

Community



Sections

- Sense of community
- Cultural diversity
- Community work
- Information needs
- Transport and city design

Introduction

Friendships, social groups, networks and neighbourhoods that work together to support those who live there, all contribute to a sense of community wellbeing. Changes in the population and make-up of the community, along with changes in social conditions, can influence whether people feel a sense of belonging.

Natural environment features such as streams, ranges, beaches, open spaces etc all contribute to a sense of place and identity.

The provision of facilities within the city can also contribute towards a sense of wellbeing. Community and leisure facilities, including shops, libraries and parks, provide opportunities for recreation, participation in local activities and a place to meet others. Public art contributes to a sense of identity, place and creativity.

Major Policy Influences and Directions

- Transport policy changes have heralded significant injections of funding by central government into public transport in the Auckland Region.
- Central Government, and the Auckland Regional Council are supporting the development of public transport in the city by increasing the subsidy to bus operators.



- Changes in national immigration policy in favour of job seekers who will settle more successfully as they already have a job or job offer, NZ qualification or experience and are willing to go to regions other than Auckland.
- Waitakere City Council has undertaken policy development work in parks, the arts and leisure areas.
- Completion of the Waka Kotuia, a national strategy aimed at improving relationships between the Government and the community and voluntary sector.
- The Regional Recreation Strategy, which is in development.
- The national urban design guidelines, "People, Places and Spaces", completed by the Ministry of the Environment 2003.
- A public referendum in 2003 saw the retention of Licensing Trusts in Waitakere City. The Trusts are a significant provider of funding for local community organisations and initiatives.

Key Issues

- Access to transport is still a major issue for youth, migrants and refugees, those on low incomes and older residents.
- There is a sense of a lack of connectedness, particularly for some groups in the community, e.g. between migrants and refugees and host communities, exacerbated by the continuing decline of geographic or place-based relationships. This is emphasised by the increased amount of time spent travelling and working.
- Decreasing time available to put into volunteer or community activities.

- Finding effective ways to engage communities in the long-term development of their neighbourhoods, suburbs and city.
- Promoting and celebrating local and cultural diversity.

New Migrant groups

- Isolation among new migrant groups can be compounded by language difficulties, unemployment, under-employment or inappropriate employment.
- Waitakere City is becoming increasingly ethnically diverse. However, New Zealand lacks national, regional or local policies and plans to ensure migrants are well settled. Existing services are, in some places, already unable to cope well with the recent changes in service demand.

Older Adults

- For older adults, there are issues around being unable to take part in community events or use community facilities. This was in part because of a lack of affordable and accessible public transport and fears around safety.
- Isolation can be a problem for older adults. Some older people find it hard to reach out to others. They can feel confined and totally alone.
- The following barriers to accessing transport add to older adults' sense of isolation:
 - Environmental barriers such as steep slopes, rough footpaths or the bus stop being too far from home,

- Physical barriers such as public transport not being 'disability' friendly, or
- Inadequate lighting and seating at bus stops.
- Some older adults are experiencing difficulties living alone, for example, with changing light bulbs, putting out rubbish, and doing home maintenance.

