

Rangitikei Tomorrow

Working towards an economic
resilient and thriving Rangitikei

Economic Strategy and Action Plan



make this place home



Introduction

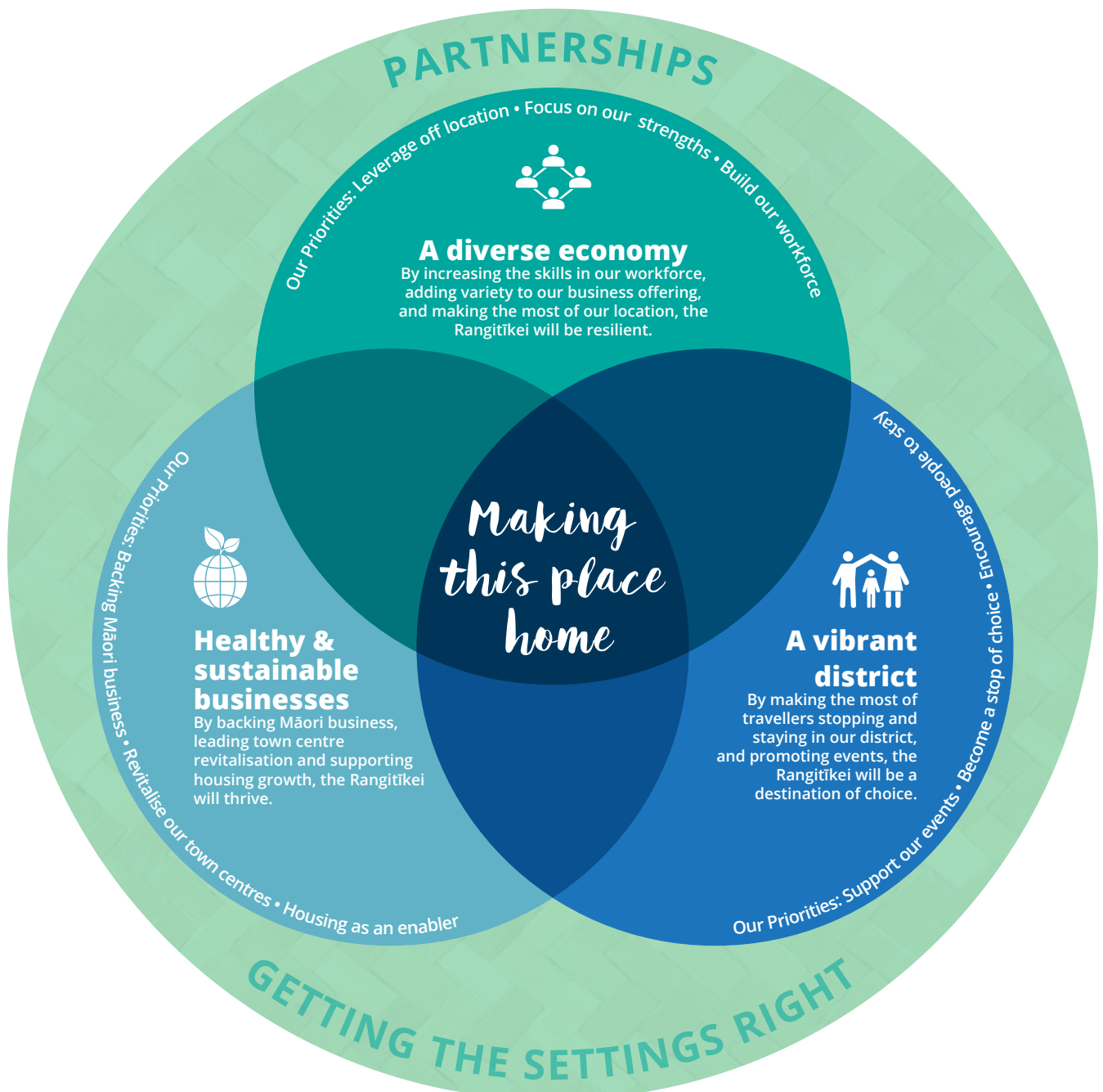
A strong local economy is foundational to a prosperous, vibrant, and resilient community. When the economy is thriving, residents see better job opportunities, higher wages, and a holistically better standard of living.

Rangitikei is home to many successful local, national and global organisations who enrich and support Rangitikei as a fantastic place to live, work, and do business.

The future is exciting for Rangitikei. The district is well-positioned to capitalise on opportunities for future economic development and growth, but we need to be prepared.

Rangitikei Tomorrow presents an ambitious economic vision for Rangitikei. It identifies key goals and priorities that will ensure the district remains well positioned for growth, and sets out how we plan to cultivate these opportunities with a comprehensive action plan.

Plan on a page



How Rangitikei Tomorrow was created

Rangitikei Tomorrow was developed in multiple stages. Initial work focussed on a stocktake of the current economic outlook and profile of Rangitikei, including understanding economic indicators such as GDP, income, and industry composition. This initial data was presented to key partners and stakeholders for discussion.

Through a series of workshops, Rangitikei iwi, business and sector leaders, and Rangitikei District Council Elected Members provided valuable insights into the real life experiences that fuel Rangitikei economic data.

Key themes from these workshops are briefly outlined below:

Iwi

- Individual wealth is generated through equitable access to education, employment and training.
- People are our biggest resource.
- By procuring local contractors, Rangitikei District Council has the opportunity to make a difference to the local economy.
- Regulatory settings are important for enabling economic growth - i.e. by enabling zoning rules for commercial activities.
- Recruiting skilled workers is a challenge in a large district with a small population.
- Using the word 'wellbeing' means strong interconnections between all aspects of wellbeing. All aspects of wellbeing need to be weaved together - economic wellbeing cannot stand on its own. A good example of this is Ngā Puna Rau o Rangitikei, a collective of hapū and iwi connected to the Rangitikei awa catchment that works to manage and protect the awa. Their initiatives deliver environmental benefits for the Rangitikei awa catchment, while also delivering economic outcomes through local employment opportunities.
- Distribution of resources is important for the wellbeing of the whole community. It is important that everyone who calls Rangitikei home benefits from economic growth and development.
- Addressing inequity and striving for social cohesion are important elements of any economic growth and development strategy. If we aspire for all Rangitikei communities to truly thrive, we need to connect with the people are just trying to make it to the next day
- Economic wellbeing is about the opportunity to have choice. It does not necessarily mean financial wealth or a traditional career, it could mean serving the community, or the flexibility to stay at home and care for whānau.

