

Town Centre Manager's Report for 2023/24

The past year has been a busy and productive one with new business initiatives, events and projects.

We have received a lot of positive feedback from members and the wider community in response to these activities which have helped to support local business and build awareness of what we have in our town.



We enjoyed visiting all BID Members this year with an updated Member pack which was a great opportunity to catch up and hear about your current challenges.

The economic challenges and market uncertainty in the last few months has affected many of our members and we will continue to work to support and advocate for you all however we can. We hope that the recent economic relief will make a difference and lift spending and business confidence as we near the end of 2024.

The retail landscape has changed and we must change with it and focus on what's special about Waiuku and our businesses. Competition is having some effect, but this highlights opportunities to do better. It's all about the customer experience. We're here to provide support to all our members so please get in touch with us about any queries or challenges you may be experiencing in your business.

Growth

Several new businesses have opened in Waiuku recently and we receive regular enquiries from others wanting to move here. Most vacancies don't stay vacant for long. A number of property owners have projects planned and we look forward to seeing fresh new development both in the town centre and at Fernleigh Business Park in the next couple of years which will benefit the whole business community. This promises good things for local employment and demand and opportunity for local business and services.

We have some wonderful businesses and 'destination shops' which are so important to a town like ours, and we want to attract more, whilst continuing to encourage landlords to consider a healthy retail mix to support all. The lack of over the counter bank services has not been good for business and foot traffic in the town centre, causing inconvenience to many businesses and organisations. We have advocated for improved banking facilities for our community, engaging with the NZ Banking Association and The Reserve Bank, but to date without the desired outcome.

The WB&DA continue to support private plan changes where appropriate, such as Plan change 73 in Constable Rd, to address the current housing and retirement living shortage, as well as advocating for public transport and roading upgrades to ensure the area has robust infrastructure to accommodate future growth. The long awaited Watercare services upgrade is now set to happen which will make a huge difference to Waiuku's development.

The huge growth happening in Drury and what is predicted for our region in the next 10 years, means we all must 'up our game' if we want Waiuku to continue to flourish.

WB&DA are about to start a new branding project, with the support of the Franklin Economic Broker, to improve Waiuku's digital presence and attract more visitors, shoppers and investors. A new Franklin regional website is being created to promote all the region has to offer, being so close to Auckland and the airport. This site will channel the audience to each individual destination. Our goal is to create a new 'brand', in consultation with the community, which represents Waiuku's identity and to enhance our existing website to be more accessible and welcoming, highlighting our unique offerings and attractions, providing an escape from the large busy centres. We will be engaging with stakeholders, business and property owners about how we can work together to ensure our town centre is a beautiful place to shop, dine out and do business.

Events

We enjoyed some fantastic events during the last 12 months which were well supported by the community and businesses.



We held the **NZ Steel Christmas Festival & Parade in Dec 2023**, which was a wonderful day for the community, always so well supported and so much fun to be a part of. We had more than 30 parade entries and saw amazing floats, with great business participation, some entering for the first time. All the category prize winners were rewarded with town credit notes to spend at local businesses.

We held three **Connective networking events**, all well attended, hosted at The Kentish in July 2023, The Shires in Dec 2023 and Waiuku Cossie Club in April 2024 with guest speakers from Franklin Local Board, Christina Rogstad; Franklin Economic Broker, Mike Marr of Innovation Franklin and Kym Maynard of Haven Financial presenting on their fields of expertise and topics affecting Waiuku business. We received great feedback from attendees with lots of positive connections made.



The **Waiuku Steel 'n' Wheels Festival in April 2024** was a spectacular day with new attractions such as the wonderful Harvards display and a Tigermoth fly over to top things off. We had a huge turn out again with approx. 15,000 people in our little town centre. Again, so well supported by the businesses, the community and the whole region, with visitors and exhibitors from greater Auckland, Waikato & further and we received great feedback from businesses and the community.



Blast to the Past, Nov 2023 was another total blast with huge crowds at rugby park.

Window dressing competition winners were Bakers Shoes & More and St. Andrews Op Shop.

A huge thank you to everyone for your support, our executive committee, event sponsors, the Franklin Local Board and volunteers from the community, who helped make all these events such a success for our town.

Promotions

Shop Local/ Support Local Business showcase campaign

As part of our Shop Local initiative to encourage our community to support local businesses wherever possible we started our Business showcase campaign this year. We have visited more than 26 members and created a short video reel to showcase their business, what's unique about it, the real people behind it and what they offer. These have been shared on social media and received a wonderful response from businesses and the community.