Some Highlights

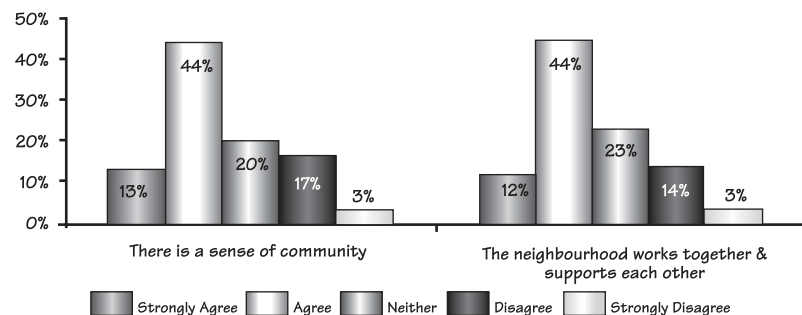
- Waitakere City has seen a major growth recently in sports, arts and cultural festivals and events. These include Waitangi Day celebrations, Diwali, the Waitakere Moon Festival, Pacific Living Arts Festival, Going West Literary Festival, Trash to Fashion, World Kilikiti Championships, Volunteers Picnic, the Pacific Island Sports Festival and the Toddlers Day Out.
- The past five years has seen a proliferation of public artworks in Waitakere City. These include pou whenua, murals, seats, sculptures, toilets and bridges. The City has received numerous awards for its works and has been recognised nationally and internationally for its art development. This is becoming a more visible part of community life.
- The Waitakere City Council has embarked on a major programme of facility development in town centres supporting the development of urban villages and the transport nodes. These include:
 - the new Trusts Sports Stadium,
 - the expanded Westwave Aquatic Centre,
 - the development of two community houses in Titirangi and Ranui,
 - the New Lynn Community Centre and the Corbans Estate Arts Centre.
- Major library development has also occurred with new libraries constructed or in planning at Ranui, Massey (Westgate), New Lynn, Henderson and Glen Eden.
- Community initiated facility developments include the Swanson Railway station, Summerland school and the Man Alive Centre in Henderson. Developments in the pipeline include a Community Resource Centre and a potential Youth Facility in Henderson.
- Numerous local markets have sprung up around the city.
- Central Government has established an Office of Community Sector.
- New railway stations have been commissioned for Ranui, New Lynn and Henderson.
- The Ranui Action Project, begun in 2001, is now a great example of community development being driven by a local community working alongside government and council partners. The McLaren Park project (Henderson) is being modelled on the Ranui Action Project and has similar community development objectives.
- The co-location of Citizens Advice Bureaus (CABs) with libraries is providing opportunities for residents to access information more easily from a single location and to be referred to local services.
- Networks of neighbourhood parks have been developed.
- In the mid 1990s the Sturges area was opened for development. It was designed to be a more walkable neighbourhood. Subsequent research shows an increased proportion of people using public transport and walking in those neighbourhoods.

Sense of community

In 2002 residents were asked to what extent they agreed that a sense of community exists in Waitakere City.

- The majority of people in Waitakere City agree they feel a sense of community and local neighbourhood works together and supports each other.
- Those who do not feel a sense of community say that they are 'too busy,' 'have nothing in common,' and 'don't know people.'

Waitakere City Residents' Perception of 'Community'



Source: Quality of Life Residents' Survey 2002

- The percentage of people who think that those in Waitakere City work together and support each other has increased from 47% to 56% over the 2000-2002 period.

"How involved people are in their community and the extent to which they feel they belong is fundamental to people's wellbeing." Candace Bagnall, Ministry of Health.

"Our youth identify very positively with Waitakere." Councillors Wellbeing Report, 15 March 2004.

Case Study: Living in Ambrico Place – a Medium Density Housing Development

Ambrico Place is a medium density housing area in New Lynn initially developed over 1997 – 1999. Research was undertaken to find out how residents felt about living in this new development.¹

Residents were asked about a range of community issues including their sense of safety, security and how much they felt connected to their local community. Key findings are:

