

# Our Places

Eastern Bay Spatial Plan



## Wāhanga 3: Tō mātou Mahere Whakawhanake

### Part 3: Our Growth Plan

June 2025











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# Wāhanga 3: Tō mātou Mahere Whakawhanake

## Part 3: Our Growth Plan

### Tiro whānui

#### Overview

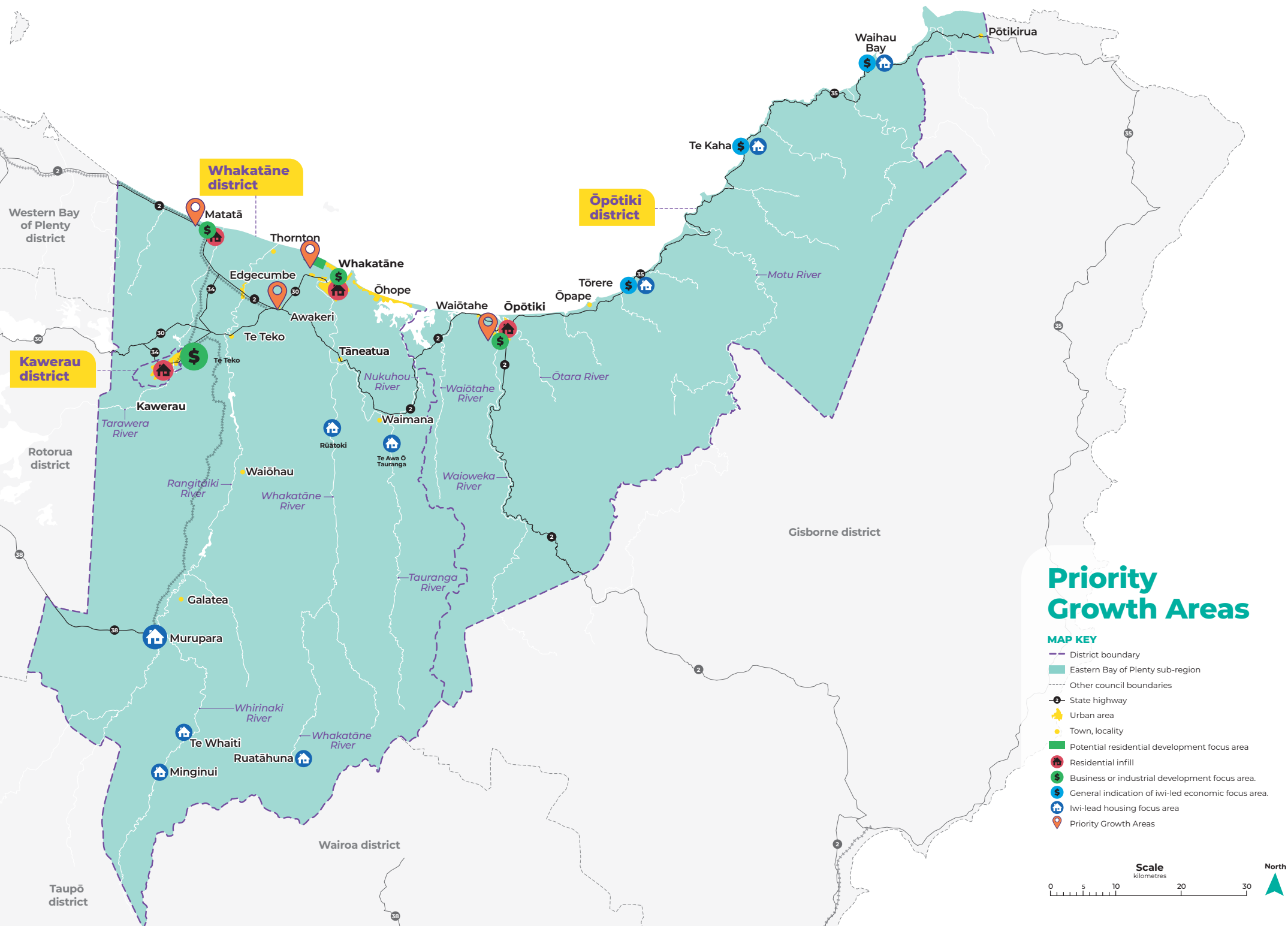
This section identifies potential development patterns across the sub-region, based on projected population and employment requirements, technical assessment of different locations, and feedback through engagement. An overview of the decision-making principles and process behind the strategy is explained.

To communicate the growth strategy, the sub-region has been segmented into three corridors of different characteristics: the Urban Central Corridor, Rural Southern Corridor, and Coastal Eastern Corridor. Infrastructure is mainly addressed in Part 4 – Infrastructure Considerations.

The following Priority Growth Areas provide an overview of where new growth is expected to occur.









## Getting to a growth plan

To provide the inputs for the land use changes proposed through the growth corridors, various scenarios were explored to see how different land use changes might work. The Scenarios and Development Options report explains the process we followed. Here's how we approached it:

### Outcomes framework to test performance

What we want to achieve through delivery of the Spatial Plan. Including success factors that can help monitor the progress to achieving the goals, and a list of key moves which are necessary to deliver the spatial plan. This framework aims to achieve long-term wellbeing outcomes and aligns with the community goals and strategic objectives of the Eastern Bay Councils, including Toi Moana Bay of Plenty Regional Council (BOPRC).

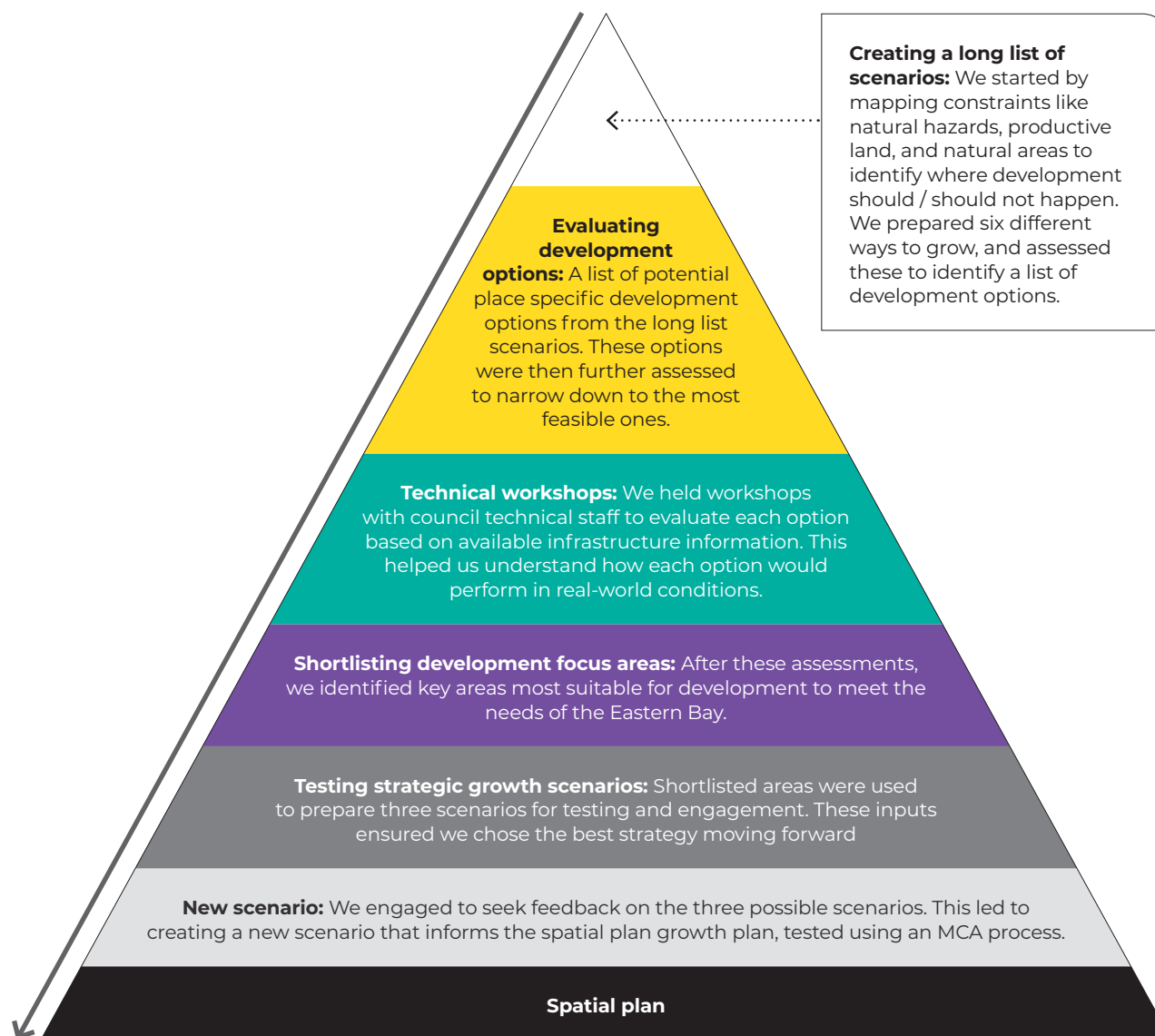


Figure 2: Scenarios and development process



## Decision-making principles about development

**Public engagement feedback and project goals informed a set of decision-making principles that now guide where development can occur and how it will be implemented. These were applied to prepare the new scenario, including the assessment of new land areas identified through submissions.**

### **Principles that direct where we want development to happen**

1. First, consider development locations where there are existing settlements and infrastructure before contemplating new growth areas and infrastructure.
2. Avoid locations where man-made and natural hazard risk (including residual risk) and effects of a changing climate cannot be practicably and equitably managed.

3. Urban development locations should have good connections or access to employment, services, and schools and have affordable community infrastructure to support community wellbeing.

### **Principles that are 'givens' that apply in all locations**

4. Avoid and mitigate impacts on natural areas to protect and conserve.
5. Protect culturally significant areas from development.
6. Minimise urban development on highly productive land and ensure no rural residential development on highly productive land (excluding papakāinga).

### **Principles about what we want to achieve**

7. Enable and support iwi and hapū to use

their land for their aspirations and unlock opportunities and ensure engagement reflects this intention.

8. Cost of infrastructure is feasible and affordable.
9. Enable a certainty of zoned and serviced land supply for residential and business purposes for a thirty-year period.
10. Locations that enable residential development and economic development opportunities are preferred, including iwi and hapū development.
11. Consider the changing needs of housing types due to shifts in demographics.
12. A settlement pattern that supports achievement of net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.
13. Community wellbeing outcomes can be supported by great placemaking.

## Three different strategic corridors

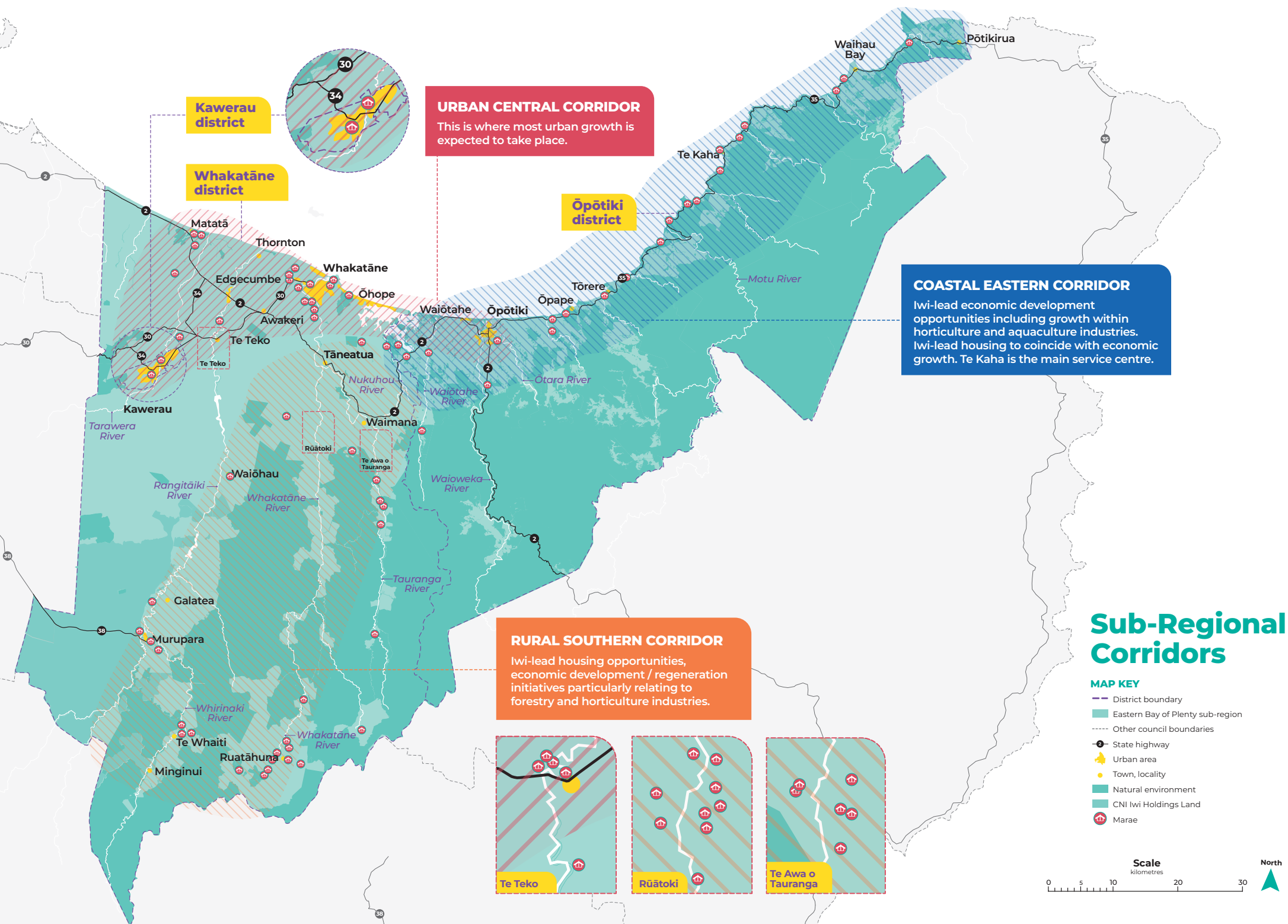
The Eastern Bay is a diverse and vibrant sub-region, characterised by its three main urban centres and numerous smaller villages and coastal settlements. Spread across the Eastern Bay are 92 marae - focal points for Māori communities, providing spaces for gatherings, ceremonies, and cultural activities. The sub-region includes areas of plantation forestry, pastoral agriculture, horticulture, and natural areas. These varying urban and rural environments form the backbone of our community, each contributing uniquely to the region's identity and prosperity.

