



Tō Tātou Tāone 2055: Our City 2055

Business views

In late 2024/early 2025, we asked local businesses to share their thoughts on what makes Lower Hutt an attractive business location, long-term opportunities for Lower Hutt, what's holding us back, and priorities for the future.

We met with 12 businesses/organisations across a range of sectors, including retail, technology, manufacturing, and Māori business.

These views help to inform the development of **Tō Tātou Tāone 2055 : Our City 2055**, a document that will set goals and identify plans to guide our city into the future.

Summary

The business community in Lower Hutt sees great **potential** in the city's economic development, particularly in:

- **Innovation & technology** (deep-tech startups, game development, advanced manufacturing, idea of 'Technology Valley')
- **Infrastructure improvements** like Te Wai Tamamori o Te Awa Kairangi – RiverLink.
- **Urban revitalisation** through higher-density housing and a more vibrant CBD, which lifts the value of the commercial centre.
- **Sustainability and resilience** as priorities for climate adaptation and disaster planning.

However, they also face **challenges**:

- **Lack of suitable commercial space** (especially for growing tech and R&D businesses which may need special lab facilities).
- **Workforce shortages** and difficulty attracting skilled talent.
- **Public safety and crime concerns** affecting businesses and workers.
- **Public transport and parking issues**, making commuting a challenge.

Key Themes

Business environment & growth opportunities

- **Lower Hutt as a business location:**
 - Businesses appreciate the city's proximity to Wellington, lower costs compared to Wellington CBD, and a good quality of life in Lower Hutt.
- **Opportunities for growth:**
 - Te Wai Tamamori o Te Awa Kairangi – RiverLink: Seen as an important investment to improve urban vibrancy and flood resilience.
 - Technology & R&D growth: Emerging deep-tech and game design industries (e.g., A44 Games, Bspkl), and embracing AI.
 - Manufacturing & advanced industry: Significant potential in engineering, science, and technology (e.g., Fraser Engineering, Callaghan Innovation).
 - Encouraging innovation: Need for infrastructure and investment to support tech startups, advanced manufacturing, and research spin-offs.

Challenges for business & economic development

- **Lack of suitable commercial space:**
 - Shortage of office and industrial spaces that meet modern standards (e.g., seismic strengthening, adequate lab facilities).
 - Businesses struggle to find new premises, limiting growth potential.
- **Lack of amenity in surrounding area:**
 - Gracefield lacked hospitality/social spaces such as cafés, and public transport. CBD needed more quality restaurants and hotels.

- **Limited opportunities for co-location and collaboration:**
 - Strong value in bringing businesses together, to create a community, collaborate, and share talent and skills.
- **Infrastructure & transport issues:**
 - Poor public transport connectivity—trains unreliable, buses not meeting business needs. *“...public transport is designed to get to Lambton Quay.”* Cost was also a factor, as driving/parking was less expensive than the train for some.
 - High reliance on private vehicles, making parking costs an issue. Lack of parking at new houses limits EV uptake, as the vehicles can't be charged from home.
 - Cross Valley Link could reduce congestion and improve access to Seaview/Gracefield Innovation Quarter.
- **Talent & workforce challenges:**
 - Shortage of skilled talent, particularly in tech and game development.
 - Hard to attract workers to relocate to Lower Hutt over Auckland or Christchurch.
- **Perception of Lower Hutt:**
 - Some businesses feel the city is not marketed effectively to attract talent, particularly single/couple Gen Z and Millennials.
 - Concerns about Lower Hutt being perceived as “boring”, needing more vibrant nightlife and cultural spaces, like emergence of breweries in Petone.

Housing & urban development

- **Housing affordability & availability:**
 - More affordable than Wellington but growing concerns over density and new developments.

- **Urban intensification:**
 - Mixed views—some businesses support higher-density housing to create more vibrancy.
 - Others worry that poor planning could lead to overcrowding and infrastructure strain.
 - Suggestion: Rates incentives for high-density development to encourage uptake.
- **Retail & CBD revitalization:**
 - Businesses want a vibrant, well-designed CBD, with desirable places to stay and eat dinner, and lift the value of the commercial centre.
 - Support for more inner-city apartments to increase foot traffic.
 - Ideas include pedestrian-only zones, more street markets, and creative precincts.

Sustainability & resilience

- **Sustainable business practices:**
 - Businesses are at different stages—some integrating climate mitigation, energy efficiency, and waste reduction.
 - Others not currently focused on environmental sustainability, with lack of adequate technology limiting some sectors.
- **Flood & earthquake resilience:**
 - High awareness of flood risk, earthquakes, and climate-related threats, which is particularly driven by insurance costs/banks.
 - Businesses support disaster preparedness planning.
- **Energy & renewable solutions:**
 - Growing interest in solar energy, particularly in manufacturing.
 - Some businesses advocate for local renewable energy communities (e.g., micro-turbines, wind, solar).

Public safety & community wellbeing

- **Safety concerns:**

- Businesses raised issues around antisocial behaviour, shoplifting, and homelessness.
- Some feel public safety has improved, while others, particularly women business owners, feel unsafe in parts of Lower Hutt.

- **Community & social initiatives:**

- Strong community engagement (e.g., volunteering, ethical investment).
- Suggestions for youth engagement, cultural events, and initiatives like mentorship programmes to support young entrepreneurs.

Culture & identity of Lower Hutt

- **Branding & perception of the city:**

- Businesses want clear messaging on Lower Hutt's identity (Lower Hutt vs. Hutt City?).
- Ideas to market Lower Hutt as a place for young professionals and creatives rather than just a family-oriented suburb.

- **Cultural infrastructure:**

- Interest in events, gigs, and public art to reflect the city's diversity.
- Desire for a more vibrant food, nightlife, and arts scene to attract young talent.

- **Māori economic development:**

- Strong support for Māori entrepreneurship, innovation, and governance.
- Invest in Māori led innovation, support early-stage business and explore opportunities in disruptive technology such as AI.

Considerations for City Strategy

Invest in commercial infrastructure:

- Support seismically strengthened buildings and modern office/lab spaces.
- Develop facilities for co-location, such as a tech innovation hub to attract and retain startups (eg. Cicada Innovations, Sydney).

Build connections to foster collaboration:

- Strengthen “business-science” interface to share information, and collaboration (eg. secondments).

Enhance city branding & liveability:

- Market Lower Hutt as a place for skilled professionals & young entrepreneurs, and raise the proportion of people who live and work in Lower Hutt.
- Invest in nightlife, cultural events, and entertainment to improve the city's appeal.

Improve transport & connectivity:

- Advocate for better train and bus reliability, and affordable fares.
- Explore incentives for businesses to support employee transport options.

Encourage sustainability & resilience:

- Support local renewable energy initiatives.
- Develop business disaster preparedness plans.

Increase public safety measures:

- Expand community policing presence and street lighting.
- Address concerns around crime and antisocial behaviour in retail and business areas.