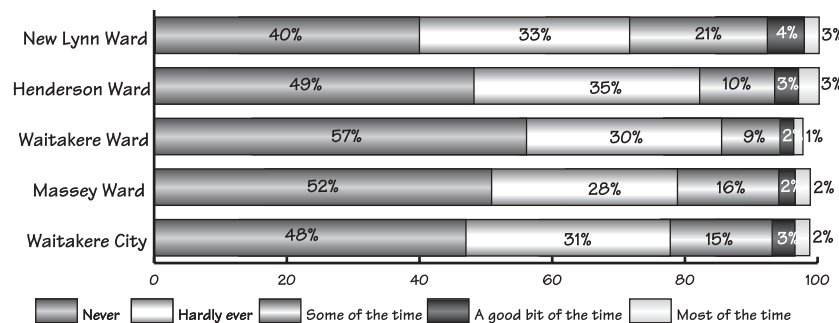
- Residents' main reasons for living in Ambrico were listed as security, proximity to the New Lynn town centre and privacy.
- Ambrico residents' perceptions of safety in their housing area were higher than comparative citywide figures. (Between 86-94% felt reasonably safe in their unit and the Ambrico development).
- All respondents noted some type of positive contact with other residents, although 54% indicated that they didn't feel part of a community yet. This could have been because of the newness of the development.
- A consultation exercise undertaken with local children indicated that 'friends' and 'the park' are what they liked most about living in Ambrico, and most had more friends in close proximity compared with the last place where they had lived.

¹ The research project From Claypit to Community, was a joint project between Waitakere City Council, Massey and Auckland Universities undertaken in 2000-2001.

Neighbourhood Support

- Most (79%) Waitakere City residents report positive contact with people in their local neighbourhood such as a visit, a chat, asking for favours etc.
- The social networks and groups that matter most to residents were based on interests, culture or beliefs (63%) rather than those who live in the same area.
- Over three quarters (79%) of Waitakere City residents reported never or hardly ever feeling lonely or isolated.
- Of all wards in Waitakere City, residents of New Lynn were somewhat more likely to feel lonely or isolated.

Frequency of Waitakere City Residents Feeling Lonely or Isolated



Source: Quality of Life Residents' Survey 2002

- Population groups more likely to feel lonely or isolated were those of Pacific Island and Asian/Indian ethnicity and those with incomes between \$20,001-\$40,000 per annum.

"Disabilities are not something individuals have - they have impairments. It's society that disables people through lack of access, attitudes and perceptions of disability." Disability Information Waitakere Network.

"There is a need for day care facilities for our elderly. Our Homecare workers are often the only social contact some elderly have each week." Lisa Woolley, Community Services Director, Friendship Centre Trust.

"There is nothing for the ethnic elderly – such as networks, support services. The elderly don't have opportunities to socialise and get homesick because they can't go out." Hassan Hosseini, Coordinator, NZ Ethnic Social Services Trust.

Cultural Diversity

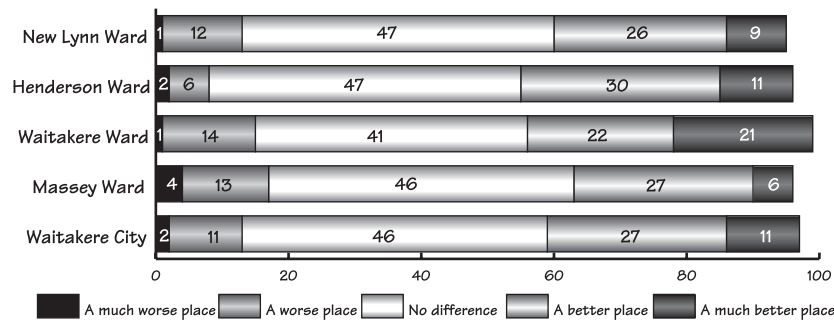
- Waitakere City is becoming increasingly ethnically diverse with new residents introducing different lifestyles and cultures into the community.
- New residents to Waitakere City are mainly from Central/ Southern Asia, Australasia and the United Kingdom.

"I loved the citizenship ceremony, especially the Maori blessing and being given a native plant." Justine MacFarlane, new citizen of Waitakere.

Perceptions of Cultural Diversity

- Over one third of Waitakere City residents (38%) felt that cultural diversity made Waitakere City a better place to live. A larger group (46%) felt it made no difference.
- Those who felt positive about cultural diversity did so because they felt it brings a 'broader outlook and new ideas' as well as the 'opportunity to learn about other cultures.'
- Those who felt cultural diversity made the city a worse place to live (13%) felt that there was a 'lack of integration into society' and that 'new residents (were) causing racial disharmony in the city'.