**The sub-region is organised into three main corridors.** These corridors facilitate movement, economic activity, and sustainable growth, ensuring that both urban and rural areas thrive. Each corridor identifies **Priority Growth Areas**, which serve as recommendations for where to focus additional planning and investment to support development or other aspirations for change.

- **Urban Central Corridor:** includes the townships of Kawerau, Whakatāne and Ōpōtiki extending along the coast, and capturing main rail routes to the port and connection to SH 2. It is expected to see the most development activity.
- **Rural Southern Corridor:** includes the large southern extent of the Whakatāne District, including the villages of Tāneatua, Waiōhau, Galatea, Waimana, Murupara, Minginui and Ruatāhuna with linkage to Rotorua from SH 38. The corridor prioritises iwi-led housing and development opportunities to support rural communities, forestry and horticulture industries.
- **Coastal Eastern Corridor:** includes the coastal strip extending from Ōpōtiki township to Pōtikirua. The Coastal Eastern Corridor focuses on iwi-led housing and economic initiatives specifically for the horticulture and aquaculture industries. Te Kaha anchors this corridor as the main service centre.







# Te Kauhanga Tāone Pokapū

## Urban Central Corridor

The Urban Central Corridor has the largest current and projected urban growth in the sub-region. The three main townships of the sub-region are within this corridor:

- Kawerau township is in the heart of the sub-region and offers a variety of services and amenities. Kawerau supports around 8,000 residents along with those working in the commercial and industrial areas, including the fast-developing Putauaki Trust Industrial Area.
- Ōpōtiki township is situated near the coast, adjacent to the Ōtara and Waioweka rivers, and is protected by stopbanks. The township serves as a key hub for local and rural communities. The Ōpōtiki Wharf provides access to the coast, supporting recreational and economic activities. Residents also connect with the Ōtara and Waioweka rivers, which converge near the town, offering opportunities for fishing, kayaking, and other water-based activities.

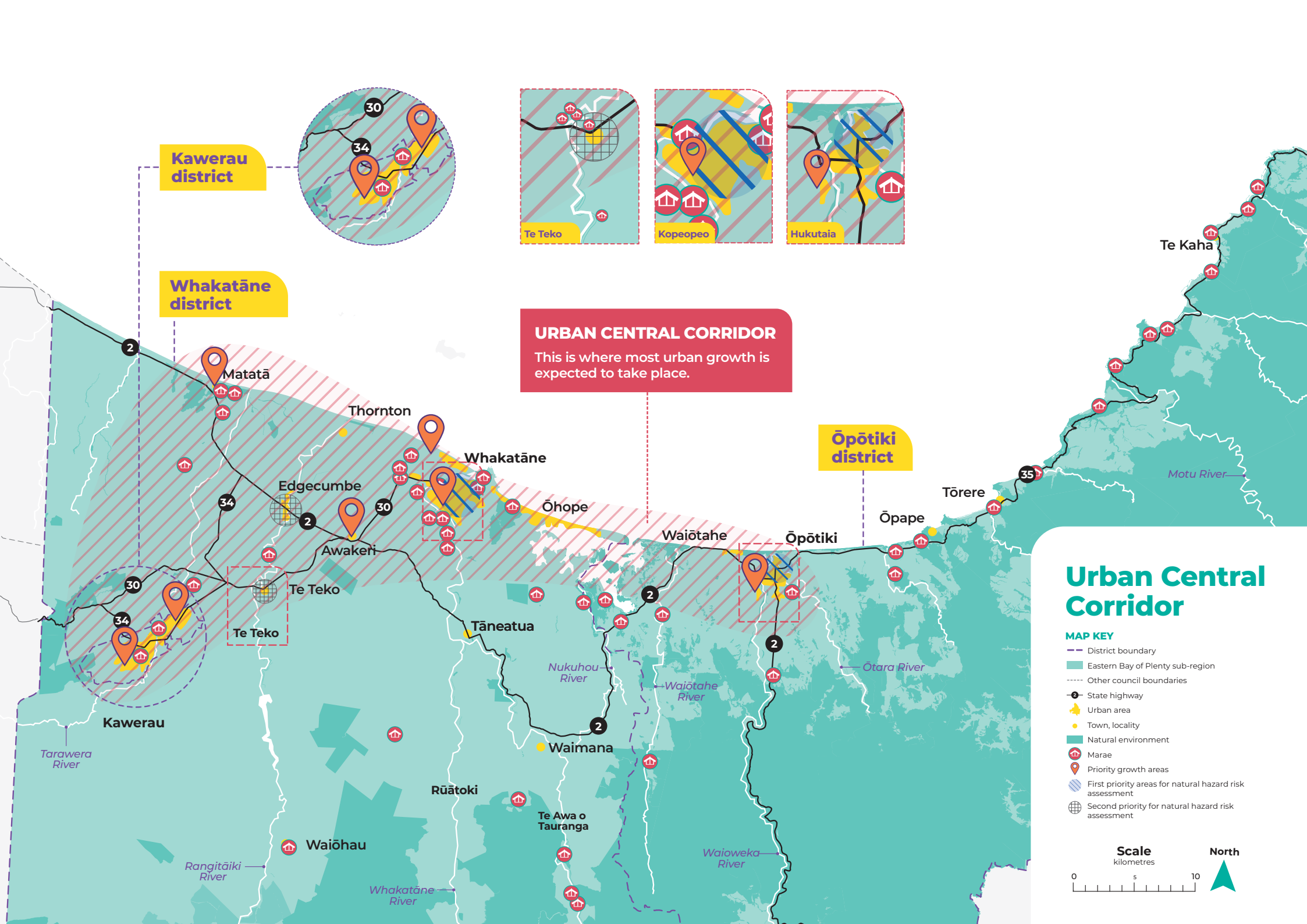
- Whakatāne township is situated near the coast and adjacent to the Whakatāne River, with stopbanks providing defence from flood events. Whakatāne offers a wide range of services and amenities for both residents and visitors as the primary sub-regional centre.

The Urban Central Corridor contains highly productive soils, active rural farming, and is the sub-region's key industrial hub in Kawerau. The Putauaki Trust Industrial Area in Kawerau is a key location for future industrial growth. The area benefits from excellent transport links via SH 2 and 30, and a railway connecting directly to the Port of Tauranga. State Highway 2 connects Tauranga in the west to Gisborne in the southeast, while SH 30 links Rotorua in the southwest with Whakatāne. These transport

connections are vital for the industrial and farming sectors.

The Tarawera, Rangitāiki, and Whakatāne rivers run through the Rangitāiki Plains to the Pacific Ocean, enriching the land. Flood protection schemes currently manage the area's flood risk during heavy rainfall. River flooding is a significant challenge for the Eastern Bay. Flood protection will continue to play a key role in supporting community wellbeing for existing settlements, including Whakatāne and Ōpōtiki townships. However, as conditions change, more adaptive and resilient approaches may need to be explored to ensure communities remain safe and resilient. There are limited opportunities for expanding development areas within this corridor due to broad constraints, such as flood hazards and highly productive lands.





## Priority Growth Areas in the Urban Central Corridor

Area	Timing	Notes
Awakeri	Short to medium term	Develop into an urban township of more than 2,000 dwelling units.
Whenua Māori west of Coastlands	Medium term	Explore opportunities based on Māori Land Trust and hapū interests, with substantial potential for the development of 190 ha.
Matatā	Medium to long term (Infill)	There is existing zoned capacity requiring centralised wastewater treatment to be realised and a long-term opportunity to expand eastward.
Putauaki Industrial Growth Area	Ongoing	Continued ongoing development.
Hukutaia	Ongoing	Develop into an urban community of 2,000 dwellings.
Whakatāne (Kopeopeo infill)	Ongoing	Ongoing infill of Whakatāne township in locations safe from natural hazards.

**Note:** Long term (10-30 years), Medium term (3-10 years), Short term (0-3 years)

Each council is now working through the next steps. While the Priority Growth Areas are expected to accommodate larger changes to enable more development, this will be supported in other ways. These include ongoing infill and intensification within townships, rural residential development, papakāinga, and continued growth in smaller communities—much of which is already enabled through District Plan provisions.

## More business land is needed

By 2053, Whakatāne District is projected to require 2,000 new jobs, with a further 1,000 in Ōpōtiki and 1,400 in Kawerau. To support growth, an additional 57.8 ha of land will be needed across the sub-region, including 40 ha for industrial use and 17.8 ha for commercial activities. Development is expected to concentrate on new growth areas, alongside some rejuvenation within existing urban centres. Major industrial growth will be centred on Putauaki Trust Industrial Area.

Whakatāne township is the primary sub-regional service centre. While there is still growth potential within the existing urban area, available space is limited. Over the life of this plan, additional commercial land will likely be required near the township to accommodate growth. A 2022 survey by Whakatāne Council estimated 8 ha of light industrial land and 2 ha of commercial land were available for development across the Whakatāne District - much of it on redevelopment sites. Forecasts show demand of 18 ha of commercial business land, with only 10 ha available, highlighting a shortfall of 8-18 ha for future commercial and light industrial activities.

Ōpōtiki township has limited land available for industrial activities. Future commercial land needs can be met through redevelopment or infill within the township, as well as through planning for new development at Hukutaia. Ōpōtiki District Council is currently undertaking a specific planning investigation into industrial land supply, which will provide recommendations for rezoning actions.



## Māori Land Trust and owner aspirations

One of the goals of the spatial plan is to work with Māori landowners to enable the development of their land in alignment with their aspirations. A key part of the planning process has been engaging with local iwi. Several iwi and hapū submitted their views through Te Au o Te Awa Punga during the public consultation period in 2024, identifying key priorities and opportunities for development partnerships.

Many Māori landowners and trusts have not yet fully explored development opportunities or funding mechanisms for their land. Continued dialogue is essential as development aspirations evolve over time, and planning must account for natural hazards and the changing climate. Specific areas of interest within the Urban Central Corridor include land near Awakeri, whenua Māori west of Coastlands, and land to the east of Matatā. In Ōpōtiki, development aspirations include Hukutaia, the Totara Block, and coastal areas, including the Marina and Industrial Park.



## Awakeri

Awakeri has a small permanent population, primarily located near the local primary school and community recreation centre. The intersection of SH 2 and SH 30 is a major transport node within Awakeri, attracting high through-traffic volumes. Positioned around 8.5 km southwest of Whakatāne and 25 km from Kawerau, the area features flat land bordered by hills. Located within a managed flood scheme, the area requires integrated stormwater management planning to inform growth strategies, address climate change impacts, maintain service levels of the flood infrastructure, and mitigate downstream flood risk.

### What growth could look like in Awakeri

By 2055, Awakeri could develop into an urban community with a centre focused on commercial and community amenities. The development could be more than 2,000 residential lots, supported by investments into enabling infrastructure such as transport, three waters, and public facilities.

Awakeri is a priority for development due to its low flood risk, consolidated land ownership pattern, existing community facilities, and excellent transport connections to employment hubs in urban areas across the sub-region. These factors give current and potential future residents access to a broad range of employment, schooling, services, and recreational opportunities.

As Awakeri grows, it will build on its own unique character, complete with new parks and open spaces created through careful master planning and placemaking. There are schooling options to meet roll requirements and good bus options to other schools in the district, including secondary schooling. A stormwater management approach that uses natural systems and connected open spaces and parks can help shape Awakeri's

identity. Expanded public transport services to main employment locations in Kawerau and Whakatāne townships will offer transport choices.

