



Submission on Upper Hutt City Council Draft Annual Plan 2014-2015

Prepared by Hutt Valley Chamber of Commerce & Industry Incorporated

OVERVIEW

Hutt Valley Chamber of Commerce wishes to congratulate the Upper Hutt City Council on a visionary annual plan that captures the heart of the upper valley. The council has laid down a pragmatic programme balanced against income from the sale of surplus land that will advance the vision for a vibrant and prosperous community.

Our chamber members are your ratepayers within the business community which ranges from service industries and manufacturing to retail and hospitality. It is our role to encourage strong business relationships and make connections that encourage business growth.

We believe that can be achieved through a close working relationship between our Chamber and council as partner organisations seeking to encourage economic development for Upper Hutt and the Hutt Valley as a whole.

There is strong support for investing in creating greater awareness of Upper Hutt's assets in terms of facilities, retail, the hospitality sector, sports grounds, and the beauty of the surrounding natural environment.

We believe the combination of lifting awareness of what is on offer in Upper Hutt and upgrading areas like the railway station and finishing off Main Street, will build the city's profile as a destination city for the Greater Wellington Region.

Our submission looks at a number of areas that will be considered by council for inclusion in the draft Annual Plan.

SETTING OF RATES

The proposed average rate of 3.44 per cent is in line with the previous year and takes into account the planned increase spending by council in areas of economic development. We note your intent to sell off council land to offset significant expenses proposed for the year ahead. We believe this is a prudent move by a council intent on keeping a tight hold on rates. Business interests share this concern and cite their own cost of investing in developing and growing their own businesses and in turn creating employment.



SPENDING ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Encouraging new business investment will contribute to ongoing growth of Upper Hutt.

The ongoing commitment to the economic development stimulus package is welcomed particularly the expansion of the policy to include incentives that will attract key tenants in the CBD. This focus on 'transformative' retail businesses, high density residential apartments and large scale office type developments is to be welcomed.

Bringing people into the city centre is vital for sustaining growth in the area.

Marketing Upper Hutt is important and the allocated funding will help boost the profile of the city and build pride among the local community while raising awareness across the Wellington region that Upper Hutt is alive and is the place to visit.

Support for events that also attract people to the city is a vital component of developing the "Upper Hutt Package" and, while the total sum allocated for the year is relatively modest, the planned events together with new signage proposed for SH2 will provide an important platform for promoting Upper Hutt.

Hutt Valley Chamber of Commerce is very strong on encouraging new skills, networking and providing training opportunities for the owners of emerging enterprises. We believe our programme leads New Zealand in the variety and relevance of the skills being encouraged in the age of social media. We will encourage business owners in Upper Hutt to support the council initiatives while working alongside the council to offer suitable courses that meet the needs of Upper Hutt business people.

SUPPORTING FUTURE CBD DEVELOPMENT

We congratulate the Upper Hutt City Council for taking a powerful step forward in encouraging future development of the Central Business District. The allocation of \$2.3 million for this purpose is a clear indicator of its commitment to making things happen in the CBD of Upper Hutt. Taken together with the economic development incentives and other projects such as new and enhanced public spaces, this represents an overall investment of some \$4 million in the CBD.

In the long term this will be of significant benefit to the city.

We also believe replacement of the railway station will have a major impact on perceptions of Upper Hutt City for residents commuting to Lower Hutt and Wellington city. A new will also have a positive impact on visitors arriving by rail.

As a chamber, we will continue to support and encourage the growth and development of the CBD through positive support for businesses in the city.



IMPROVING COMMUNITY SERVICES

The Hutt Valley Chamber of Commerce is very aware of the need for city services that enhance the community and provide a pleasant environment in which to live.

We believe Hutt City Council has acknowledged its commitment to the community through a diverse range of projects included in the annual plan.

Council's focus on community safety is seen as important by the Chamber and initiatives included in the plan covering safety, health and wellbeing are applauded. Programmes aimed at youth are important.

The decision by council encourage health and wellbeing through a commitment to the Activation programme aimed at helping people become more active is also seen as important and an essential part of being involved in the community.

A major feature of the annual plan in supporting the community is the ongoing development of the Maidstone Park sporting hub where there will be new artificial turf playing fields laid and new tennis courts built.

Taken together with improvements in commuter and recreational cycle routes and upgrading of the Hutt River Trail, Upper Hutt has created access to a wide number of recreational opportunities. These serve as a powerful incentive for staff wishing to work in Upper Hutt. This in turn supports investment decisions by developers and business.

SUMMARY

The Hutt Valley Chamber of Commerce believes its members will support councils new draft annual plan because of its boldness in seeking to make a difference to the Central Business District and providing incentives for investment. In the end, business needs people to survive and prosper.

Our Chamber supports initiatives that will assist in promoting growth and supporting families of business owners and their staff. Retail spending patterns show that Upper Hutt people are loyal to their city and shop local most of the time.

We believe Upper Hutt City Council has hit the right button in deciding to grow Upper Hutt into a destination city. We think it will happen.

But there is also still much to be achieved in encouraging residents to support local businesses rather than perceiving they have to go outside the area to find something better.

The council's annual plan is a blueprint for building confidence and igniting business growth and development for the city.

Mark Futter
Chief Executive