Residents' Perception of the Impact of Cultural Diversity on Waitakere City as a Place to Live (%)



Source: Quality of Life Residents' Survey 2002

"We all want to live together in harmony so it is important to integrate communities so that we can share each other's culture and respect each other and our protocols." Praveen Chandra, President Waitakere Ethnic Board.

Community Work

- Almost one third (26%) of Waitakere City residents state they were involved in unpaid community work.
- The most frequently mentioned types of community work were:
 - Voluntary work for a community organisation (39%)
 - Voluntary work for a recreational group (15%).²

"The culture of volunteering is changing. New migrants desiring some of New Zealand work experience are replacing the 'non-working' woman. The need for two incomes into the household and the changing role of retired people (e.g. care-giving for grandchildren) is impacting on these sectors' ability to engage in volunteering." Sally Clarkson, WADCOSS

² Source: Waitakere City Council Key Performance Indicator Phone Survey, 2003.

Information Needs

Waitakere Libraries

Waitakere City Council provides eight libraries, and a mobile library. There are over 400,000 holdings (books, magazines etc). There are over 2 million books etc issued a year.

- The holdings on a population basis are low compared with library services in other cities.
- Of the 17 largest cities in New Zealand, only Whangarei had a lower number of holdings per capita.³
- Waitakere City also had the second lowest number of books etc issued per capita.

However almost half (42%) of Waitakere City residents regularly (i.e. at least once a month) use a library located within Waitakere City.⁴

- Three-quarters (74%) used a Waitakere City library at least once a year. Use is higher for residents living in Henderson.
- The majority (84%) of residents rate Waitakere City's library services for a wide range of needs as good/very good.
- The majority (85%) of Waitakere City residents state that their information needs are met all or most of the time – a steady increase from 67% in 2001.

The libraries have launched a programme increasing access to computers called Clikit. This has been launched at Ranui and new learning Centres. Libraries and CABs are now being located together, increasing the convenience of information services available for local residents.

"There is a lack of written material (signage) that is short, large, clear – for those with visual impairments - particularly for key important messages." Disability Information Waitakere Network.

Citizens Advice Bureaus

Citizens Advice Bureaus provide information and services to the local community.

- In the past three years, there has been a significant increase in requests for specialist services; e.g. legal clinics, advocacy and interpreters.
- In the past six months, there has been a 22% increase in legal queries.⁵

Numbers of People using Waitakere City CABs 2001 - 2003

CAB office	2001 ⁶	2002	2003	Total
Glen Eden	7,959	7,514	8,029	23,502
Henderson	11,812	11,838	12,803	36,453
Massey	5,490	5,703	7,191	18,384
New Lynn	10,268	11,292	12,932	34,492
Total	35,529	36,347	40,955	112,831

Source: CAB 2004

³ E.g. North Shore 2.8, Auckland 3.4, Waitakere 2.3, Manukau 2.3, Whangarei 1.8 holdings per capita. Dunedin had the highest at 5.6 Source: NZ Metropolitan Libraries - Comparative Data 2002/2003. Final Report with Comments.

⁴ Source: Waitakere City Council Performance Indicator Survey 2003.

⁵ The "legal category" is a broad category that covers a large number of issues including traffic infringements and consumer complaints.

⁶ The year is from 1 January to 31 December.

"As our volunteers more and more reflect the community we serve, we're increasingly better able to meet the needs of those new to both Waitakere and New Zealand.

"The range of enquiries we deal with has become more complex, but our volunteers have become more adept and aware of the range of issues in the community - from those of a general nature to things like the urgent need for housing and the gaps in legal services in West Auckland." Barbara Guy, Massey CAB.

Internet

Increasingly, the internet is a primary source of information, for communication and point of service.