Rangitikei businesses, sector leaders, and Elected Members

- The Agricultural sector is a strength in our district and should be celebrated. It is however, under pressure from rising costs, tighter margins and stricter regulatory environment.
- Town centre development is important to attract talent and money into the economy. Earthquake prone building regulations are limiting development opportunities.
- Cost of living is an advantage for Rangitikei. The Rangitikei district offers great lifestyle at a more affordable price. These advantages should be capitalised and promoted more.
- Diversification of the economy (i.e. growing our tourism offering, or increasing manufacturing capabilities) is necessary but will require long-term effort and investment.
- Opportunity to better 'tell our story'. The beauty of Rangitikei, and the affordability of life here is undersold.
- Council procurement practices could better support local businesses by being directive about the benefits of local procurement.



National and regional strategic context

National

The Government has been clear about economic growth and development as a key priority. This approach differs from the wellbeing model introduced by the previous Labour Government.

Rangitikei Tomorrow has been scoped and shaped within the context of the 2025 political environment. However, as this document should endure and extend beyond the priorities of the Government of the day, we have ensured Rangitikei-specific nuance and the unique opportunities and challenges facing the district are prioritised.

Accelerate 35 (previously, Accelerate 25)

Accelerate 35 a regional economic development initiative that focuses on growing a prosperous Manawatū-Whanganui. It was established in response to a Manawatū-Whanganui Regional Growth Study undertaken in 2015 and facilitates collaboration and collective involvement in regional economic growth opportunities.

The initiative's mission is to "fast-track the major strategic priorities that will propel Manawatū-Whanganui forward". It plans to do this by assembling, inspiring and empowering talented teams to lead the strategic priorities that matter to them.

Te Pae Tawhiti

Te Pae Tawhiti is an intergenerational strategy for Māori economic development in the Manawatū-Whanganui region over the next twenty-four years. Its purpose is to provide direction and support for Māori to pursue economic development as whānau, hapū, iwi enterprises and communities, individually and collectively. Te Pae Tawhiti believes collaboration through Māori alliance will almost certainly accelerate economic growth that benefits both Māori and non-Māori in the Manawatū-Whanganui region.



High Country looking north towards Mount Ruapehu

The Rangitīkei District

Located in the Central North Island, Rangitīkei is part of the Manawatū-Whanganui region. The district covers 4,479 square kilometres and supports a strong primary sector - from the sand country of the south coast, to the magnificent hills of northern Rangitīkei.

Whanganui and Palmerston North are within a commutable distance from Southern Rangitīkei. Wellington, New Plymouth, Taupō and the Hawke's Bay are within a 2 – 3 hour drive.

Rangitīkei has the advantage of access to State Highways 1 and 3, both of which provide significant inter-regional freight, commuter, and visitor traffic.

At least 28.5 million tonnes¹ (approximately 10% of Aotearoa New Zealand's total volume) of freight moves through the wider Manawatū-Whanganui region, relying on Rangitīkei road and rail infrastructure. For example, the Taihape-Napier Road provides Hawke's Bay with a key link from Rangitīkei and vice versa.

The extensive Rangitīkei rail network transports freight around the North Island with at least 1.6 million tonnes passing through Marton per year.

Air Force Base Ōhakea is located just across the Rangitīkei River in the Manawatū District. The Airbase's defence infrastructure carries national significance with a growing workforce, many of whom call Rangitīkei home. Base Ōhakea undoubtedly supports continued population growth in Southern Rangitīkei.

Rangitīkei has been growing at a rate of around 170 people per year, resulting in increased housing pressure. Marton and Bulls have experienced the biggest growth pressure, followed by Hunterville and Taihape.

In 2024, roughly 16,650 call Rangitīkei home.

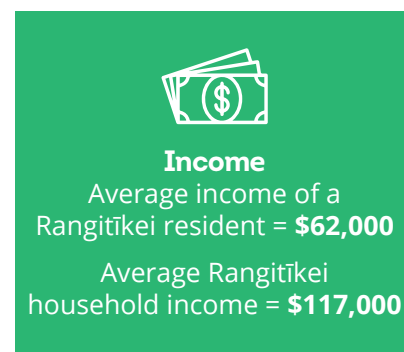
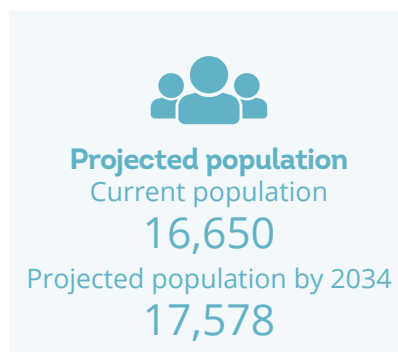
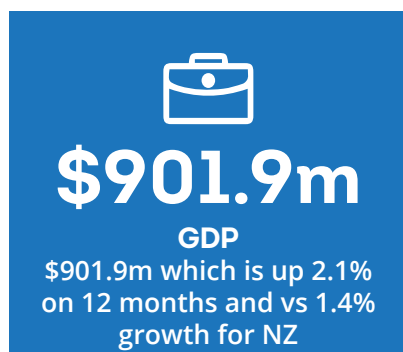
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Data obtained from the Ministry of Transport National Freight Demand Study 2017/18



RANGITIKEI
the way life should be

Our economy (as at 2024)



Top 5 industries contributing to the Rangitikei economy

Agriculture, forestry and fishing	30%
Manufacturing	11.9%
Rental, hiring and real estate services	6.0%
Public administration and safety	5.7%
Construction	4.7%

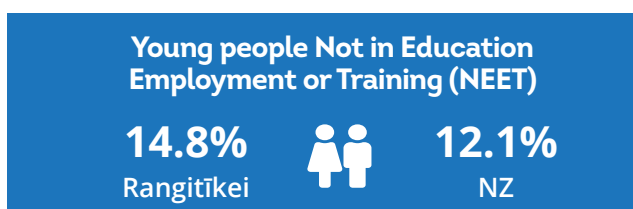
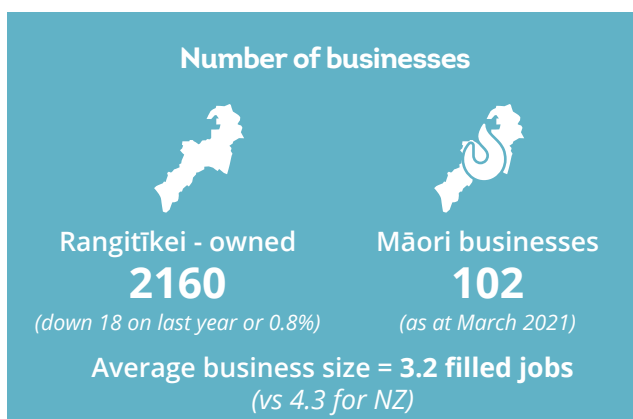
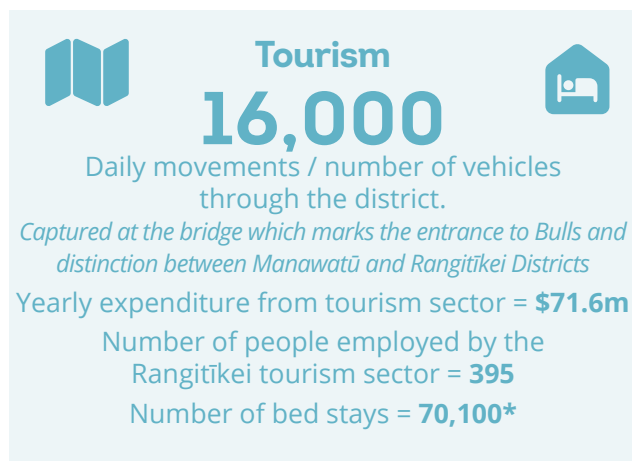
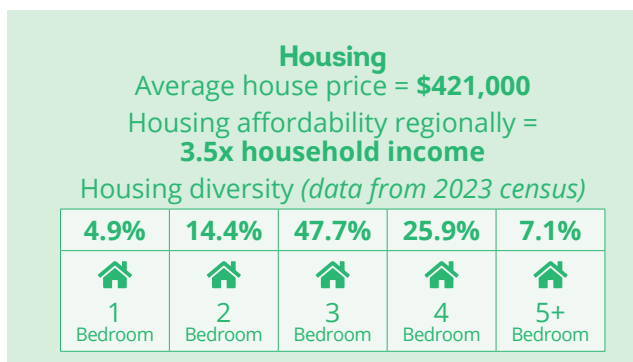
Skills
(Rangitikei vs Aotearoa New Zealand)

