



## **Tauranga CBD On the Cusp Of An Exciting Future**

**TAURANGA, 10 August 2021:** A thriving central city that reflects our heritage, our connection to the ocean and our identity as a lifestyle destination is within reach according to influential property leadership group, the Urban Task Force (UTF).

Seeking inspiration from other cities as diverse as Hamilton, San Antonio, and Brisbane, with innovative ideas such as a Tri-Cable Urban Transport Network, canals through the lower CBD and apartments built on the wharf, the members of the UTF believe the time has come to dream big.

UTF Chairman Scott Adams says we need to shift the narrative and put the bad news stories about the city behind us.

“The Long-Term Plan (LTP) is now in place and a significant shift in momentum is underway at Tauranga City Council. It’s time for the private sector to step up and join the conversation about how we shape the future of the city,” he says.

“With the right collaboration and co-operation Tauranga is poised to become the commercial, cultural, and civic heart of the Bay of Plenty, a title that is arguably currently held by Rotorua. We want this to be the place where people from all around the region come to spend time and money,” says Adams.

With nearly a billion dollars of major development either underway or in the pipeline, the members of UTF are advocating for creative and collaborative discussions between the public and private sector about ways to revitalise the CBD.

“Both the commissioners and Council CEO Marty Grenfell have signalled their intention to work proactively with the business community to forge lasting improvements for the city. For the first time, we feel like our voice is being heard,” says Adams.

Council have earmarked a budget of \$500,000 to begin consultation work with the private sector and Nigel Tutt, Chief Executive of Priority One believes this sends a clear message to

Tauranga business leaders that building stronger partnerships between council and business is high on the agenda.

“Retail spend in the CBD between January and June (updated) this year was the highest on record, we have another 4,000 students coming to the University in the next few years, substantial investment from the Ministry of Justice with a new courthouse planned, as well as a new council building and a new library all in the pipeline. The CBD is a positive news story and it is encouraging to see business work alongside the Council to make even greater, transformative change,” said Tutt.

For UTF member and iwi leader Buddy Mikaere, the changing governance at the Council has offered an enormous boost to Māori.

“Iwi business interests have a unique opportunity to be heard in this new environment. We need to use our position as the region with the largest Māori population to our advantage and create meaningful pathways for our rangatahi through partnerships in areas such as tourism with private businesses,” he says.

Mikaere also points to accommodation as a critical factor in the development of the CBD area.

“If we want to attract more businesses such as Winstone Wallboards to the city, we need a significant increase in affordable housing,” he says.

Adams notes that changing our focus from retail to residential will be important to attracting people into the CBD.

“We want Tauranga to be a place where it’s easier to get consent for 20 apartments than 20 residential house and land packages.

“Inner city housing development is the most important thing we can do to re-energise the city and make Tauranga CBD a place we can be proud of,” he says.

Local architect Mark Wassung suggests we should look to our Waikato neighbours for direction in developing the CBD.

“Tauranga is about two years behind Hamilton in terms of development. We can learn some real lessons from their set-up, in particular the Urban Design Panel that they established to oversee development. A similar structure here would enable us to design our inner city in a collaborative and cohesive way.

“We could also look to the many past designs proposed for the city over its history. The decades of rejected plans held on file for the Tauranga CBD should be revisited to gather common ideas that may have been previously dismissed as not right at the time,” says Wassung.

Adams notes that it is critical that any future development plans are transparent and circulated widely for submission.

“The people of Tauranga have become frustrated and disengaged. It’s important that we bring them along on this journey and that they feel a part of the changes,” he says.

The UTF are impressed with the positive changes the commissioners have made to the city.

“The commissioners are prepared to make the tough decisions. Unlike elected councillors their reputation as professionals relies upon their performance in the role. They are more driven to leave a lasting, positive legacy and we’re keen to support them in that work,” says Adams.

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