Sustainable development in Awakeri can be part of addressing the need for more employment opportunities in the sub-region. Providing appropriate land for commercial and small-scale industrial activities can promote local employment. Commercial activity needs to reinforce Whakatāne township as the primary sub-regional commercial services centre and the Putauaki Trust Industrial Area in Kawerau as the industrial hub for the sub-region. Commercial development should enhance Awakeri's appeal by incorporating quality urban design and place-making approaches. Future residential growth could be supported by small-scale industrial activities that boost employment and increase commercial land supply.

Māori landowners in the area are actively exploring development opportunities that uphold te taiao, ensuring future growth does not come at the expense of the whenua or wai. The Kiwinui Trust wish to see the inclusion of a large area of Māori land as part of the development

at Awakeri. While the area is currently used for carbon forestry, it offers broad opportunities over time to support papakāinga, open spaces, and other complementary forms of development. These opportunities can help shape the village's transformation into an urban village, building on its character through sustainable land use and intergenerational wellbeing.

The area will continue to benefit from a rural aspect with proximity to farming and agricultural activities, as much of the surrounding land is classified and protected as highly productive. Reverse sensitivity issues between agricultural and urban activities will be proactively addressed through careful structure planning, which is likely to require a sufficient buffer space.

The existing school and community events centre serves as a key focal point for current and future community life. Located approximately 500-600 m northwest from the core residential growth area, it supports walkable connections. Effective management of the highway network will be needed to promote safe speeds and pedestrian-friendly access. Planning will also need to balance local access with the demands of through-traffic on the State Highway network.

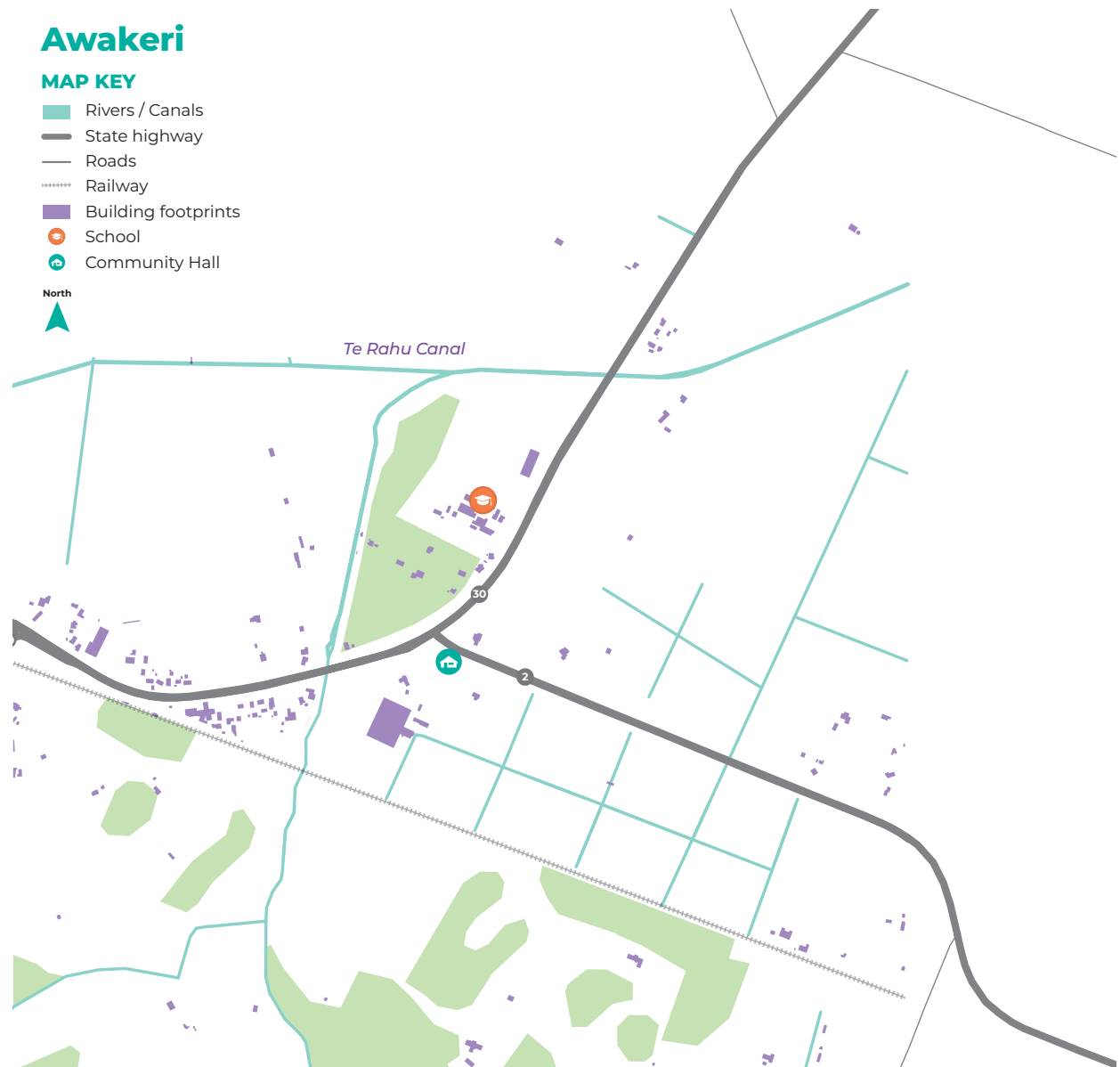


## Next steps

The next steps will be determined by Whakatāne District's Local Growth Strategy, which will be developed in consultation with the community. These steps are expected to include integrated catchment management planning, advancing feasibility studies, and preparing a master plan and plan changes. They will also involve infrastructure and environmental assessments, along with securing funding for key infrastructure interventions.

Both the NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi (NZTA) and the Ministry of Education will be key players in future planning.

With careful planning and community input, Awakeri can grow into a resilient community that plays a vital role in the sub-region's future. Community facilities, open spaces, and local services will play an integral part alongside development to create a place where people are proud to live. Collaboration with iwi, hapū and Māori landowners is essential to shaping an inclusive, culturally enriched, and sustainable future.



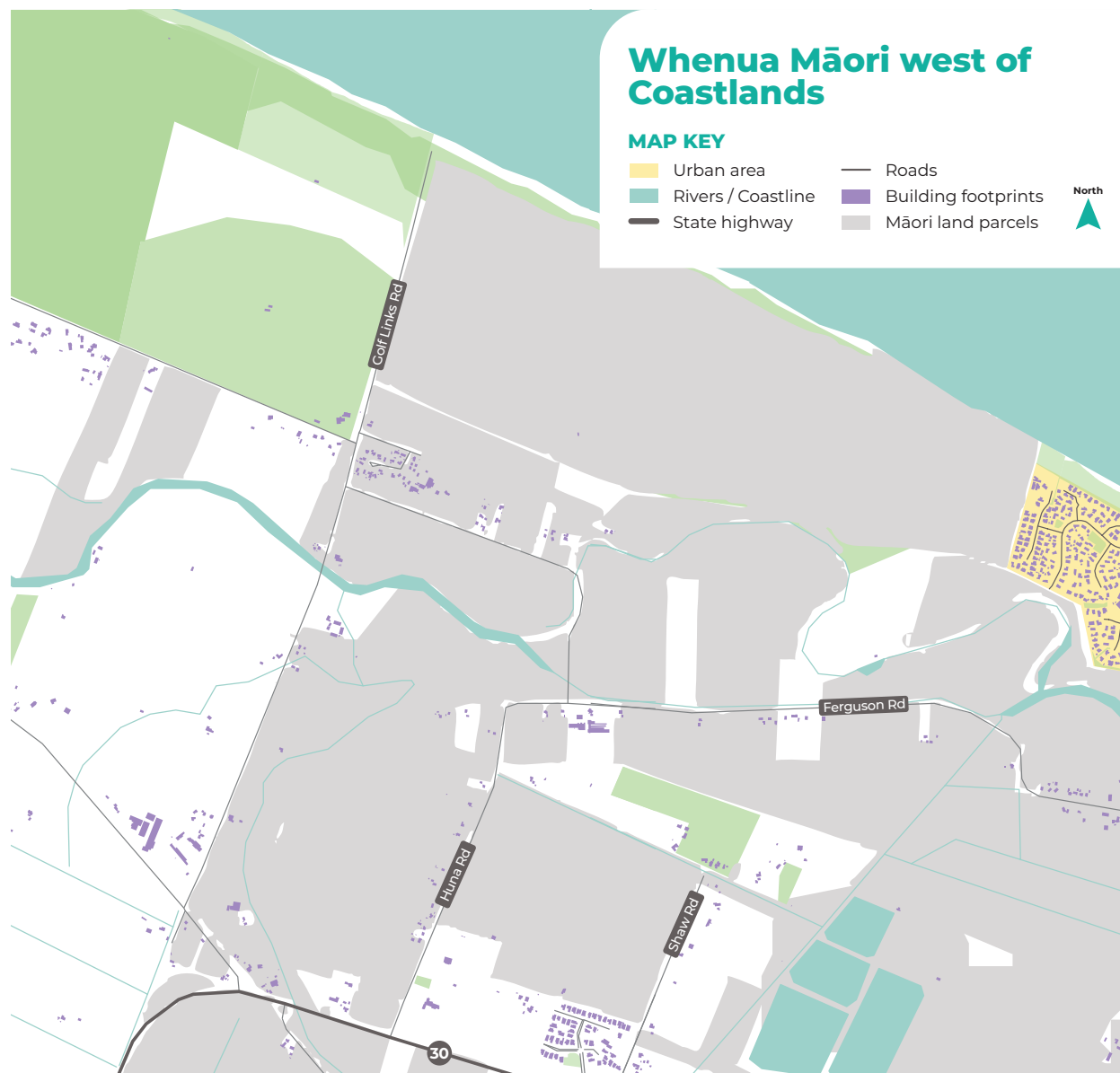
**Figure 5:** Awakeri location

## Whenua Māori west of Coastlands

A 190-ha area of land was raised by landowners during consultation of the spatial plan for consideration of its development potential. The land is west of the Coastlands community near Whakatāne township.

Māori Land Trusts own the land, which is within the Ngāi Taiwhakaea rohe. Currently undeveloped, the land has the potential to make a sub-regionally significant contribution to future housing requirements and offer business opportunities for landowners. The land is elevated, with slight undulations forming part of the dune area, making it substantially resilient to flood risks.

The land is centrally located and coastal, offering strong potential for commercial opportunities for landowners. To enable development, it will be important to integrate hapū perspectives and ensure wāhi tapu and sites of cultural significance are protected. The priority for Ngāi Taiwhakaea is to protect, preserve and restore te taiao in any development. Currently, there is no clear agreement around the future use of the lands. To illustrate the scale of the opportunity, a very conservative five residential units per ha gross density would yield 950 dwellings.



**Figure 6:** Whenua Māori west of Coastlands



### **What growth looks like**

The area is a strategic opportunity for housing and socio-economic activities. The area could remain in its current state or be developed for a wide range of uses, from papakāinga to institutional activities. A master plan by Māori Land Trusts and hapū would need to be undertaken to inform subsequent District Plan changes. A structure plan will inform potential development of this area by outlining the intended land use, infrastructure approach, and related funding proposals. Whakatāne District Council plays a role in enabling and helping manage the provision of infrastructure to service the location as well as related regulatory functions.

### **Next steps**

Whakatāne District Council must continue working closely with the Māori Land Trusts, iwi, and hapū to support the development of aspirations and site feasibility. This collaboration will inform structure planning or master planning that can then guide potential zoning changes and infrastructure considerations.

Key priorities include securing three waters considerations and identifying funding opportunities, including private funding agreements. The master plan should consider logical planning boundaries rather than relying solely on land ownership patterns. This approach may extend the initially defined area and require wider engagement with adjacent landowners.

Consideration of Local Waters Done Well will be needed alongside resilient, catchment-wide stormwater management plans that maximise existing drainage schemes and minimise adverse effects. Options for connecting to existing water and wastewater services include linking with Coastlands or extending services along Golf Links Road. Given the coastal dune landscape, stormwater management must align with natural drainage systems.

Further feasibility studies and infrastructure assessments will be essential to unlocking sustainable development while ensuring alignment with community and environmental priorities.



**Figure 7:** Matatā location

## Matatā

Matatā is a coastal village in the western part of the district, situated at the foot of the Matatā Scenic Reserve and on the north-western edge of the Rangitāiki Plains. Home to around 650 residents, it serves as a key gateway to the Eastern Bay, with SH 2 and the East Coast Main Trunk rail line running through the town. Matatā is known for its rich cultural heritage and natural beauty.

### What future growth might look like

Matatā's future will be influenced by population growth driven by nearby employment hubs. Increased activity in the Putauaki Trust Industrial Area in Kawerau, business development at Rangiuru (east of Pāpāmoa), and continued growth within Whakatāne township are expected to create new employment opportunities within a reasonable commuting distance (approximately 25 minutes). This will likely attract new residents to Matatā, requiring a coordinated and sustainable approach to township development. As a gateway to the Eastern Bay, the community has strong ambitions for local economic development and the development of eco-tourism opportunities.