	Rangitikei	NZ
Highly-skilled	38.3%	38.5%
Skilled	9.5%	13.2%
Semi-skilled	12.2%	13.6%
Low-skilled	40.1%	34.7%

Year on year industry contribution



Top 5		Bottom 5	
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	\$19.3m	Financial and insurance services	-\$4.5m
Public administration and safety	\$4.9m	Retail trade	-\$3.9m
Information media and telecommunications	\$3.4m	Transport, postal and warehousing	-\$2.6m
Manufacturing	\$1.2m	Rental, hiring and real estate services	-\$1.8m
Health care and social assistance	\$0.9m	Professional, scientific and technical services	-\$1.7m



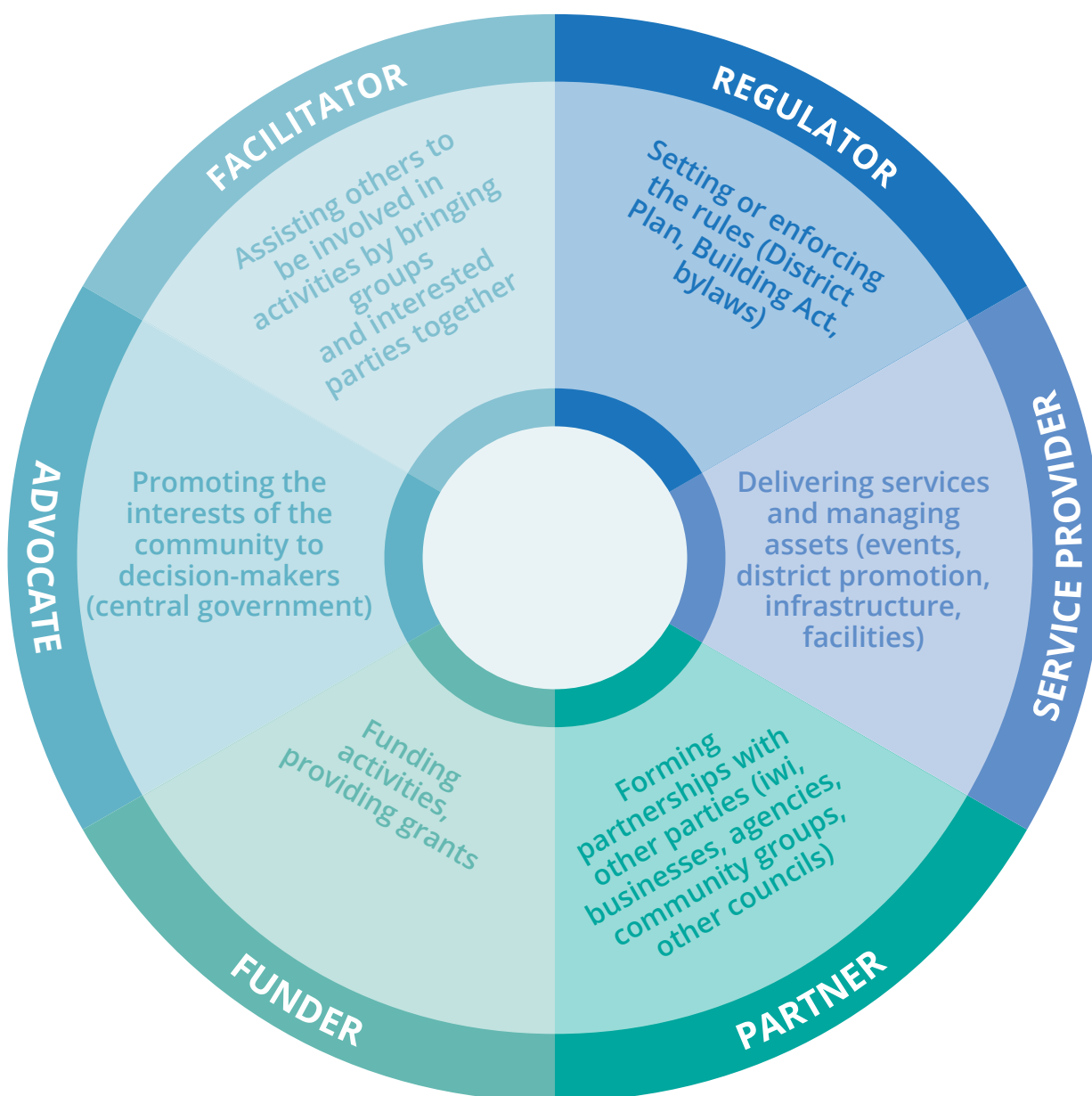
* (i.e. In any given year, 70,000 people come and stay in Rangitikei for a night: 1 night = 1 bed stay)

How Rangitikei District Council contributes to Rangitikei economic growth

Although Rangitikei District Council aspires to be an efficient contributor to Rangitikei economic growth and development, it is important to note the success of Rangitikei Tomorrow is fundamentally centred around all partners working together.

Council acknowledges the wide range of people, businesses, iwi, agencies, and stakeholders involved in economic growth and development in Rangitikei. Working collaboratively is vital to achieving the best outcomes and building a prosperous future.

This strategy does not attempt to cover the roles and activities of all these parties, it focuses on the path forward for Rangitikei District Council. The following outlines how Council currently contributes to the Rangitikei economy as a facilitator, regulator, service provider, partner, funder, and advocate.