Christmas promotions included the return of Shop & Win which proved very popular and well supported by local businesses, and some excited winners who could then spend their vouchers at their favourite local businesses. Feedback from the retailers led to a Sunday Christmas Shopping Day event rather than focusing on late nights. This was a great success with photos at Santa's grotto, music and entertainment. The giant Christmas Tree in Norfolk rise was lit up once again and Photos with Santa in his Grotto proved popular leading up to Christmas with music in the town centre. The Christmas windows competition winner was Vanilla Homewares with their beautiful display. We look forward to another wonderful Christmas in Waiuku.

Advertising, Website & Social Media

The WB&DA Facebook page is fully utilised with regular posts sharing events, news and updates which we also share to all the local community pages to increase our reach. We also use these posts to drive readers to our website for all the latest events, local businesses, services and community groups. We created a new WB&DA Members Facebook group this year for businesses to see our updates pertinent to them and share their own news or promotions. We would like more of our members to join this group to enable them to stay up to date with things happening with WB&DA and around town.

Instagram All our promotions and business showcase reels are promoted on Instagram to widen our reach to the younger online audience.

Waiukutown.co.nz has continued to improve and progress over the last year, as we add more information, local events and imagery. We look forward to more improvements in 2025 following our new branding project.

West Franklin Breeze We advertise all our large events in the Breeze and support them wherever we can, as a great community publication featuring all the important news for residents in Waiuku and surrounding areas.

2024 Franklin Map WB&DA and some local businesses have advertising in this brochure which goes to several I-Sites and locations across the country.

Waiuku heritage brochure We continue to distribute our town brochure to tourist operators, real estate agents and other businesses, civic centres and Information centres in other regions. The brochure contains information on local eateries, accommodation, attractions, services and maps for visitors. We hope to renew this in 2025 following our new branding project.



Community Placemaking

A Community placemaking grant of \$15,000 in late 2023 enabled us to replace some of our Christmas icicle lights so we could continue to dress up the town centre for the festive season, to support the installation of the new Fred Graham sculpture donated to

the Waiuku community and to hold a successful Spring school holiday event to support local retailers and benefit the community.

Our business subsidy initiatives continued; building façade beautification, shop front lighting and now a CCTV camera subsidy. These have been taken up by a small number of business and property owners during the year. These initiatives are a key part of our aim to continually beautify and improve the perception of our town centre, offering an attractive and safe place to shop and do business. With the huge commercial and urban growth taking place

in neighbouring areas of Franklin, we must work together to face the challenges and embrace the opportunities this brings.



Safety & Crime Prevention

We have made further upgrades to the town CCTV system including automatic number plate recognition and additional cameras where the need was identified. This has been a great help to Police to track and apprehend offenders and vehicles of interest. The more successes with the system, the less likely criminals will target our town, knowing there is a robust camera system in place. Regular Crime Prevention meetings throughout the year and the weekly Community Cops drop-in session at the Information Centre have given businesses the opportunity to engage directly with Police and gain advice, tools and take advantage of subsidies such as fog cannons, to prevent being the victim of crime. Our WhatsApp business security group has grown and provides an extremely useful tool for businesses to share and support each other in real time for any incidents or known offenders in town, often preventing crime and situations from escalating.

Advocating for Local Business

We have put in submissions this year for the Auckland Annual Plan, improved Public Transport and Roads to help with congestion and better access for all to enjoy and the Plan Change 73 appeal. We have made applications for improved banking services with NZ Banking Association and a Cash Depot Trial with The Reserve Bank which were unsuccessful. We continue to work with Auckland Council and property owners to address concerns and find opportunities for local business growth.

Information Centre

We continue to have a dedicated team of volunteers who help us to provide a great service to visitors and the whole community at the Waiuku Information Centre. We hope that one of our main attractions, the Manukau Heads Lighthouse, will be accessible again in 2025 once the



road can be repaired. We promote all the attractions and events in our area to show visitors what Waiuku and surrounding areas have to offer. We regularly request and re-stock brochures for local attractions to keep locals and visitors informed. Community groups and event organisers regularly bring in posters or information to display and we also share these messages on our outdoor electronic noticeboard at the centre. We have special displays at the centre for community causes such as The Mudlarks, Lions Club or School holiday events and we welcome others to approach us to discuss what we can do to help. The JP service continues to be well patronised every Wednesday which also offers exposure to the businesses, attractions and community groups information on display.

In closing, I'd like to sincerely thank my executive committee, the Council Communities team, Franklin Local Board and NZ Police for their wonderful support over the year. There's always more work to do and new challenges to overcome to help our business community thrive. We love what we do and Michelle and I are genuinely excited about next year's goals and projects. I look forward to working with you all as we head into the summer season and 2025.

Vanessa Newman
Waiuku Town Manager