The Tarawera Awa Restoration Strategy Group is developing plans to return the nearby Tarawera River to its natural watercourse. The lower catchment area also drains into Te Awa o Te Atua and the Tarawera River and is subject to coastal processes. Iwi are leading efforts to restore the mauri of the Tarawera Awa to Te Awa o Te Atua.



The residential zone in the Whakatāne District Plan for Matatā is larger than the current developed urban footprint. Subject to the development of a reticulated wastewater system, the town is anticipated to grow from approximately 260 homes to 600–700 homes. The growth is expected to happen through a mixture of infill and subdivision of existing residential properties over the long term of 10–30 years. Given fragmented and complex land ownership, a strong emphasis on environmental protection, stormwater management, and natural hazard risks, development is likely to progress slowly at first.

In addition to the existing capacity provided for in the District Plan, there is elevated land suitable for future new growth further east of the existing residential zone. This area could accommodate another 700–800 homes and should be preserved for future urban development consideration by avoiding low-density residential uses.

### **Where to next?**

To guide growth, a master plan for Matatā should be progressed to ensure that future development protects and enhances the town's natural character while providing sufficient development opportunities. A new wastewater treatment plant that services Matatā is critical to enabling development and achieving environmental outcomes.

The community was clear through engagement that retaining the character of Matatā is paramount. Planning will need to take a

placemaking-first approach, interweaving changes with existing development to support the town's unique character. Economic development and detailed planning should explore how to strengthen Matatā's role as a gateway to the Eastern Bay.

The community has a strong interest in shaping the future of Matatā and must be actively involved in guiding its direction. A local economic development plan should be prepared alongside any local growth strategy to support this. There is also strong concern that successful development and new economic activity could price out existing residents. Future planning must address this risk.

Partnerships with iwi, hapū, and Māori Land Trusts will be critical to the township's ongoing development. Opportunities include exploring lease structures that preserve Māori land ownership while enabling development. A slow, careful approach to planning the future of Matatā is preferred.

The legislative requirement to restore Te Awa o te Atua is included as part of the Ngāti Rangitihī Claims Settlement Act 2022. The completion of the current wastewater project and the creation of a flow through Te Awa o Te Atua are essential elements of the restoration plan. The Tarawera Awa is the most likely source of that flow. Both of these developments will positively influence the growth of Matatā. Restoration of the mauri of Te Awa o Te Atua can be a catalyst to creating economic growth and employment opportunities.

## Putauaki Trust Industrial Area

The Putauaki Trust Industrial Area in Kawerau originally covered approximately 171 ha. In 2024, a boundary adjustment with the Whakatāne District was approved, transferring an additional 311 ha to the west of the existing site into the Kawerau District. Part of this area will be rezoned for the expansion of the industrial area.

### What growth looks like

Kawerau will continue to be the sub-region's primary industrial growth area. The Sub-Regional Economic Development Strategy identifies future development as a green industry hub with geothermal and bioenergy facilities.

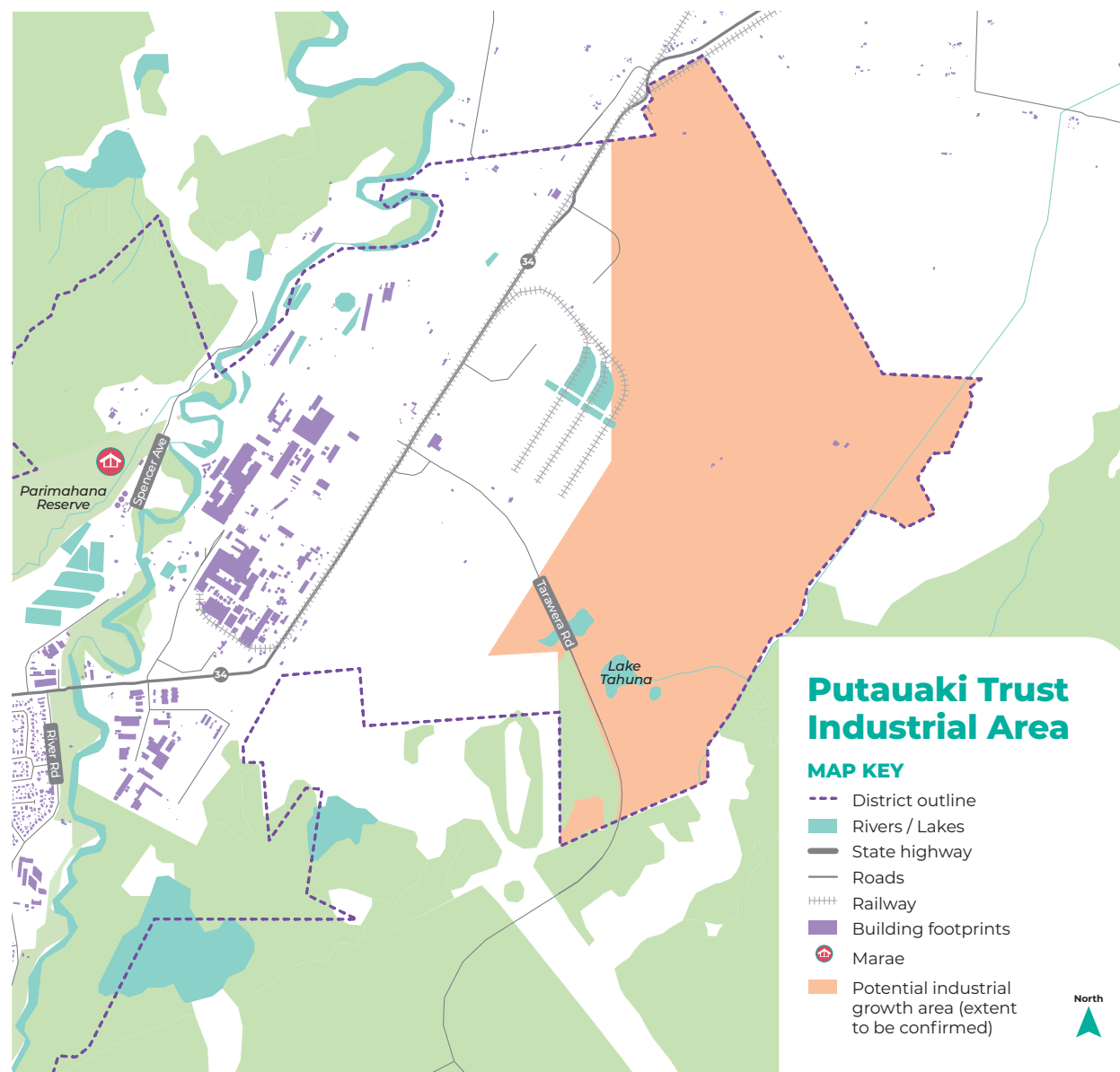


Figure 8: Putauaki location

## Kawerau residential infill

Kawerau District has limited opportunities for greenfield residential development, so future housing growth will rely on infill or intensification of existing residential areas. Stoneham Park is one of the remaining greenfield opportunities and is nearing development.

### What growth looks like

Market forces will drive Kawerau's growth, and it will be largely dependent on infill development capacity. There are some opportunities for the development of Māori-owned land for papakāinga or other Māori-led housing initiatives. District-wide stormwater flood modelling will inform the review of the District Plan and include provisions to manage flood risk.

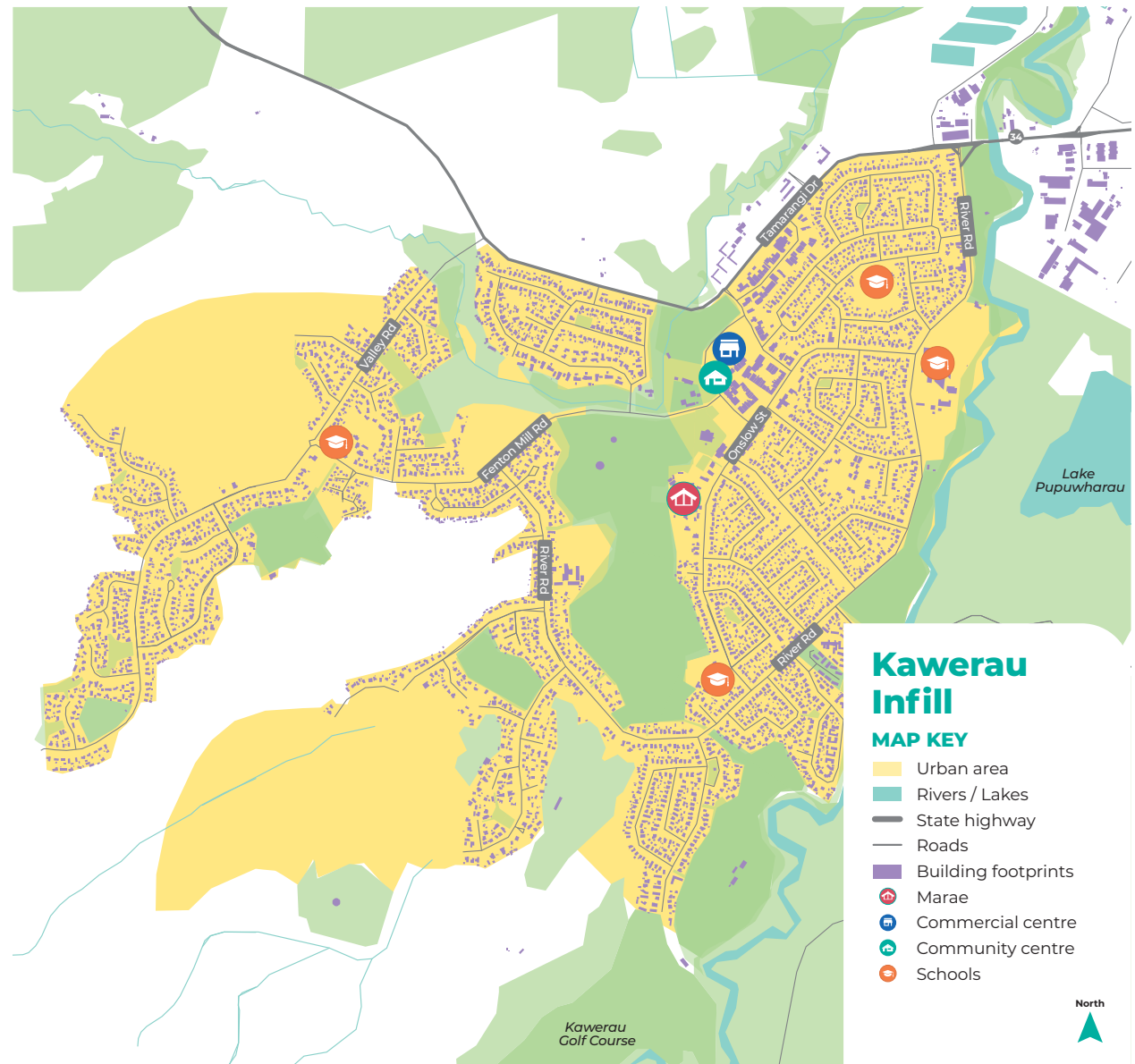


Figure 9: Kawerau location



## Where to next?

Residential growth will focus on the development of Stoneham Park, infill and intensification of existing residential areas, papakāinga or other Māori-led housing initiatives. Collaboration with iwi and strategic upgrading of infrastructure in relation to demand will be key to unlocking sustainable growth in Kawerau. Between 1990 and 2021, Kawerau averaged about 5 new dwelling consents per year.<sup>1</sup> Stoneham Park will enable around 104 residential units.