Existing programmes that contribute to economic growth

Programme	Description	Council's role
Urban Growth Plan Change	Council is reviewing the rules for residential and rural lifestyle development and rezoning of land to ensure a sufficient supply for the next 30 years	Regulator
Rates Remissions	Ensuring settings for rates remissions have strong ties to economic benefit across the district and ensuring the opportunity to access a remission is well understood from those who could benefit. For example: rates remissions for earthquake –prone buildings and for new dwellings.	Regulator
District Promotion	Enhancing the visibility and appeal of Rangitikei district is a key focus for driving economic growth through more visitors to the district. Current efforts include promoting the district's unique and natural attractions and events through targeted marketing campaigns.	Service provider
Events	Council leads the delivery of Marton Market Day and Harvest Festival. We also support the delivery of community events across the district through sponsorship funding, promotion and in-kind support.	Service provider / Funder
Promoting a healthy business network	Regular contact with businesses through the district including enabling 'Business After 5' events, Shop Local campaigns. Promoting a healthy business network provides an important link between business and Council, which benefits both parties.	Facilitator / Partner
Mayors Taskforce for Jobs	The delivery of this programme through a third party provider is critical to reducing the number of NEET's (16-24 year olds not in employment, education or training) in the district. This programme also facilitates employment opportunities that benefit both residents and employers across the district. The programme has placed over 600 people into work since 2020.	Service provider
Procurement and contract management policy	Council has a procurement policy which considers economic benefit to the district through social procurement, particularly 'Think Local' which speaks to how procurement decisions improve economic outcomes through employment or sustainable business growth.	Regulator / Service provider / Facilitator

Programme	Description	Council's role
Marton Rail Hub	The opportunity to develop a Rail Hub at the Marton Industrial Development Area remains a key piece of work that will undoubtedly unlock economic growth and employment opportunities from a range of new and existing industries.	Partner / Advocate / Regulator
Town Centre revitalisation	Rangitikei town centres are hubs of commercial activity, providing goods and services for residents and local job opportunities. Council is working on a streetscape upgrade plan for Marton while also assisting building owners and businesses to make improvements to the built environment (i.e. painting shop faces and facilitating connections for building redevelopment). Placemaking and wayfinding initiatives are also a key component to the overall vibrancy of our town centres – ensuring residents feel at home in Rangitikei town centre, and visitors to the district are able to navigate to shops and places where they can invest in the local economy.	Facilitator / Service provider / Advocate
Strengthen Iwi relationships	Iwi-led providers are significant and vital contributors to Rangitikei health and social services. Council wishes to strengthen relationships and work in partnership with iwi to enable new and existing business activities. Establishment of papakāinga (communal Māori housing) for urban development growth is also a key Council and iwi partnership opportunity.	Partner
Infrastructure investment	Council invests in infrastructure through a combination of capital and operational expenditure outlined in the Long-Term Plan 2024-34 and supporting documents.	Service provider
Partnerships	Council understands it cannot do this work on its own and needs strong partnerships to support Economic Growth in the district. Examples include Business Rangitikei, Accelerate 35, and MBIE.	Partner

Economic Challenges for the Rangitīkei District

Struggling town centres

Our town centres are going through a period of change, with vacant shops, buildings in need of maintenance, and limited new development. The retail sector is declining, with reductions in revenue and employment. Many of the buildings are protected by Heritage and the Earthquake-prone building requirements. Earthquake-prone building requirements are resulting in some buildings being unsafe for occupancy. Thriving town centres are important for attracting businesses and people to our towns.

Primary sector fluctuation

The primary sector contributes to over 30% of the district's GDP, primarily from sheep and beef. A further 5% of GDP is associated with manufacturing activities that are a direct secondary activity from the primary sector (e.g. meat processing). It is important our economy is aware of and prepared for fluctuations in this sector, and resilient to its highs and lows.

Ageing population

Rangitīkei has an ageing population. The median age is 41 years, higher than the Aotearoa New Zealand median of 38 years. Fewer working age people provide a smaller local workforce and talent pool for businesses. There is also a high risk of youth migration to urban areas with perceived greater opportunity. However, there are opportunities to leverage off an ageing population such as the provision of housing and services targeted at their needs.

Thriving
town centres
are important
for attracting
businesses
and people to
our towns.

Skilled workers

Knowledge and skills are generally a reflection of individual opportunities within the labour market. High engagement in the labour market is the most common method for increasing personal wealth. Statistics show that Rangitīkei sits below national averages for qualification metrics, meaning opportunities within the labour market for these people could be more limited. Increasing the rate of school leavers going on to pursue higher education is a key challenge.

National and global economic outlook

The Aotearoa New Zealand economy is emerging recession. The recession was created by intentional strict monetary policy after inflation peaked at 7.3% in 2022. Since September 2022, per capita GDP has dropped 4.6% for Aotearoa New Zealand as a whole, making this a larger recession than the global financial crisis.

Recent indications are that the turning point has been reached with annual inflation back within target, interest rates beginning to fall, and consumer and business confidence improving. The outlook for the Aotearoa New Zealand economy is more positive in 2025, although recovery is going to be sluggish with unemployment yet to peak and the current lag between falling interest rates and resultant discretionary spending.

The global economy is a little less certain with power shifting and new alliances being formed. This is generating tension between global superpowers such as the USA and China which will create both challenges and opportunities for Aotearoa New Zealand businesses.

It is important for Rangitīkei to keep a close watch on the national and international economic context. It will help us anticipate changes to demand for local goods and services, identify new opportunities for economic growth, assist decision making around infrastructure investment, and ensure we capitalise on opportunities to attract investment from business, individuals, and central government.

Economic Opportunities for the Rangitikei District

Location

Located in the Central North Island, Rangitikei has many opportunities for growth. Southern Rangitikei is within commuting distance to Palmerston North and Whanganui which provides the opportunity for residential growth and access to a wider pool of workers for local businesses.

Rangitikei also has the advantage of access to both State Highway 1 and 3, connecting the district regionally in all directions. Both highways sustain a significant volume of inter-regional freight and motorists. The Taihape-Napier Road also provides a key link with Hawke's Bay.

The extensive Rangitikei rail network (i.e. The North Island Main Trunk Line and the Marton New Plymouth Line) provides ample opportunity to increase industrial activity associated with rail freight, as well as establishing passenger rail services.

Māori economy

Building Rangitikei Tomorrow in partnership with iwi is vital to ensuring diverse views and perspectives.

Rangitikei iwi are in various phases of their Treaty Settlement processes. There are already significant investments in Māori economy (such as in primary industries, environment, education, and health), and this will continue to grow significantly over time. In addition, the Rangitikei Destination Management Plan highlights opportunities associated with Māori tourism experiences.