- In Waitakere City 21,612 households (or 41.2%) have access to the internet. this is slightly lower than the national figure (43%).⁷

Waitakere City Council has launched an initiative to support development of local information technology capacity. A key project has been launching a Waitakere homepage & portal "Waitakere On Line".

Transport and City Design

The way transport is planned and designed affects not just the number of cars on the road and the time it takes to get to work, it also affects:

- The environment and people's health through pollution and emissions.
- Families and volunteer time through the hours spent travelling from one activity to another.

- Family budgets through the amount of the household budget spent on transport.

City design is linked to wellbeing through issues of safety (lighting, safe road crossings, width and quality of footpaths, size of roads etc), opportunities for criminal activity, access to services, availability of quality parks, facilities, shops and access to local jobs. For these reasons, this report notes key issues and trends in these areas.

Waitakere City Council has been advocating and planning for more integrated public transport systems since the inception of the Eco City concept in 1993. This includes investment in rail stations, building more intensively around transport hubs, particularly the rail corridor, but also providing bus lanes and cycle ways. Ferry services are also in the planning.

The Council's goal is to bring living, working and recreational activities into closer physical proximity with each other, supported by effective public transport.

- In 2001 Waitakere residents travelled on average 14kms to work each day – up 6% from 1996.
- While the population is growing about 2% per year, traffic volumes are increasing by 3% per year. This means that more people are spending time in cars and using them for more trips than before.
- The percentage of households with no motor vehicles decreased from 9.5% in 1991 to 7.7% in 2001. Although the number of vehicles per household is also increasing, 17% of households are without a car during the day.⁸

⁷ Source: New Zealand Census 2001.

⁸ Source: New Zealand Census 1991 and 2001.

- Residents were asked how frequently they had used public transport in the previous 12 months. Of the eight largest New Zealand cities, Waitakere City had the second highest percentage of residents who had not used public transport (65%). Seven percent used public transport every day.⁹
- Residents were asked about the affordability, safety and convenience of public transport. Only 38% of Waitakere residents felt that public transport was affordable. However, most (63%) said that they felt that public transport was safe. Almost half (44%) disagreed that public transport was convenient.¹⁰
- Overall, residents and bus users in Waitakere City perceive train and bus stations in Waitakere City are accessible and safe.¹¹

Case Studies

Ambrico Place, a New Lynn housing development, is an example of a closer, better linked neighbourhood. Research shows Ambrico Place residents (54%) are more likely to use public transport than other residents (37%).¹²

Similarly, when the Sturges Road area was developed it was designed to be a more 'walkable' neighbourhood. Subsequent research show a comparatively higher increased use of public transport and walking in this neighbourhood.¹³

"There is a lack of accessible buses. Accessibility on trains and at train stations is an issue." Disability Information Waitakere Network

"Inadequate public transport prevents people readily accessing facilities, attending events etc." Nelda Taurua, Wai Health & Social Services, Te Whanau o Waipareira Trust.

"Safe, accessible and affordable public transport is a key issue for older adults. Many are isolated by a lack of public transport in their area." Safe Waitakere.

Questions Arising from the Community

How do we engage with the sectors of the community that have the highest needs and lowest engagement?

Are we really working from the ground up?

Is the community leading the development of Waitakere City?

Can our current infrastructure support increasing migration and immigration to Waitakere City?

What can we put in place now to meet the needs of our changing demographics, e.g. aging population, migration and immigration?

Is sustainable community development possible without realistic funding?

What is the cost of genuine consultation?

How can we reduce social isolation? Would improved transport options make a difference?

⁹ Source: Quality of Life Residents' Survey 2002. 70% of Hamilton's residents had not used public transport.

¹⁰ Source: Quality of Life Residents' Survey 2002.

¹¹ Source: Waitakere City Council, 2004.

¹² Source: Waitakere City Council, 2004.

¹³ Source: Waitakere City Council, 2004.