Ngāti Tūwharetoa have aspirational projects designed to uplift the wellbeing of iwi beneficiaries, stimulate Kawerau's economy, and enhance the attractiveness of the district to investors. Including:

- Revitalisation of geothermal hot pools on Parimahana Reserve
- Spencer Avenue property development for priority economic, cultural, and environmental activities
- Papakāinga housing development – 33 rental homes in urban and rural areas around Kawerau
- Development of hot houses on Otarahanga Farm to support food sovereignty and economic outcomes

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<sup>1</sup> Kawerau District Council Stoneham Park Residential Development Property Market Report, Veros



## Hukutaia Growth Area

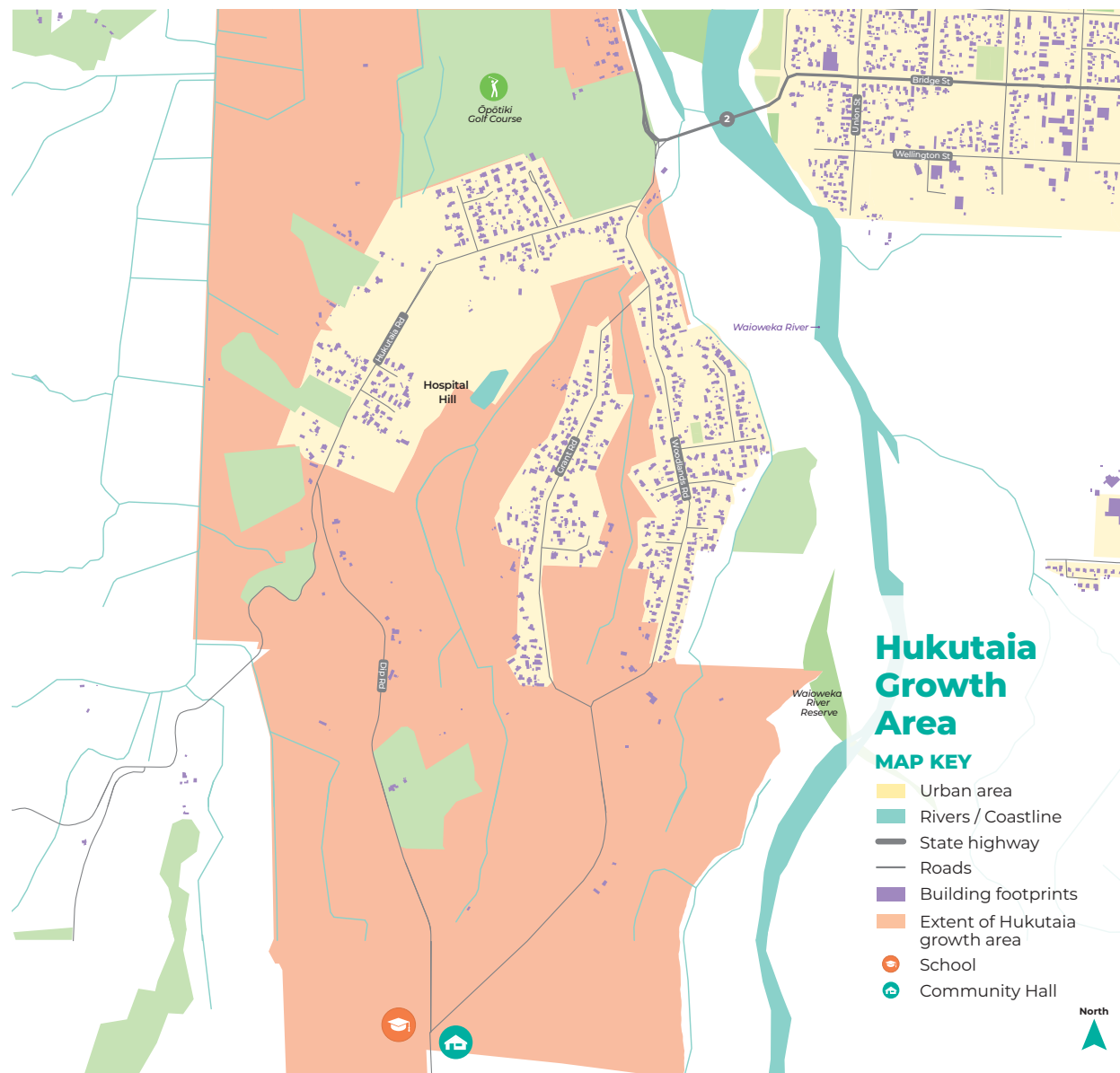
Located southwest of Ōpōtiki, the Hukutaia Growth Area is currently bounded by Woodlands Road, Hukutaia and Dip Roads, and Grant Road and is located above the Waioweka-Ōtara flood scheme. The area currently has a mix of urban residential development around Hospital Hill and surrounding rural land uses. Its elevated position places it outside most flood hazard risk areas, making it better suited for development than the township itself.

### What growth looks like

The area has the capacity to provide for 2,000 residential dwelling units by 2055. Local commercial opportunities will create employment and strengthen the vibrancy and resilience of the new area. Development concepts have identified smaller-scale commercial opportunities to support local job creation.

A District Plan change and new structure plan will rezone and unlock the land within Hukutaia Growth Area. Future planning must consider the impacts on the Ōtara-Waioweka flood scheme and the existing Ōpōtiki township. Hukutaia is expected to develop into a vibrant new growth cell with land for social infrastructure and facilities provided as growth and demand increase. Growth in Hukutaia will be steady, featuring a mix of residential density dwellings that provide a safer retreat for some existing residents and natural growth for others working in the township.

**Figure 10:** Hukutaia location





## Where to next?

The next steps focus on unlocking Hukutaia's potential as a key growth area. A District Plan change and structure planning will be essential to rezone land, ensuring sustainable and well-integrated development. With capacity for 2,000 new homes by 2055, growth will be staged to align with infrastructure upgrades and community needs.

Key priorities include securing resilient water supply solutions, evaluating wastewater treatment options, implementing effective stormwater management and managing downstream risk to Ōpōtiki township. The planned Stoney Creek utilities bridge will improve water supply resilience, while electricity upgrades will support growing demand.

Ongoing collaboration with iwi, landowners, and stakeholders will guide growth, ensuring Hukutaia develops as a vibrant, well-serviced community with local employment and commercial opportunities.





## Whakatāne (Kopeopeo infill)

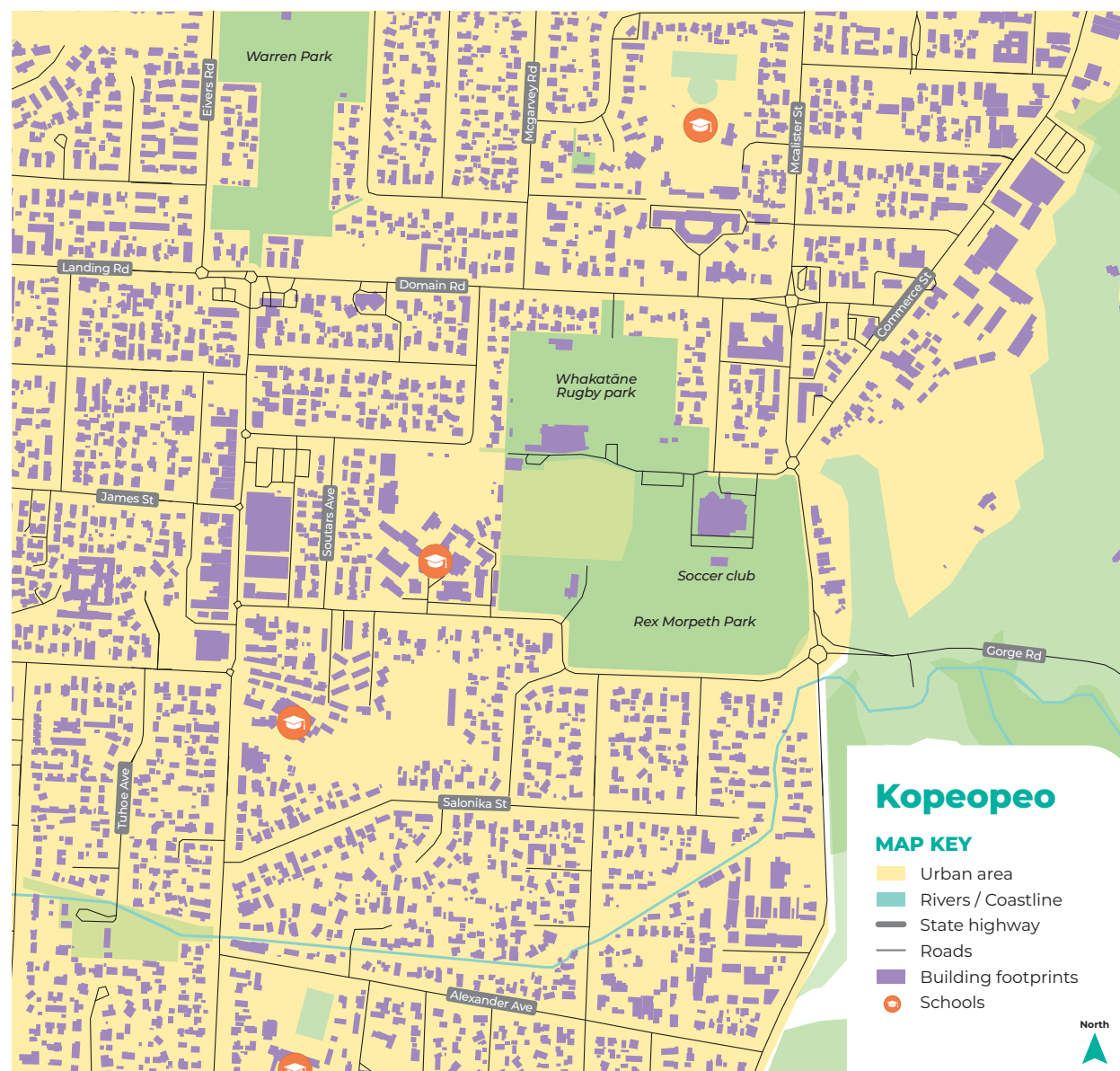
Unlike the wider Whakatāne urban area, Kopeopeo and other higher-elevation areas such as Hillside offer safer opportunities for infill development due to their lower exposure to natural hazard risks.

Kopeopeo sits on land elevated above the flood hazard risks associated with stopbank failure, or an overtopping during storm events exceeding a 1-in-100-year annual exceedance probability (AEP) intensity.

### What growth looks like

As an established community, there is unlikely to be a substantial or quick increase in infill and intensification. Kopeopeo, and similarly elevated areas, present an opportunity for gradual infill and intensification over the timeframe of the spatial plan.

While existing water and wastewater capacity is available for infill development, certain constraints exist. Urban water mains will eventually require upgrades to meet increased demand, and any expansion of the Whakatāne Wastewater Treatment Plant will need to accommodate additional capacity for the area.



**Figure 11:** Whakatāne (Kopeopeo infill) location

## Where to next?

Kopeopeo and other similarly elevated areas offer a strong opportunity for continued infill and intensification in the short to long term, due to their elevation and lower exposure to natural hazard risks. However, long-term growth will depend on shifting public and developer perceptions toward higher density living. Infrastructure planning will focus on ensuring water supply resilience, with potential connections to primary and secondary mains from Paul Road or Braemar Road. Upgrades to ageing asbestos cement water mains may be required to support increased demand.

Wastewater capacity is currently being assessed, with further modelling needed to determine if upgrades to pump stations and rising mains are necessary. The potential expansion of the Whakatāne Wastewater Treatment Plant could accommodate future growth, ensuring long-term service reliability.

Stormwater management remains a priority, with ongoing reviews aimed at improving performance and maintaining effective drainage. While Kopeopeo is at a higher elevation than the Whakatāne CBD, it still sits within key river catchments, requiring ongoing flood risk considerations as part of wider spatial planning. Future development of stormwater systems should promote catchment wide blue green network consideration.





## Areas within the Urban Central Corridor facing constraints

The Urban Central Corridor has several villages and townships that have developed over time around rivers in low-lying areas. Many areas have been previously zoned for a range of land use activities. These places have been home to communities for generations. Continued collaboration with iwi, landowners, and key stakeholders will be essential to shaping a sustainable path forward.

In areas like Tāneatua and Ōpōtiki township, the spatial plan has adopted a precautionary approach due to ongoing natural hazard constraints and the absence of planned or funded risk mitigations. Full mitigation may not be feasible or affordable, and as such, these areas are not included as Priority Growth Areas.

The spatial plan takes the position that areas promoted for new growth must be demonstrably resilient. The spatial plan does not change zoning in the District Plan or create or prohibit development on its own. Any zoning changes would require a future District Plan review or plan change process.

Communities not being considered for additional development capacity beyond what is already enabled through the current District Plans, include Ōpōtiki township, Whakatāne township, Te teko and Edgecumbe.





## Ōpōtiki township

Ōpōtiki township is surrounded by the Waioweka and Ōtara rivers and protected against adverse flood conditions by stopbanks on either side of the urban area.

Ōpōtiki will continue to provide for infill development at a controlled pace in the short term. In the medium to long term, as flood risks and management options and funding are better understood and implemented, development potential within the township may change. Hukutaia provides a resilient nearby option to accommodate population and commercial growth, including as a potential location for managed retreat from natural hazard-prone areas.

Risk assessments will inform river management planning, infrastructure planning, adaptation planning, emergency preparedness, and land decisions. These assessments will guide future growth decisions, ensuring that Ōpōtiki remains a resilient and well-supported township.