Lifestyle

Rangitikei offers an enviable small-town lifestyle, with affordable housing, exceptional landscapes, and central location. There is opportunity to get the word out about the benefits of living in Rangitikei. A growing population supports the economic health of the community by increasing local revenue, supporting business growth and creation, and boosting the general busyness and vibrancy of our town centres.

Diversification of the primary sector

Rangitikei has a strong primary sector, with a wide range of climates, topography, and soil types. Opportunities for diversification of the primary sector are broad, including clean energy, cropping, horticulture, and on-farm tourism . Further research into these opportunities is required to appropriately unlock them - including understanding market demand, diversification opportunities and pathways/barriers.



Our Vision

Making this place home

Rangitikei District Council's vision, making this place home, reflects our desire for Council to play its part in ensuring our district is a great place to live, work, and do business.

Rangitikei Tomorrow sets out the economic growth strategy that will support Council to achieve this vision.

Our Foundation

Partnerships

Rangitikei economic growth is reliant on developing strong partnerships.

Working with iwi, sector groups, economic development agencies, and central government to establish initiatives centred around building Rangitikei wealth and wellbeing is vital to the success of Rangitikei Tomorrow. Each partner has role to play, and by working together we can build holistic, long term and sustainable outcomes.

Getting the settings right

Council has a wide range of levers available to make a difference to the local economy and ensure the settings are right for economic growth.

These include infrastructure investment, procurement, funding, delivery of events, planning, business support and advocating for investment, working together with economic players, and setting and implementing the regulatory framework.

Our Economic Goals



A diverse economy

By increasing the skills in our workforce, adding variety to our business offering, and making the most of our location, Rangitikei will be economically resilient.



Healthy and sustainable businesses

By backing Māori business, leading town centre revitalisation, and supporting housing growth, Rangitikei will thrive.



A vibrant district

By making the most of travellers stopping and staying in our district, and promoting events, Rangitikei will be a destination of choice.



A diverse economy

By increasing the skills in our workforce, adding variety to our business offering, and making the most of our location, Rangitikei will be economically resilient.

Our priorities

- Focus on our strengths
- Build our workforce
- Leverage our location



Rangitikei is a primary sector powerhouse, making up 30% of the district's GDP (2023). The primary sector also provides inputs to secondary industries, such as meat processing, which creates an additional 6.5% of GDP in Rangitikei.

The primary sector - in particular sheep and beef and dairy - will continue to be the backbone of the Rangitikei economy moving into the future.

The strength of Primary Industry in Rangitikei makes the Rangitikei economy vulnerable to instability within the sector. In the past few years, primary industries have been through significant challenges, such as high interest rates, cost increases, falling demand and prices, and increasing regulation. Therefore, it is important for Rangitikei to diversify for economic resilience.

A diversified economy creates a wider range of jobs and offers increased choice and employment opportunities. Discussions with local businesses have indicated that finding skilled workers can be difficult, therefore, to support the diversification of the Rangitikei economy, an increased focus on skills development is required.

Leveraging off location and affordability represents a key opportunity for Rangitikei to diversify its economy and capture future growth. In addition, proximity to key logistics infrastructure and suitable land availability make Rangitikei an ideal location for industrial growth.

FOCUS ON OUR STRENGTHS

Primary industries, particularly agriculture, are the powerhouse of the Rangitikei economy. To build on this success, there are growing opportunities for diversification via adding value to raw exports or expansion of on-farm offerings, for example.

Identifying opportunities for diversification could unlock increased primary sector profitability, and the establishment of more jobs as a result. Supportive rural service activities, such as food packaging or contracting businesses, are also increasing in prominence across the sector nationally.

Notably, Rangitikei has started breaking into new sectors such as clean energy. Rangitikei is well-positioned for solar and wind development due to topography, climate, and access to the national grid. The forestry sector has also grown significantly in recent years, with carbon forestry providing new opportunities, particularly for Māori landowners.

On-farm diversification such as expanding into destination experiences (i.e., farm stays, cultural experiences, and boutique accommodation) could also unlock growth potential. Tourist buses travel through Rangitikei regularly and there is opportunity for this foot traffic to be leveraged. Council's role in diversification is to develop and enable partnerships and ensure the regulatory settings are right to enable growth in this space.

Diversification isn't about negating the success of primary industries - these are and will remain our economic backbone. Diversification is about unlocking opportunities for growth and building the long-term resilience of this sector, ensuring it is well placed to weather highs and lows. Balancing diversification and growth whilst protecting local farming business from large-scale conversion will remain key.

Waitatapia Station, a sixth-generation family farm near Bulls in New Zealand's Manawatū-Whanganui region, exemplifies innovation and diversification in the primary sector. Managed by brothers Hew and Roger Dalrymple, the 2,200-hectare operation integrates arable cropping, livestock finishing, forestry, and fresh vegetable production. Roger oversees livestock operations, annually finishing approximately 30,000 lambs and 3,500 beef cattle, while Hew manages cropping and forestry, including 36 woodlots totalling over 300 hectares. The farm cultivates cereals like wheat, maize, and barley, and has recently expanded into fresh vegetables such as cabbages, broccoli, and cauliflower, supplying local processors in the region.

Sustainability practices include GPS-guided machinery, soil moisture probes, and minimum tillage to protect the farm's sandy soils. Wetlands have been fenced and protected, and the farm utilizes chicken manure and other bioactives to enhance soil health, rotational forestry protects and enhances all the sandy dunes.



📍 Crop fields at Waitatapia Station

The Mayors Taskforce for Jobs (MTFJ) in Rangitikei District is a collaborative initiative between the Rangitikei District Council, Local Government New Zealand and the Ministry of Social Development, aimed at strengthening the local workforce by supporting young people aged 16–24, particularly those not in education, employment, or training (NEETs). The program offers tailored assistance, including CV development, interview preparation, driver licensing, and access to training and short courses. It also provides ongoing pastoral care to ensure sustained employment. For employers, MTFJ facilitates recruitment, offers wage subsidies, and supports training needs, helping small businesses onboard and retain young workers. This initiative not only addresses youth unemployment but also contributes to the district's economic resilience by fostering meaningful employment opportunities. Since inception, it has helped over 600 young people into sustainable employment across the district.



MTFJ successful placement - Ngaire-anne at work.

BUILD OUR WORKFORCE

Building a skilled workforce is key to supporting individual economic prosperity and the diversification of our economy. Higher qualifications and educational attainment provide greater opportunities in the labour market and higher incomes offer greater choice in how residents live their lives in Rangitikei.

Rangitikei currently sits below the New Zealand average for qualification metrics and income. Local businesses struggle to recruit skilled staff, and for diversification within our economy to be achievable, access to skilled labour is essential.

