

27 November 2020

Porirua City Council
14 Hartham Place North
Porirua 5022

Re: Porirua District Plan

Tēna koe

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on Porirua City Council's District Plan.

Regional Public Health serves the greater Wellington region, through its three district health boards (DHBs): Capital & Coast, Hutt Valley and Wairarapa and as a service is part of the Hutt Valley DHB.

We work with our community to make it a healthier safer place to live. We promote good health, prevent disease, and improve the quality of life for our population, with a particular focus on children, Māori and working with primary care organisations. Our staff includes a range of occupations such as: medical officers of health, public health advisors, health protection officers, public health nurses and public health analysts.

We are happy to meet with the planners to provide further advice or clarification on any of the points raised in our written submission. The contact point for this submission is:

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Ngā mihi

Dr Stephen Palmer
Medical Officer of Health

Peter Gush
General Manager

Regional Public Health (RPH) would like to **commend** Porirua City Council (PCC) on the integrated planning which is evident in this district plan. This report has been prepared by Anita Taggart from Regional Public Health.

The COVID-19 pandemic has positioned PCC at the forefront of both the response and the recovery. Access to health and public health resources, safe and secure affordable accommodation that fosters wellbeing and protection for vulnerable communities are made more challenging by the economic consequences of the pandemic in urban centres. Affordable medium density housing, active transport and accessible open and green spaces all contribute to the building of healthy communities and neighbourhoods that support healthy and resilient communities.

RPH appreciates the important role that PCC played in providing support for communities during the COVID-19 pandemic. The economic and social impacts of COVID-19 will become increasingly apparent for many communities. The COVID-19 crisis and the outcomes that lockdown have had, and will continue to have, will impact significantly on vulnerable communities and will exacerbate existing inequities among Māori, Pacific, low-income families, refugees, and seniors.

RPH would like to **support** PCC in considering how COVID-19 recovery efforts can promote the health and wellbeing of your community and advance equity.

The recent amendments to the Local Government Act to reinstate the four aspects of community wellbeing; economic, social, environmental and cultural, has highlighted the importance of putting the wellbeing of citizens at the centre of all that PCC does.

Through the district plan, PCC has the opportunity to promote and improve the wellbeing and health of its citizens. Decisions around land use, housing, transport and the natural environment will have a powerful impact on the health and wellbeing of those living in Porirua.

Housing

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of warm, dry, safe and affordable housing, particularly during lockdown when whānau spent more time in their homes than ever before.

Opportunities to build new houses are supported by RPH, provided that any new housing stock is health promoting (well-insulated, mould free, warm, and dry etc.) and access to housing is equitable across all members of society.

Whānau living in damp, cold and overcrowded houses are at greater risk of contracting respiratory illnesses¹. Poor housing conditions are linked to Māori, Pacific whānau and tamariki who are disproportionately represented with respiratory illnesses are directly impacted as a result of this.

Historically priority populations, such as Māori and Pacific peoples, have not been included in the growth of home ownership in the community. Housing must be affordable for all but especially for

¹ <http://www.healthyhousing.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2010/01/HH-Crowding-ID-Burden-25-May-2013.pdf>

Māori and Pacific whānau. Housing should be appropriate for community needs, for example comprise a mix of housing types that is accessible for people living with disability and for different whānau configurations. It is essential that there is a sufficient quantity of affordable housing to meet demand at different price levels.

RPH also supports the identification of universal accessibility standards as a priority area of activity under the district plan. Currently many people living with a disability face challenges in finding suitable housing and accessing community facilities and locations. It is essential that this is addressed when undertaking new building and planning.

As part of an equitable recovery, RPH **recommends** that Council continue to invest in supporting warm, dry, safe and affordable, accessible homes, including providing subsidies to retrofit houses, increasing access to an Eco designer.

COVID-19 exacerbated vulnerability of homeless communities and highlighted the need for support. RPH **recommends** that Council provide additional support to community organisations who work alongside these communities, to enhance the services provided.