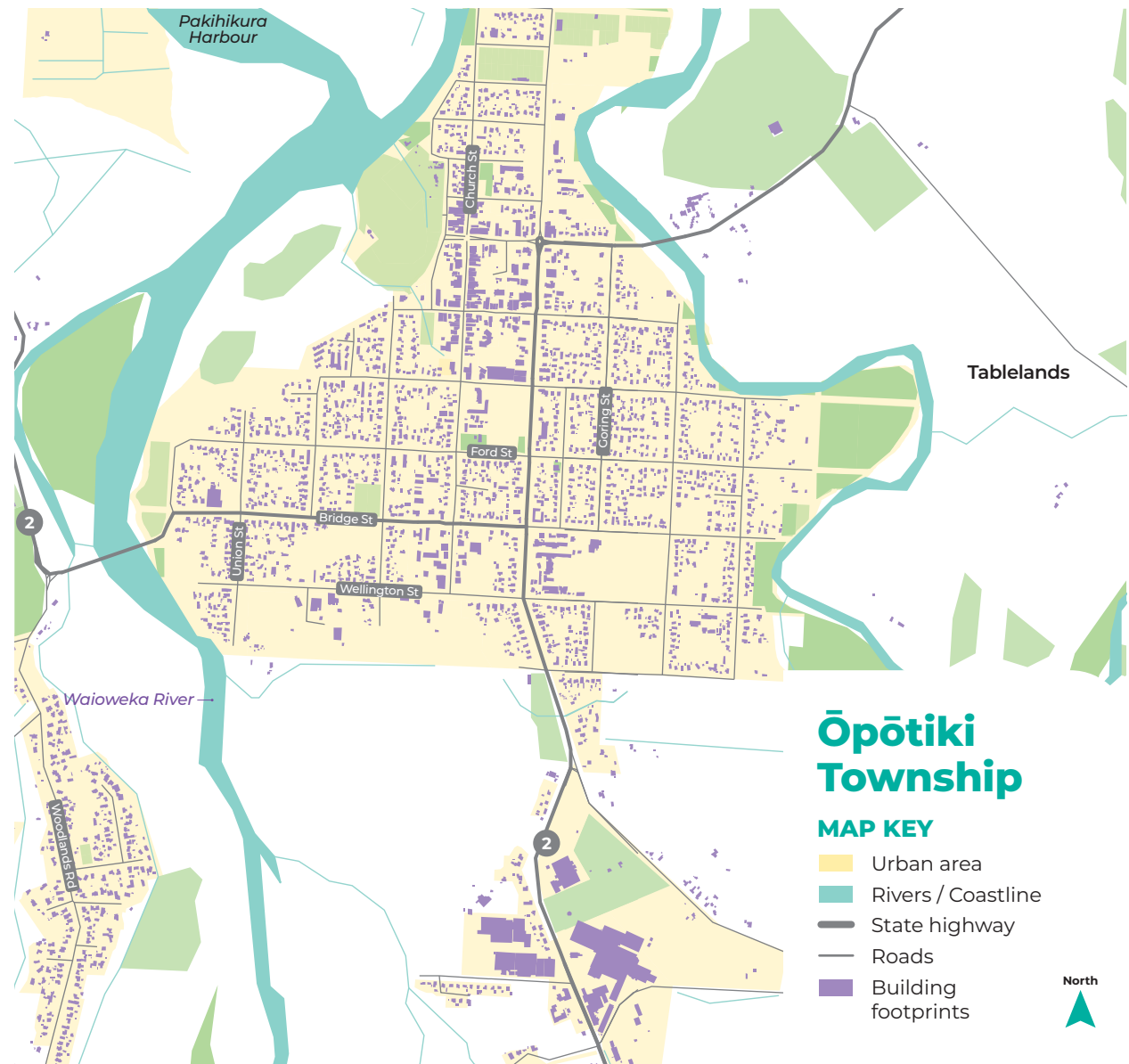


Figure 12: Ōpōtiki township location

## Whakatāne (Infill)

Lower-lying land within the Whakatāne urban boundary (excluding Kopeopeo and similarly elevated areas) and adjacent to the township is subject to natural hazard risks from the Whakatāne River and potential flooding. As a result, other locations such as Matatā and Awakeri have been identified for future growth.

As further investigations are undertaken to understand natural hazard risk and as future risk management strategies evolve, District Plan provisions may be updated to reflect improved understanding of risks.



**Figure 13:** Whakatāne (Infill)

## Te Teko

Te Teko has the capacity for small-scale growth within the existing urban area on land currently zoned for residential development. The existing settlement is protected in some locations by stopbanks, while other areas are unprotected and susceptible to large flooding events.

For these reasons, the community remains vulnerable to flood risk, and Te Teko has not been identified as a growth option in the spatial plan. In the interim, natural hazard risk assessment and resilience planning are encouraged.



**Figure 14:** Te Teko location



## Edgecumbe

Edgecumbe is a vibrant community nestled along the banks of the Rangitāiki River, with a strong sense of connection to its natural environment. The settlement is protected from the risk of flooding by stopbanks along the river's margins and is part of the Rangitāiki River and Drainage Scheme.

In 2017, Edgecumbe faced a significant challenge when heavy rains from Cyclone Debbie led to a breach in the stopbank, causing the Rangitāiki River to flood much of the village. As a result, Edgecumbe has not progressed as a viable growth area for new urban development.

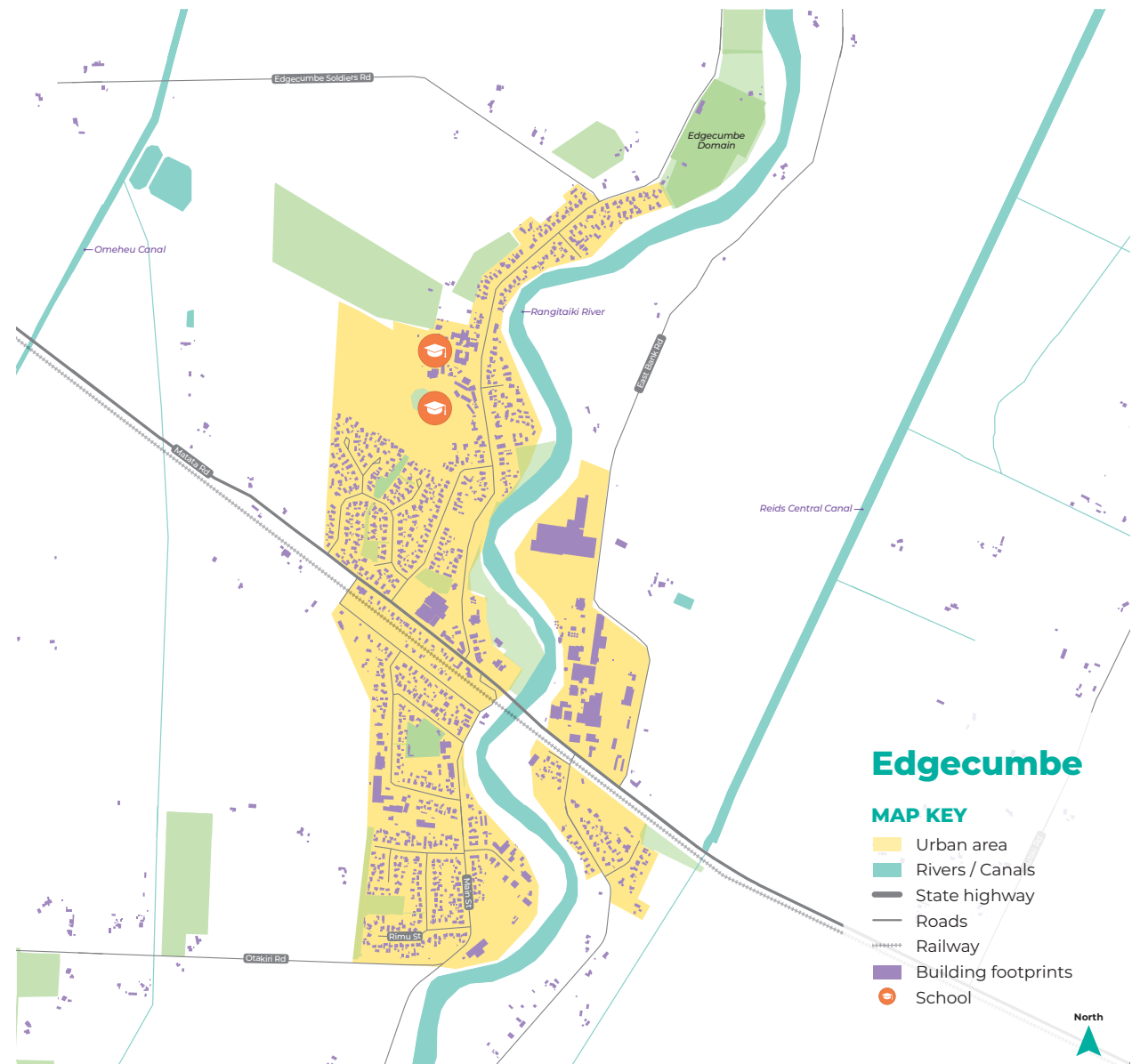


Figure 15: Edgecumbe location

# Te Kauhanga Tuawhenua kite Tonga

## Rural Southern Corridor

### Where are we now?

The Rural Southern Corridor stretches from Tāneatua in the north to Minginui in the south, encompassing areas such as Murupara, Waimana, Waiōhau, Ruatāhuna, and Galatea. This area is known for its small rural towns, agriculture, forestry, and large areas of protected indigenous forest, including Te Urewera and Whirinaki Forest Park. Tourism in this area focuses on these beautiful natural landscapes. The three main iwi in this corridor are Ngāti Manawa, Ngāti Whare, and Ngāi Tūhoe.

The Galatea Valley is a productive area with dairy farms, while the Kaingaroa Forest and Central North Island (CNI) Iwi Collective Forestry Lands lie to the west. The Rangitāiki River, along with the Ōhinemataroa (Whakatāne), Whirinaki and Tauranga rivers, flows through this corridor, playing a significant role in its environmental and cultural landscape. The Rangitāiki River is co-governed by the Rangitāiki River Forum and supports hydro-electric power generation at Aniwhenua and Matahina.

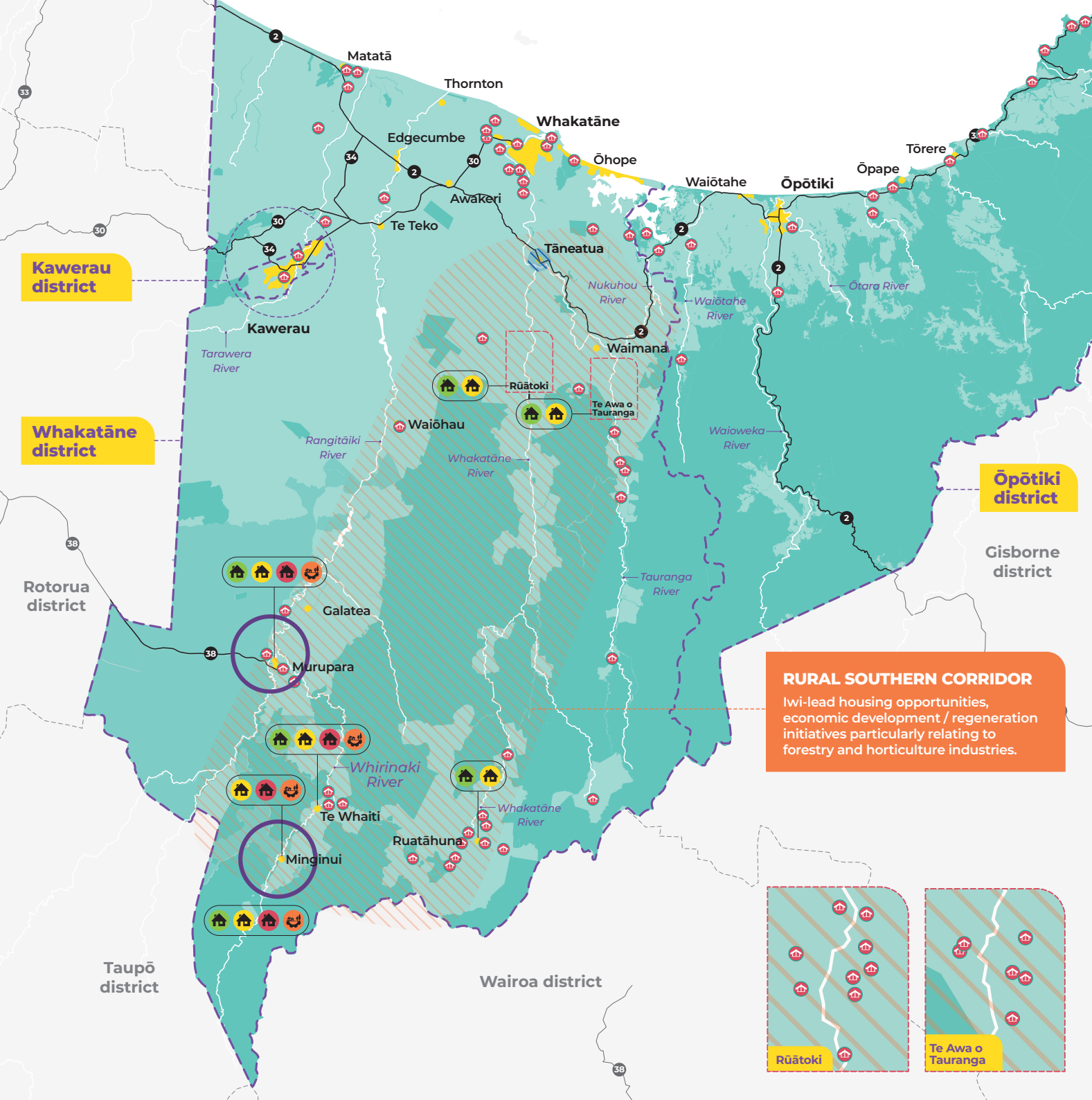
Key transport routes include SH 38, connecting Murupara to Rotorua, the Te Urewera Rainforest Route, and Galatea Road which links to the Rangitāiki Plains and the north. Tāneatua and Waimana are served by SH 2 and Tāneatua Road, which connects to Whakatāne. Additionally, there is a rail line from Murupara to Kawerau and Tauranga.