To address this skill shortage, there are a number of providers delivering education, training, and skills development programmes in Rangitikei. One provider is Te Puna. Established in 2020,

Te Puna provides iwi, hapū and hāpori with a range of tools and opportunities to achieve their education and employment aspirations. The initiative works with a range of partners to deliver courses and services from the Te Poho o Tuariki assessment centre.

Council's role in building our workforce is to foster relationships between education providers, employers, and agencies - connecting them to the right people at the right time. Council holds valuable knowledge of industries with skilled worker shortages and sets the regulatory environment to develop Rangitikei as a great place to call home.

LEVERAGE OUR LOCATION

Many opportunities for economic diversification could be realised through the central location of Rangitikei and its connection to primary industries, tourism, and opportunities for population growth.

Rangitikei has strong accessibility to the wider North Island:

- **Road:** Access to State Highways 1 and 3
 - Commutable distances to Whanganui and Palmerston North
 - Key centres such as Napier, Wellington, New Plymouth and Taupō only 2 – 3 hours drive
- **Railway:** The North Island Main Trunk Line and Marton New Plymouth Line.

This accessibility has potential to be better leveraged in a range of different ways.

- Logistics and manufacturing are key industries where our district's locational advantage would be attractive for investment. Recent focus has been on industrial rail opportunities; however, further work is required to understand the unique proposition to make the most out of our locational advantage.
- Rangitikei is still establishing itself as a tourism destination. The natural environment combined with our location makes the district an obvious choice for tourism-based activities utilising both road and rail.
- The district needs to be open and ready for business, with enough zoned and serviced land available in the right place to meet market needs.
- Building relationships with iwi, our neighbouring councils, Central Government agencies and other stakeholders is essential to maximise opportunities for all parties.

Situated adjacent to both State Highway 1 and the North Island Main Trunk railway line, the Marton Industrial Development Area offers seamless connectivity for freight movement across the country. The development of the Marton Rail Hub capitalizes on this prime positioning, facilitating efficient transportation of goods, particularly for the forestry and agricultural sectors prevalent in the region.

By integrating road and rail networks, the hub aims to streamline supply chains, reduce transportation costs, and alleviate road congestion by shifting freight to rail. This infrastructure not only enhances Marton's role in national logistics but also stimulates local economic growth through job creation and attracting related industries



Marton Industrial Development Area offers seamless connectivity for freight movement across the country.

Staff surveying the Makirikiri Road site



Healthy and sustainable businesses

By backing Māori business, leading town centre revitalisation, and supporting housing growth, Rangitīkei will thrive.

Our priorities

- Backing Māori business
- Revitalise our town centres
- Housing as an enabler



Healthy and sustainable businesses are essential to economic prosperity in Rangitīkei. Businesses provide employment opportunities for the local community and support individual prosperity, which is often invested back into the community.

Businesses also provide local services for the community and contribute to town vibrancy by filling buildings and attracting even more people to shop and spend locally. Rangitīkei is home to a proportionally high number of small businesses compared to the national average. There is great opportunity to celebrate these businesses as key contributors to the vibrancy of Rangitīkei.

BACKING MĀORI BUSINESS

Rangitikei already boasts higher than average rates of Māori business¹ ownership. There were 102 Māori privately owned businesses in Rangitikei in the year to March 2021, accounting for 14% of all businesses. The average in Aotearoa NZ was 11.

The district also features multiply owned Māori freehold land blocks at various stages of development and use.

This is all significant because, despite the existence of these positive economic elements, Māori remain over-represented in deprivation statistics. Whilst this remains the case, it is strategically sensible and beneficial for the district to support Māori focused, and iwi and Māori led, initiatives that generate economic growth with the expectation that this will ultimately elevate more and more Māori families to financial independence and wealth creation.

By backing, enabling, and supporting iwi and Māori business and economic development as much as possible, council supports the growth of Rangitikei as a diverse, dynamic and innovative place to do business. The picture is for iwi and Māori to stand alongside all private individuals and their businesses, and public investment, to grow prosperity in Rangitikei. An overall economic strategy that acknowledges this and facilitates a coordinated approach that works for all interests in the district simply makes sense.

Māori
business
represents
a significant
opportunity
for growth

The investment approach of local iwi development organisation Te Rūnanga o Ngā Wairiki – Ngāti Apa showcases the growth and value that iwi organisations bring to the economy. Other iwi groups in the district are approaching Treaty settlements and will soon commence investments and growth. The intergenerational nature of iwi organisations and the deep commitment to their ancestral territories means that our local iwi groups are set to become very long-term owners and contributors in the local economy.





Engaged and proactive commercial building owners can make a significant difference to the vibrancy of our town centres. Under new ownership the Marton Post Office building has seen new life with a clean, paint and fit out ready for retail. The impact of these improvements has resulted in at least three new retailers moving into the building generating increased foot traffic and vibrancy to a corner of town that was previously looking tired and run down.

REVITALISE OUR TOWN CENTRES

Vibrant town centres are foundational to the enjoyment, sense of place and economic success of Rangitikei. Town centres are hubs of economic activity where our communities come together, and we celebrate our local identity.

However, Rangitikei retail sector is struggling. The large number of run-down and earthquake-prone buildings throughout the district are creating vacancies and exponentially impacting external investment. Active intervention is needed to ensure our retail sector is nationally competitive, and an attractive and lucrative place to do business.

Vibrant town centres are key to retaining youth, attracting skilled workers to the district, and encouraging tourists to experience and stay in Rangitikei.

Our town centres are hubs for local events, festivals, and markets, offering opportunities to celebrate and showcase our local identity to a wider audience.

Thousands of people pass through Rangitikei every day. Welcoming town centres entice them to stop, spend, and invest in the Rangitikei economy.

Streetscape upgrades in Taihape, Marton and Bulls are a great first step towards greater town vibrancy in Rangitikei. It is also important that we get our regulatory settings right to enable an increasingly diverse range of activities to establish.

HOUSING AS AN ENABLER

Affordable and high-quality housing is an essential enabler as the Rangitikei economy grows and diversifies.

A lack of quality housing in Taihape is creating a barrier for businesses to find skilled workers. While living in Rangitikei and working outside is possible in Southern towns (i.e. Marton and Bulls) due to commutable distances to main centres (such as Palmerston North and Whanganui), this is not as easy in the Northern part of the district. Without quality housing in Northern Rangitikei, there is less likely to be long-term business investment and skilled worker migration. Quality housing in Northern Rangitikei is key to unlocking economic development in this part of the district.

Looking to housing opportunities across

Rangitikei, our housing stock is predominantly three-bedroom stand-alone dwellings.

Housing diversification, including increasing appropriate town centre living is necessary to provide for future growth. For example, with our population projected to continue ageing, provision of suitable elderly housing to enable this demographic to live centrally within our town centres is needed.

Working with iwi to support the development of papakāinga housing throughout Rangitikei is another key lever that will diversify our housing stock and bring people back into these areas.