RPH **commends** the PCC's plans to develop a medium density zone. The medium density residential zone can provide an opportunity to support the health and wellbeing of people and communities in Porirua. Medium density housing (MDH) is recognised as one of the solutions to housing unaffordability. MDH can also meet the needs of diverse communities, such as an ageing population, single-person households and smaller families. Furthermore, MDH reduces urban sprawl, protects valuable productive land, and reduces the infrastructure demands on a city².

RPH **commends** the Eastern Porirua Regeneration Project that will deliver an increased supply of housing and increased options within the City.

Incorporating housing near transport routes and suburban centres, encourages the use of public transport and active transport (walking, jogging, and cycling).

Advantages are:

- Reduced dependency on cars and motorised transport reducing congestion
- Removes impedances to public transport flow around the city.
- Beneficial for the environment by reducing carbon emissions.
- Health benefits include encouraging the individual to be physically active in their community. Non-communicable diseases, such as heart disease and cancers, drive most of the ill-health and premature loss of life experienced by New Zealanders.³ Promoting physical activity is one way we can reduce the impact of these diseases.

² Bryson & Allen (2017). Defining medium-density housing.

https://www.branz.co.nz/cms_show_download.php?id=8f539a4cd06da4fe57e215051ec5374eeb25628b

³ Ministry of Health. 2020. Health and Independence Report 2018. Wellington: Ministry of Health. Available at: <https://www.health.govt.nz/publication/health-and-independence-report-2018>

Transport

Improving public transport, increasing walkability and a bike use, developing a greener and carbon neutral Porirua are all positive health outcomes for the Porirua community. RPH **recommends** that health is integrated into the PCC District Plan to ensure that health and wellbeing is prioritised. There has been an increased focus from the New Zealand Government on wellbeing, walking, cycling and public transport⁴, particularly with the decline in rates of active transport in Aotearoa⁵. RPH recommends that PCC prioritise safe, efficient, resilient and well-connected transport that:

- Is ntegrated with land use
- Meets local, regional and national transport needs
- Enables urban growth and economic development
- Provides for all modes of transport.

Transport planning decisions have the potential to positively address equity or exacerbate inequity. RPH acknowledges that often the voices of those that have influence are those who are more articulate, advantaged and younger communities. Without effective engagement with the disability community, elderly, and those who are less advantaged, there is risk that transport plans may have unintended consequences that may exacerbate inequities. The 'Enabling Good Lives'⁶ approach provides a groundwork from which to consider and evaluate how PCC transport plans are inclusive and supportive to those living with disabilities.

The Innovating Streets for People programme and Innovating Streets Fund launched by Waka Kotahi (New Zealand Transport Agency) is a supportive programme for councils to try different ways of making their streets safer and more liveable by enhancing existing spaces with a focus on people, and reducing cars and traffic by vehicles⁷.

Speed limits play a crucial role in safety for cyclists and pedestrians. Specifically, research has found that when traffic volumes are lower and speeds slower, streets become safer, more inviting places to meet, and are more liveable and communal⁸. The more people use streets and interact with one another, the more likely they are to walk or cycle.

In addition to the physical health benefits of public and active transport, these modes of transport minimise carbon emissions. Transport currently represents over 40% of New Zealand's greenhouse gases from the energy sector (17% from road transport)⁹, with a predicted increase in gas emissions

⁴ Mandic S., Jackson A., Lieswyn J., Mindell JS., Garcia Bengoechea E., Spence JC., Wooliscroft B., Wade-Brown C., Coppell K., Hinckson E. (2019). Key Policy Recommendations for Active Transport in New Zealand. Dunedin, New Zealand: University of Otago. <https://www.otago.ac.nz/active-living/otago710121.pdf>

⁵ Ministry of Transport. (2015). 25 years of New Zealand travel: New Zealand household travel 1989-2014. Wellington

⁶ <https://www.enablinggoodlives.co.nz/>

⁷ Waka Kotahi/New Zealand Transport Agency. (2019). Safe and liveable streets to support vibrant communities. <https://www.nzta.govt.nz/media-releases/safe-and-liveable-streets-to-support-vibrant-communities/>

⁸ Alexandra Macmillan, Jennie Connor, Karen Witten, Robin Kearns, David Rees and Alistair Woodward. The Societal Costs and Benefits of Commuter Bicycling: Simulating the Effects of Specific Policies Using System Dynamics Modelling. Environmental Health Perspectives; 2014.