### Iwi aspirations

The three main iwi in the Rural Southern Corridor have specific aspirations:

- Ngāti Manawa aim to uplift health and wellbeing in Murupara by supporting economic development and creating a thriving community that acts as the service hub for the Rural Southern Corridor. This includes establishing a service centre on SH38, revitalising the town centre, improving community infrastructure, progressing the housing development at Miro Drive and developing housing at Evans Park. The Miro Drive Development is through the consenting stage and ready to progress to construction. It is an important starting point to providing housing for descendants of Ngāti Manawa and will serve as a blueprint for future housing developments Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Manawa undertake in Murupara. The Evans Park development will require work to be undertaken to return the land to Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Manawa.
- Ngāti Whare are working towards a vision of self-sufficiency and sustainable development in their rohe, which includes the Minginui Village and Te Whaiti Settlement. Iwi have aspirations, including improved infrastructure, environmental management, housing solutions, economic opportunities, and strengthened social and cultural wellbeing.
- Ngāi Tūhoe have documented their aspirations in Tūhoe - Te Uru Taumatua and other publications from tribal authorities. Ngāi Tūhoe's long-term housing goals are outlined in the Tūhoe Blueprint: Housing 40 Year Vision.

Ongoing conversations with iwi are crucial to identify how councils and others can support these aspirations.



**PAPAKĀINGA:** Papakāinga development across the Rural Southern Corridor including Rūātōki, Te Awa o Tauranga, Murupara, Te Whaiti and Ruatāhuna.



**IMPROVING HOUSING QUALITY:** Upgrade and improve existing homes in Rūātōki, Te Awa o Tauranga, Murupara, Minginui, Te Whaiti and Ruatāhuna.



**NEW HOUSING:** New housing in Murupara, Minginui and Te Whaiti.



**COMMERCIAL AND REVITALISATION ACTIVITIES:** Support health and wellbeing in Murupara through economic development, which may include the establishment of a water bottling plant, commercial activities on the Te Urewera Rainforest Route and improving community infrastructure as part of the Murupara revitalisation programme.

Ngāti Whare have plans for revitalisation for Minginui and Te Whaiti including renewable energy projects, eco-tourism and strengthening educational facilities.



**SELF-SUFFICIENT INFRASTRUCTURE:** Ngāti Whare has goals for Minginui and Te Whaiti to support self-sufficiency including renewable energy and sustainable waste and water management.



**ROADING:** Ngāti Whare have plans to develop, upkeep and maintain a forestry road for resiliency in case of access disruption to the main road to and from Minginui.

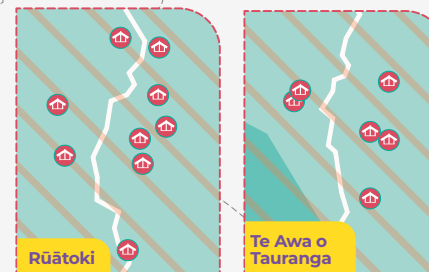
## RURAL SOUTHERN CORRIDOR

Iwi-lead housing opportunities, economic development / regeneration initiatives particularly relating to forestry and horticulture industries.

### MAP KEY

- District boundary
- Eastern Bay of Plenty sub-region
- Other council boundaries
- State highway
- Urban area
- Town, locality
- Natural environment
- CNI Iwi Holdings Land
- Marae
- Areas for risk assessment in the future
- Town Centre revitalisation
- Papakāinga
- Improving housing quality
- New housing
- Commercial and revitalisation activities

Ongoing conversations with iwi are crucial to identify how councils and others can support these aspirations and to understand as they change and new ones are identified. Ngāi Tūhoe have their aspirations in Tūhoe - Te Uru Taumatua and tribal authorities' publications. Tūhoe's long-term housing goals are outlined in the Tūhoe Blueprint: Housing 40 Year Vision.





## What does the future hold for the Rural Southern Corridor?

The focus for the Rural Southern Corridor is on iwi-led housing and economic opportunities, particularly in tourism, forestry, horticulture, and new ventures like sustainable water bottling. The main emphasis is on supporting iwi-led initiatives.

Growth in this corridor means resilience, revitalisation, and supporting iwi aspirations. The focus of Three Waters Infrastructure is improving existing systems or self-sufficiency. Marae must be supported as cultural and community hubs, including for emergency management. Community facilities should be co-located to service the needs of each community effectively.

### Minginui and Te Whaiti

By 2055, increased Māori housing and papakāinga will support the growth of Ngāti Whare descendants living within the Minginui and Te Whaiti communities. Marae and surrounding areas will be prepared as community hubs for use during Civil Defence emergencies. Minginui will grow in a sustainable way, meeting whānau needs and creating a

central recreation area and essential services accessible to the Te Whaiti community.

Minginui and Te Whaiti can support a greater tourism offering in Whirinaki and the wider Eastern Bay of Plenty. With support in developing into a sustainable and self-sufficient settlement, Minginui could build on what it currently has to offer as a rural escape for those seeking to immerse themselves in the natural environment and activities of Whirinaki.

### Murupara

By 2055, Murupara will have improved public facilities and community spaces. Key changes proposed for consideration include converting Evan's Park into a residential zone and enabling a commercial area on the Te Urewera Rainforest Route. Both require initial feasibility assessments.

### Tāneatua

By 2055, flood mapping and natural hazard risk assessments will inform the feasibility and affordability of any risk management planning

and decisions to be considered in the future. Prior documented flood events have affected this community. Due to known flood risk and the absence of mitigation measures, Tāneatua has not progressed as a viable growth area. A natural hazard risk assessment is required to understand the extent of risk and to inform the feasibility and affordability of any future risk management responses. In the interim, some limited low-density development may occur in safe areas already enabled in the District Plan where there is available infrastructure capacity.

### Te Awa o Tauranga, Rūātoki, Ruatāhuna

By 2055, Ngāi Tūhoe aim to advance their aspirations for establishing papakāinga goals, as outlined in the Tūhoe Blueprint: Housing 40 Year Vision, in locations resilient to natural hazard risk and climate impacts. This will help ensure existing and future communities are safe and resilient in the long-term. Infrastructure will be self-sufficient and sustainable, with resilient transport connections

# Te Kauhanga Takutai ki te Rāwhiti

## Coastal Eastern Corridor

### Where are we now?

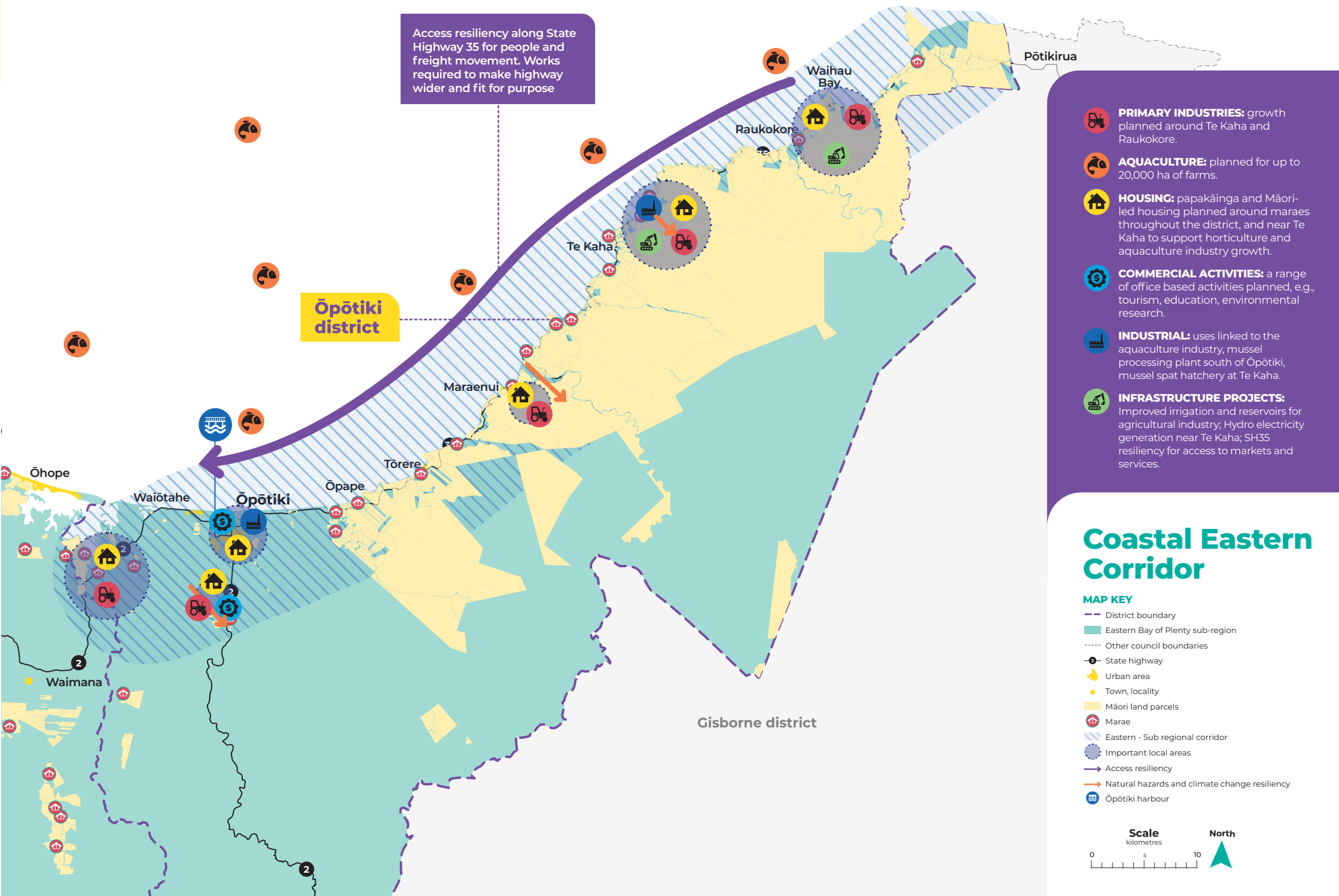
The Coastal Eastern Corridor stretches from Ōpōtiki township west to Kererutahi, south to Waioweka Pā, and east to Pōtikirua. This area is known for its rural and coastal charm, with a strong focus on iwi-led housing and economic development.

**Ōpōtiki District Council has worked closely with Ngāi Tai, Te Whānau a Apanui, and Te Whakatōhea to inform the content of this plan.** These iwi collectively own 60% of the land in the district and are responsible for major economic drivers in the area. With 66% of the district's population being Māori, their partnership with local, regional, and central government plays a crucial role in shaping the future development of the Coastal Eastern Corridor.

**Te Kaha serves as the main service centre, with a network of coastal marae and settlements along SH 35.** While there is limited flat land for development along the coast, the area contains highly versatile soils. The mountainous Raukumara Forest Park and conservation land to the south are rich in indigenous vegetation and recreational reserves. These areas attract visitors from all over the country for cycling, hiking, and fishing. Ngāti Porou land within Ōpōtiki District is mostly located within these mountainous areas.

**State Highways 2 and 35 are vital for connecting the Coastal Eastern Corridor internally and to external markets.** However, the area is vulnerable to coastal flooding and landslides, which can disrupt access, especially east of Ōpōtiki. The Waioweka River floodplain and the presence of protected versatile soils also limit development south of Ōpōtiki.







## Iwi aspirations

Iwi in the Coastal Eastern Corridor have big plans for housing and businesses that would contribute to economic growth in the area. They aim to establish papakāinga and Māori housing near marae and near Te Kaha to support local industries. Recent Treaty Settlements with Te Tāwharau o Te Whakatōhea and government grants for Te Whānau a Apanui have boosted these plans.

Important projects that have the potential to enhance the community's economic, social, and cultural wellbeing in the Coastal Eastern Corridor are outlined below.

- Whakatōhea Mussels were the first in the world to develop an Open Ocean Greenshell Mussel farm, with their 20-year journey beginning in the late 1990s. Their mussel processing facility in Ōpōtiki has the most modern mussel processor in New Zealand and has the potential to have the largest production capacity in the southern hemisphere.
- Te Whānau a Apanui have applied for the largest single seawater consent for aquaculture in New Zealand. Their plans include an on-land mussel spat hatchery and

research hub near Te Kaha and exploring the seaweed industry. To avoid reliance on the often-closed State Highway network, they are investigating sea freight options from Te Kaha for mussel transport.