Housing affordability in comparison to our neighbours is a key attractor/point of difference. Sufficient housing supply is essential to ensure house prices remain affordable, enabling first home buyers to enter the market and subsequently invest their discretionary income back into the Rangitikei economy.

Housing affordability in comparison to our neighbours is a key attractor/point of difference.



Hereford Heights in Marton demonstrates how housing can drive economic growth. By developing over 80 new residential sections, the subdivision has attracted a diverse mix of residents—from families seeking larger homes to retirees wanting low-maintenance living. This growth in housing supply has directly supported population increase, fueling demand for local services and amenities. The construction phase created jobs and boosted related industries, while the completed homes have encouraged further investment and development in the area. As a result, Hereford Heights has played a key role in strengthening the district's economy through thoughtful, inclusive, and strategic housing expansion.



A vibrant district

By making the most of travellers stopping and staying in our district, and promoting events, Rangitikei will be a destination of choice.

Our priorities

- Support our events
- Encourage people to stay
- Become a stop of choice



Tourism in Rangitikei is an area with significant economic opportunity. Tourism represents 2.5% of the district's GDP, compared with 3.5% nationally and has been growing at a slower rate than average.

Our natural landscape, excellent accessibility, and unique cultural identity offers an exciting base for tourism development.

Strengthening Rangitikei tourism will put more money into the local economy, provide job opportunities, and attract more people to the district.

The Rangitikei District Council Destination Management Plan (2022) sets out investment and work programmes in this area. The two key themes are:

- **Manaaki tangata – care for our people**
- **Manaaki whenua – care for our land**



📍 Gumboot Day Taihape



📍 Harvest Festival



📍 Fest-a-Bull



📍 Shemozzle 2023 - Photo Suraya Holland

Events such as the Harvest Festival, Marton Market Day, The Shemozzle, Gumboot Day in Taihape, and Fest-a-Bull in Bulls significantly contribute to the economic growth of Rangitikei. These popular community gatherings attract thousands of visitors, boosting local tourism and increasing spending at local businesses. They showcase the district's unique culture and identity, drawing attention to local food, art, and traditions.

Supporting these events creates employment opportunities, promotes regional pride, and encourages investment in the hospitality and retail sectors. By fostering vibrant, well-attended events, Rangitikei enhances community engagement while driving economic activity that benefits both residents and local business across the district.

SUPPORT OUR EVENTS

Events provide a range of benefits for our communities, including economic growth. Events deliver an immediate economic benefit to the district by bringing in spending from out-of-town visitors. Successful events also provide long term economic benefit by raising the profile of Rangitikei and its local businesses, encouraging people to return to shop, visit or live after the event.

Rangitikei hosts a range of regionally significant and successful events throughout the year: The Shemozzle, Marton Market Day, Taihape Spring Fling, and Turakina Highland games.

These events attract thousands of visitors from across the wider region who provide economic benefit and vibrancy to our towns. Continuing to support and amplify these events through considered marketing campaigns is a key opportunity.



📍 Cairnmuir Cottage accommodation

ENCOURAGE PEOPLE TO STAY

Destination experiences are a key opportunity for business growth and diversification in Rangitikei. People travel through Rangitikei everyday as they travel around New Zealand. Encouraging them to stop for an activity or stay for a night will support local business and enable tourism sector growth.

Leveraging our natural environment and offering cultural experiences are key opportunities identified in the Rangitikei Destination Management Plan (2022). These opportunities include boutique rural accommodation, back country scenic roads, activities on our river, or experiences in our stunning and diverse landscapes.

Key to supporting destination experiences across the district is town centres that are vibrant, attractive and equipped with amenities. Appropriate places to stay, well equipped toilets, and quality food and beverage stores all support Rangitikei as a tourism destination.

Opportunities include further research regarding accommodation opportunities and shortages, and strategic ways council can market Rangitikei as a tourism destination.

Rangitikei Farmstay, situated on a 630-hectare sheep and beef farm near Marton, New Zealand, has successfully diversified its income by integrating tourism into its operations. Owners transformed historic farm buildings into guest accommodations and offer authentic rural experiences such as animal feeding, garden tours, and pony rides. They also host large tour groups, including international visitors, providing activities like shearing demonstrations and BBQ lunches.

The farmstay further boosts revenue through annual events like the Mudder obstacle race. This agritourism model not only supplements traditional farming income but also educates visitors about rural New Zealand life.



📍 Hunterville Huntaway Dog Statue

Small towns like Taihape, Bulls, and Hunterville in New Zealand exemplify how placemaking can transform communities into must-visit destinations. Taihape, known as the "Gumboot Capital of the World," celebrates its identity with a giant corrugated iron gumboot sculpture and the annual Gumboot Day festival, featuring gumboot throwing competitions that attract visitors nationwide. Bulls leverages its name through witty signage—like "Consta-bull" for the police station—creating a playful atmosphere that entices travelers to stop and explore. Hunterville honors its agricultural roots with the Shepherd's Shemozzle, a unique obstacle race pairing shepherds and their huntaway dogs, drawing thousands of spectators each year. By embracing local culture and humor, these towns create engaging experiences that encourage travelers to pause, participate, and appreciate the community spirit.



📍 Te Matapihi - Bulls Community Centre



📍 Taihape Gumboot Statue



📍 Walker Park - Bulls

BECOME A STOP OF CHOICE

Rangitikei is centrally located with both State Highway 1 and 3 running through the district. At least 15,000 vehicles travel through Rangitikei every day.

Enticing these travellers to stop is a key opportunity for local business growth and employment, particularly for towns such as Taihape, Mangaweka, Hunterville, Bulls and Turakina. Each of these towns has a unique offering depending on traveller needs. Clearly defining this offering, and effectively marketing it, is key to encouraging increased foot traffic.

Essential to becoming a stop of choice is providing vibrant town centres, with welcoming entrances, where people want to stop and spend time. It is also important we provide high quality and well maintained visitor services such as toilets, playgrounds, clear signage, and easy parking.

Implementation

Successful implementation of **Rangitikei Tomorrow** is dependent on collaboration between Council, iwi, business, agencies, and the community. While the actions outlined in the Action Plan below focus on Council's roles and influence, working collectively will generate the best long-term outcomes for Rangitikei.

Monitoring progress will deliver insights on the success of actions and ensure that we stay on track. Success will be evaluated by assessing the effectiveness of each action, with learnings implemented into future initiatives.

