishes to engage with the community in alternative ways to create public spaces that will reflect each individual community's unique identity. The community knows from experience how a particular area has developed, how it is currently being used and the way they would like the area to function in the future. By early involvement in a project the community will provide insight into the talents and assets within their area which would help achieve this goal. Tapping into this information at the beginning of the process will help to create a sense of community ownership in a project that can be of great benefit to Council and the community. Each area has their own business, service and youth groups along with residents who are actively involved in the community. These groups can provide the links necessary to precipitate wider engagement with the public.

We will:

- promote the concept of placemaking to community boards and committees
- facilitate placemaking workshops in communities to kindle interest in projects and develop community ideas
- develop relationships within communities with Council's placemaking champions

Goal Two *Make it happen*

To achieve this vision and by choosing to involve the community in Placemaking projects, Council will be required to keep the momentum to the forefront for this new way of thinking and to support the implementation of projects with resources. These resources will consist of staff resourcing and provision of funds to facilitate projects. External partners will be critical to the future success of projects and Council can facilitate this approach.

We will:

- identify a Placemaking Champion in Council
- provide and prioritise council resources including staff, other projects and equipment to engage with the community
- facilitate approaches with external agencies and partners for funding to undertake projects
- work with Community Boards and support from Discretionary Funds
- provide initial funds as contributions towards projects
- liaise with internal Council staff to facilitate project inception
- promote and implement the philosophy of Placemaking across Council departments and identify relevant champions in groups
- co-ordinate teams of relevant staff to support and facilitate projects

Goal 3 Involving our Youth

Council has undertaken to engage with the youth of the district in an endeavour to build meaningful relationships amongst this section of our community. Youth are the community of the future although living in the present. In many cases these groups will be the ones using these community spaces. There were 19,470 people under 19 years of age in the Waikato District area at the 2013 Census, 30% of the total population. It is important for the future of the district that Council takes the views of this group of residents into account. Their involvement and ownership in creating and developing spaces that are meaningful locally based and which reflect their diversity will be invaluable.

We will:

- facilitate the involvement of youth in Placemaking projects as a way to develop their leadership potential
- facilitate programmes initiated from local input
- enhance Council's involvement with the young people in the District

How we will achieve the vision:

The success of Placemaking will be reliant on interaction with the community. While the aim of Placemaking is to promote alternative ways of resourcing, such as the 'one man's junk is another man's treasure' approach, commitment is required from Council to facilitate and support the inception of projects with funds and resources. The philosophy of Placemaking is not widely recognized in Council, nor is staff resources allocated to implementing this philosophy. To achieve the Placemaking vision throughout the district, these issues will need to be addressed going forward.