- The Mahi Haurahi Horticulture Centre between Omaio and Waihou Bay features multiple kiwifruit, macadamia and truffle orchards.
- Raukokore and Waihou Bay community water storage projects to support new kiwifruit orchards.

Aquaculture is primarily led by iwi, with Māori wellbeing deeply connected to the land and sea. The Crown invested \$164.34 million in a group of projects across Ōpōtiki District to enable a sustainable aquaculture industry in the Eastern Bay. This includes the Whakatōhea Mussels aquaculture farm and processing facility (opened in 2021), Ōpōtiki Harbour Development (the harbour opened in 2024), Ōpōtiki Town Wharf Upgrade (completed for temporary boat launching of mussel boats), the Marina and Wharf Development for industrial uses and commercial/recreational boats (scheduled to be undertaken in 2025), and Te Huata Mussel Spat Hatchery near Te Kaha (in planning phase).

## Ōpōtiki pipeline projects from Kererutahi (Tūranga Pikitoi) to Ōpāpe

Ōpōtiki iwi have identified a range of pipeline projects across the district. These signal likely expenditure and development that may act as a catalyst for growth. LIMITATION: This map is subject to hapū consultation

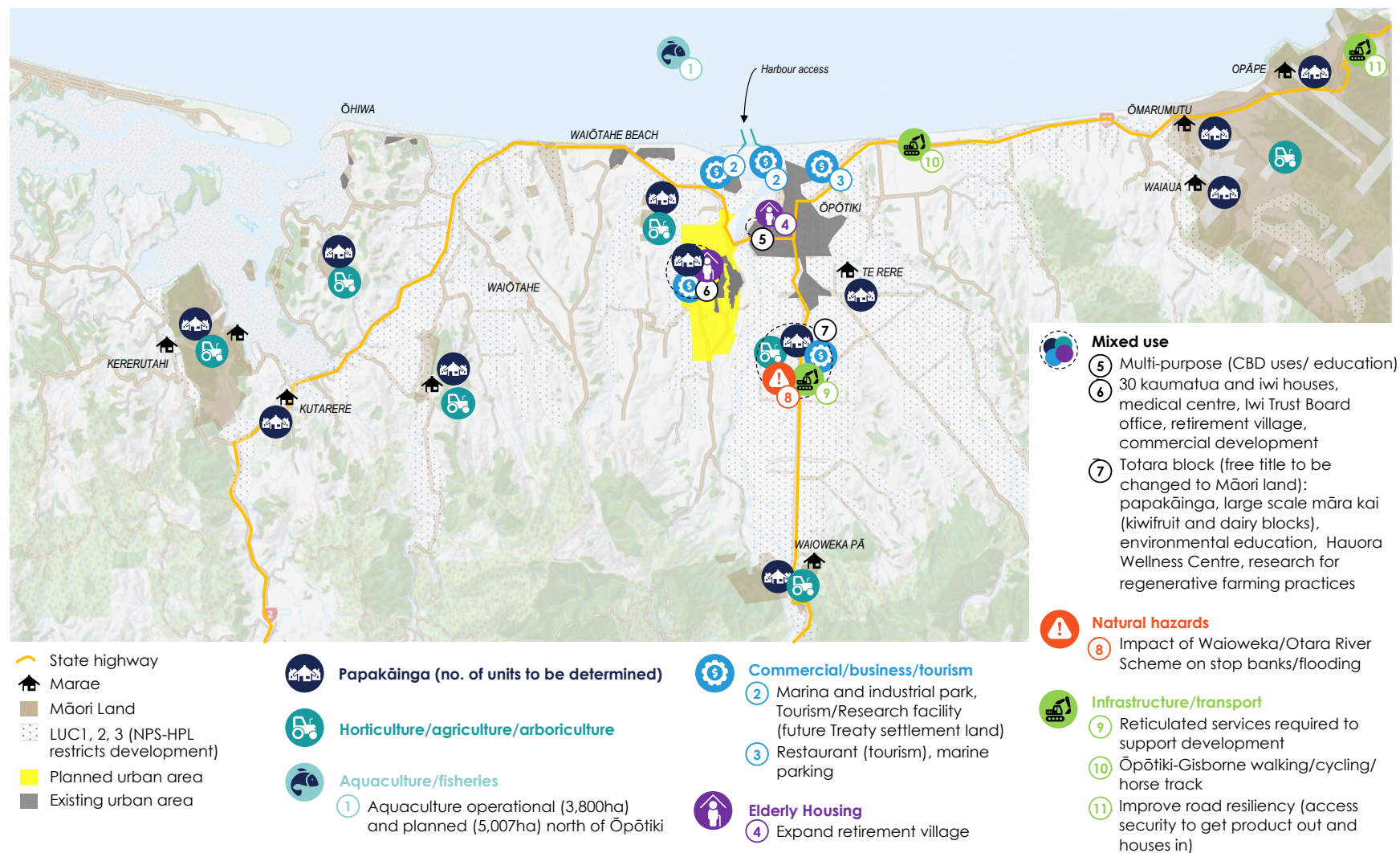


Figure 18: Ōpōtiki iwi pipeline projects Kererutahi to Ōpāpe

## Ōpōtiki pipeline projects from Ōmarumutu to Hāwai

Ōpōtiki iwi have identified a range of pipeline projects across the district. These signal likely expenditure and development that may act as a catalyst for growth.



**Figure 19:** Ōpōtiki iwi pipeline projects Ōmarumutu to Hāwai



## Ōpōtiki pipeline projects from Haupoto to Whangaparāoa

Ōpōtiki iwi have identified a range of pipeline projects across the district. These signal likely expenditure and development that may act as a catalyst for growth.

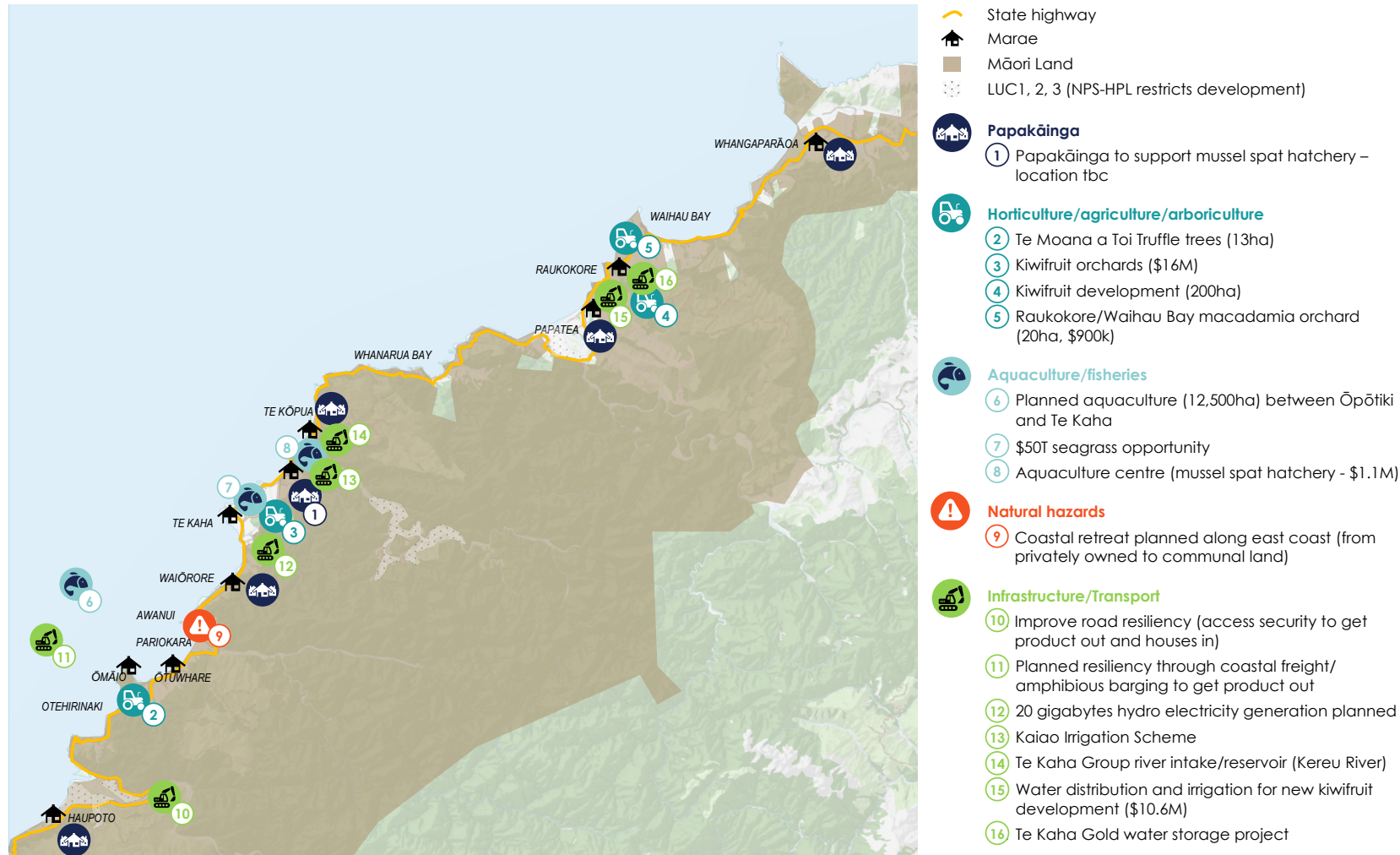


Figure 20: Ōpōtiki iwi pipeline projects Haupoto to Whangaparāoa

# What does the future hold?

## Papakāinga

Māori-led housing is set to play a significant role in the Coastal Eastern Corridor's housing supply. Plans are underway to develop over 200 papakāinga units in the next five years, providing homes for tangata whenua returning to the area. These developments will generally be close to rural work opportunities and marae. Community feedback highlights the need for infill in smaller settlements and rural residential development along the coast. This approach supports the sustainability of small communities and enables people to live near their whānau and cultural heritage.

## Business and development

Iwi will continue to play a central role in business ventures within the Coastal Eastern Corridor and primary industries will remain a significant economic driver. Central government investments are supporting the development of kiwifruit, macadamia, and truffle orchards, as well as the infrastructure needed to support these industries. Whakatōhea Mussels is planning large-scale māra kai (kiwifruit and dairy blocks) south of Ōpōtiki, supported by environmental education initiatives, a Hauora Wellness Centre, and research into regenerative farming practices.

Aquaculture is a major focus, with investment planned for over 20,000 ha of water space for mussel farming north of Ōpōtiki township and Te Kaha. Ōpōtiki processing facility is set to expand its operations, and a mussel spat hatchery will be established near Te Kaha to support the aquaculture industries. The Ōpōtiki Harbour Development Project enables Ōpōtiki to become a service and processing base for recreational and commercial vessels to support tourism, aquaculture and other marine related industries (including boat building/servicing).

## Reliable transport connections and reticulated services

State Highway 35 improvements to stabilise embankments are the key focus for the East Coast to ensure reliable access for people and products. While SH 2 requires protection against slips, alternative routes must be upgraded to provide more options and resiliency to the Ōpōtiki township. Most areas are remote and lack reticulated services, but some areas south of Ōpōtiki may connect to existing services. Infrastructure for smaller settlements can be managed through renewal programmes.

## Social and community infrastructure

Ōpōtiki township is the main centre for social and community services. At the same time, the Coastal Eastern Corridor includes several schools, holiday parks, a small number of dairies, and a medical centre and hotel located in Te Kaha. Although there is a shortage of commercial shops and employment opportunities along the East Coast, Te Kaha has the potential to become a larger service centre, offering a broader range of services and amenities.

Marae play a vital role in supporting communities, especially during natural disasters. The rich Māori heritage, along with the sea, expansive native bush and rivers, provides opportunities for kai foraging, hiking, hunting, fishing and recreational activities. The area is part of the Ngā Haerenga New Zealand Cycle Trails, which attracts visitors from across the country and internationally. The Motu Trails have boosted Ōpōtiki's regional identity, being accorded The Great Ride status in 2012. It generates annual visits of up to 20,000, supporting local businesses. There are opportunities to develop eco-tourism opportunities further.

## How will this be achieved?

**Transport network resiliency.** Economic growth in the Coastal Eastern Corridor will increase the need for housing, putting more demand on the transport network. The spatial plan highlights the need for secure access and improved road networks to support transportable dwellings and product transportation. Products prepared in the area are often time-sensitive and disrupted transport connections due to natural hazard events pose an ongoing challenge. Continued emphasis on improved resiliency of SH 2 and SH 35 is important for continued economic development.

**Increasing industrial land supply.** More industrial land is needed to meet growing demand for local industries to expand and new businesses. Ōpōtiki District Council is in the process of identifying land around the township, while development around Te Kaha will progress based on site-specific opportunities supported by an enabling planning framework.

**More housing supply and greater choice.** Economic development plans are also supported through the establishment of the Hukutaia Growth Area providing more housing choices for people working in these areas.





# Our Places

Eastern Bay Spatial Plan

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