Actions and projects delivered under Rangitikei Tomorrow will have their own success measures - appropriate to the purpose of the action. Examples of success indicators could be:

- Increase in GDP across the district at a rate faster than the region and/or country
- Increase in the employment market
- Decrease in the number of NEET's
- Improved diversity in the economy
- More council procurement spend going to Rangitikei-based and owned businesses

The adoption and implementation of **Rangitikei Tomorrow** does not commit Council to any additional funding. Some of the actions can be funded through the existing work programmes, while some actions may require additional funding. Additional funding could be secured through grants, donations or increased investment from Council into economic development initiatives. Additional funding requirements will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

Action Plan

A diverse economy

Focus on our strengths

Action
Review successful programmes that have supported primary sector diversification and resilience in other regions.
Work with the primary sector, iwi, businesses and stakeholders to develop and implement a diversification strategy for Rangitikei.
Support Business Rangitikei to develop a sustainable business network where businesses in the district thrive.
Complete a needs and opportunity assessment to understand existing commercial business offerings and gaps in the market.
Ensure Council's procurement policies consider the wider benefits of local procurement in decision making.
Work alongside local businesses to outline a pipeline of Council projects that will enable local businesses to successfully tender for work.

Build our workforce

Action
Work in partnership with key stakeholders to design a workforce development, attraction and retention programme tailored to industries that Rangitikei wants to attract.
Support our young people to become work ready through the Mayor's Taskforce for Jobs (MTFJ) programme by working with them to achieve micro-credentials (e.g. driver licencing, healthy and safety accreditations).
Create a recruitment network to match workers to job opportunities within the Rangitikei as part of the MTFJ Programme.
Establish an Iwi-Council group to investigate an education to employment pathway programme focusing on local education providers. eg. Te Puna.

Leverage our location

Action
Commission a 'value proposition' study that identifies opportunities for growth of key sectors that would benefit from the competitive advantage of our location (e.g. logistics, warehousing, manufacturing).
Promote Rangitikei as a location based on the outcomes of the 'value proposition' study.
Undertake a 'lost opportunity' study regarding regional industrial growth.
Monitor supply and demand of business land and buildings.
Invest in three waters infrastructure to ensure that supplies have the capacity to accommodate business growth (particularly industrial growth).
Rezone land as required to ensure a continuous 30 year commercial and industrial land supply.

ongoing, short, medium, long

Council's role	Timeframe	
Facilitator		Short term
Facilitator		Short term
Partner		Ongoing
Facilitator		Short term
Service Provider		Medium term
Partner		Medium term

Council's role	Timeframe	
Facilitator		Medium term
Partner		Short term
Partner		Short term
Partner		Medium term

Council's role	Timeframe	
Facilitator		Medium term
Facilitator		Long term
Facilitator		Medium term
Facilitator		Ongoing
Service Provider		Ongoing
Service Provider		Ongoing

Healthy and sustainable businesses

Back Māori business

Action

Continue to advocate for the access to landlocked land.

Ensure Council plays a role in informing new business of any iwi interests across the district.

Review the sustainable procurement settings within the Procurement and Contract Management Policy to ensure appropriate weighting is given to Māori business opportunities from Council spend.

Respond to Māori economic growth aspirations in ways identified by Māori.

Revitalise our town centres

Action

Investigate opportunities for the establishment of grants and incentives to support building owners to maintain and upgrade retail frontages (such as façade improvements).

Review rates remission settings for commercial building owners completing façade improvements, strengthening or redevelopment of buildings.

Lead streetscape upgrade projects in the town centres of Marton, Bulls, and Taihape.

Provide education and resources to building owners that guide the improvement, strengthening or redevelopment of buildings in the town centres.

Invest in ongoing maintenance to ensure Council-owned assets are contributing positively to the town image.

Housing as an enabler

Action

Work with building owners to encourage appropriate (above ground or secondary) residential development in town centres to support mixed use environments.

Monitor residential land supply and demand.

Rezone land as required to ensure a continuous 30 year residential and rural lifestyle land supply.

Review the District Plan approach for papakāinga development.

Review the District Plan approach for infill, retirement, and medium density housing.

Invest in three waters infrastructure to enable projected residential growth.

Work collaboratively with local developers to encourage a variety of housing types, including retirement housing.

ongoing, short, medium, long

Council's role	Timeframe	
Advocate	▶▶▶	Ongoing
Partner	▶▶▶	Ongoing
Service Provider	🕒	Short term
Partner	▶▶▶	Ongoing

Council's role	Timeframe	
Funder	🕒	Short term
Funder	⌚	Medium term
Facilitator	▶▶▶	Ongoing
Facilitator	⌚	Medium term
Service Provider	▶▶▶	Ongoing

Council's role	Timeframe	
Partner	📅	Long term
Service Provider	▶▶▶	Ongoing
Service Provider	▶▶▶	Ongoing
Regulator	⌚	Medium term
Regulator	📅	Long term
Service Provider	▶▶▶	Ongoing
Partner	▶▶▶	Ongoing

A vibrant district

Support our events

Action

Provide direct and indirect support for events that enhance community engagement and visitor attraction.

Encourage events and activations in public spaces – town centres, parks.

Continue to support events through Council's Events Support Scheme, prioritising those that stimulate local business activity and showcase the Rangitikei.

Build the profile of Visit Rangitikei and promote events through:

- Visit Rangitikei web page
- Visit Rangitikei social media platforms.
- Council platforms.

Encourage people to stay

Action

Work with the tourism sector to develop a trade offering.

Develop a marketing narrative for the Rangitikei and invest in marketing and promotion activities.

Update the Visit Rangitikei website and promote it as the key visitor guide for Rangitikei.

Undertake a visitor accommodation study that identifies shortages and opportunities.

Work alongside mana whenua and the community to tell local stories e.g. interpretation panels along local walkways.

Work with organisations developing cycleways to support and promote the visitor economy

Strengthen information centres as key hubs for promoting local and regional attractions.

Work collaboratively with the North Island Main Trunk Railway Group to promote the reinstatement and development of passenger services on the North Island Main Trunk Line.

Become a stop of choice

Action

Enhance the entrances to our towns to increase available amenities, align with the unique identity of each Rangitikei town, and improve the sense of arrival.

Improve pedestrian connections and wayfinding within towns to encourage visitors to walk around the town.

Invest in and maintain infrastructure that supports travellers (e.g. seating, toilets, bus stops, signs charging stations, convenient parking, open space, town centres).

ongoing, short, medium, long

Council's role	Timeframe	
Funder	▶▶▶	Ongoing
Partner	▶▶▶	Ongoing
Funder	▶▶▶	Ongoing
Service Provider	▶▶▶	Ongoing

Council's role	Timeframe	
Facilitator	🕒	Short term
Service Provider	▶▶▶	Ongoing
Service Provider	🕒	Short term
Facilitator	⌚	Medium term
Partner	⌚	Medium term
Partner	▶▶▶	Ongoing
Service provider	▶▶▶	Ongoing
Advocate	⌚	Medium term

Council's role	Timeframe	
Service Provider	⌚	Medium term
Service Provider	⌚	Medium term
Service Provider	📅	Long term





RANGITIKEI
DISTRICT COUNCIL