⁹ Ministry of Transport. (2019). Climate change and energy. <https://www.transport.govt.nz/multi-modal/climatechange/>

of 38% from 2003-2020¹⁰. By reducing private vehicle usage, increasing public transport use and cycling and walking infrastructure, substantial health gains and healthcare cost savings be achieved. Furthermore, pollution and traffic congestion will be lowered, which will likely reduce global greenhouse gas emissions.

Providing access to open and green space in the city

A review of evidence shows that living in proximity to green spaces in an urban environment is associated with “increased physical activity, positive health behaviours and improved health outcomes”¹¹. Overall “greenness” of urban landscapes and distribution of accessible parks and green space facilities can improve health and well-being of children and adolescents, and contribute to maintaining this across a lifetime.

RPH recommends that the Healthy Streets Design Indicators¹² are considered and incorporated into the design of road types, where the higher density housing will be located. The development of a new suburb allows PCC to explore the opportunities of designing an area that places health and wellbeing at the centre. Creating a community where people, young and old, interact with each other and the environment.

Some of the healthy streets design indicators include:

- People choose to walk, cycle and use public transport – shared pathways and cycleway provided;
- Suitable for pedestrians from all walks of life – clearly marked and smooth walkways;
- Easy to cross – safe, easy, clearly marked and accessible crossings. It is important that it is easy for people of all ages and abilities to find a safe place to cross without having to go out of their way;
- People feel safe – measures such as appropriate lighting, hand rails and traffic calming measures around key destinations (retirement village, childcare facilities, schools, commercial areas) all ensure that people feel safe from crime and injury;
- Places to stop and rest – resting places encourage mobility for people who maybe ill, injured, older or very young;

Land use

Land use is of particular importance in the light of the public health challenges we have recently faced, and that will continue to be part of the future. While infrastructure is a necessary and normal part of urban and rural environments, it can also have adverse effects on surrounding land use and the environment. The sustainable management of natural and physical resources requires a balance between the effects of different land users.

¹⁰ Ministry for the Environment. (2005). Review of climate change policies. <https://www.mfe.govt.nz/publications/climate-change/review-climate-change-policies-4-policy-choices-41-overall-mitigation-1>

¹¹ Douglas O, Lennon M, Scott M. Green space benefits for health and well-being: A life-course approach for urban planning, design and management. *Cities*. 2017 Jun 1;66:53-62.

¹² Guide to the Healthy Streets Indicators: Delivering the Healthy Streets Approach, Transport for London. Retrieved 25/06/2020 from: <https://healthystreetscom.files.wordpress.com/2017/11/guide-to-the-healthystreets-indicators.pdf>
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As we continue to see an increased population in Porirua, it is essential, for our community that we think about how we can grow our city in a way that promotes health and wellbeing for residents. Health and wellbeing should be considered alongside other priorities when considering land use.

RPH **recommends** that this can be completed by protecting indigenous biodiversity in natural and open spaces.

The Draft National Policy Statement on Indigenous Biodiversity¹³ recognises that the peoples of Aotearoa are both part of and dependent on the natural environment for our survival. Promoting indigenous biodiversity through preservation of habitats and protection of animal, aquatic, bird and insect life, is crucial for the wellbeing of us all. The policy statement also identifies that whilst some of the most important ecosystems and habitats are located within Aotearoa's large area of public conservation land, other important indigenous biodiversity is on privately owned and Māori land. Identifying these areas in the spatial plan and recognising the priority of protecting these ecosystems is important for the health and wellbeing of our community.

RPH **commends** the introduction of the Papakāinga concept which empowers mana whenua to make decisions on their own land.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit on Porirua City Council's District Plan.

Porirua City Council has an important role to play to enable economic and residential growth, especially as the region recovers from the social, health and economic impacts of COVID-19.

RPH would like to support council by offering our public health expertise, knowledge and skills, where appropriate.

¹³ Ministry for the Environment. 2019. Draft National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity. Available at: <https://www.mfe.govt.nz/sites/default/files/media/Biodiversity/draft-npsib.pdf>