

27 April 2021

Porirua City Council
PO Box 50218
Porirua 5240

E. longtermplan@porirua.govt.nz

Tēnā koe

Re: Porirua City Council Long Term Plan Consultation 2021-2051

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a written submission on the Porirua City Council Long Term Plan.

Regional Public Health is the public health unit for the greater Wellington region. We work with communities and local organisations to make the region a healthier and safer place to live. Our vision is: **Pae Ora: Healthy futures for the greater Wellington region.** We promote good health, and work on disease prevention to improve the quality of life for our population, with a particular focus on children, Māori, Pacific peoples and low-income households.

We are happy to provide further advice or clarification on any of the points raised in our written submission. We would welcome the opportunity to speak to our submission. The contact point for this submission is:

Demelza O'Brien, Technical Officer
Email: Demelza.obrien@huttvalleydhb.org.nz

Nāku noa, nā

Dr Craig Thornley
Clinical Head of Department

Peter Gush
General Manager

INTRODUCTION

Regional Public Health (RPH) is the public health unit for the greater Wellington Region (Wairarapa, Hutt Valley and Capital & Coast District Health Boards). Our business works to improve the health and wellbeing of our population and to reduce health disparities through public health action. We aim to work with others to promote and protect good health, prevent disease, and improve quality of life across the population. We are funded by the Ministry of Health and also have contracts with District Health Boards and other agencies to deliver specific services.

GENERAL COMMENTS

The Porirua City Council Long Term Plan 2021-2051 clearly demonstrates the wide range of work Council undertake that has potential to support community health and wellbeing. We are heartened to see you are using your role as Local Government to strengthen community wellbeing through local economic development and creating a healthy physical and social environment for all residents.

RPH recognise the important role that social, economic, cultural and physical factors such as housing, healthy food, water quality, transport, neighbourhood form and health related behaviours play in our community's health. These factors together drive as much as 80% of health outcomes, leaving only about 20% of modifiable contributors to health of a population related to medical care.¹ Health truly begins where we live, work and play.

We **commend** Council on the publication of the Long Term Plan (LTP). We recognise the changing context within which you work, in particular the reform of 3 Waters, the Resource Management Act, and the regional approach to managing future population growth.

Our submission will offer some general comments on current public health concerns of relevance to Council, as well as some specific comments on elements of your plan that could impact on health outcomes and equity in the Porirua community. We then raise some opportunities to work together to address our shared challenges and help to build local resilience and wellbeing.

COVID-19

Collectively, we need to ensure that community organisations are well supported, particularly over the next thirty years, to meet community needs resulting from the social, economic, cultural and health impacts of COVID-19.

Over the past year, the pivotal role of Councils in the response to and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic has been made clear. An experienced RPH staff member with Porirua community liaison responsibility was seconded into the Porirua Emergency Operation Centre during the COVID-19 alert



80% of our health and wellbeing is determined by our social, economic, cultural and physical environment

¹ <https://nam.edu/social-determinants-of-health-101-for-health-care-five-plus-five/>

levels 3 and 4 lockdown period; this meant RPH and Porirua City Council (PCC) were able to work together seamlessly, to provide a timely and effective response to the specific needs of the community.

RPH **encourages** maintaining a robust and ongoing relationship with Council to provide technical health expertise during emergencies or disasters.

The pandemic has highlighted the importance of building local neighbourhood resilience to the challenges our communities face. It has shown how features of our neighbourhoods can all contribute to individual and collective resiliency such as, access to safe and healthy housing, good urban design, community facilities, public transport options, active connections, water quality, parks and open spaces, as well as local food sources.

COVID-19 has also demonstrated the impact of inequitable distribution of these features on our communities. The burden of negative economic and social impacts of COVID-19 continue to be significant for communities and these exacerbate existing inequities for Māori, Pacific, low-income families, disabled, refugees, and seniors. The pandemic increased the challenge of providing vulnerable people with access to health and other resources, and safe, secure and healthy accommodation. It also highlighted the level of food insecurity and the need for food resiliency in our communities with demand for food assistance growing exponentially across the country.

An enormous amount of work was done by Councils and local groups in providing food parcels and hygiene packs to whānau in need of support. Community organisations and groups in Porirua and across the region were and continue to be at the forefront of the response and recovery from COVID-19. Many of these groups are under immense pressure to meet the needs of the community. RPH **recognises** that greater collective investment and resource is required to address the inequities that continue to exist for communities.

Climate change

Climate change is a serious and imminent threat to population health. New Zealanders are at risk of both:

- the direct health effects of climate change (e.g. extreme weather events, injuries, heat waves and damage to infrastructure)
- the indirect health effects (e.g. changes in ecosystems and subsequent disease patterns, microbiological contamination of water, conflict over resource scarcity, poor mental health, food insecurity, destruction of infrastructure, homes and livelihoods)

Climate change is likely to exacerbate inequities in Aotearoa, particularly for Māori, Pacific and low- income communities



**Strategies to
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benefits to the
population**

who are at greater risk of poorer health and social outcomes.^{2,3} Reducing emissions involves changes to behaviours and environments that can significantly improve people's general health. When implemented appropriately, strategies that address climate change can often provide significant health co-benefits (eg. increased physical activity, dietary improvements and reduced air pollution) and decrease existing inequities.⁴

Many climate change strategies are directly within the locus of control of Councils and will have positive health and social benefits for the community, in addition to a reduction in emissions. For instance, Porirua City Council has the potential to create environmental, social and wider health co-benefits through:

- Continued prioritisation of walking and cycling routes and connections between communities;
- Ensuring areas of new housing development have community facilities including communal areas to grow food, access water, play and socialise;
- Supporting initiatives that improve the 'health' of existing housing stock and neighbourhoods across Porirua.

RPH **supports** the initiatives within the 'Porirua City Council Climate Strategy – Rautaki o Te Ao Hurihuri'. In particular, RPH **recognises** the potential in diverting organic waste from Spicer Landfill.

RPH **recommends** that Council build on its work in Rautaki o Te Ao Hurihuri, and supplement the Long Term Plan with some activities to support long-term climate change strategies, for example:

- Support and encourage whānau to access the green waste bin add-on option as a means by which to reduce weekly waste disposal and increase composting of waste that does not need to go to landfill.
- Explore having a subsidised or support option for low-income families to access this service freely or at reduced cost.

By investing in areas that provide long term benefits such as Three Waters, sustainability initiatives and neighbourhood social/community infrastructure, PCC can build resilience and prevent or reduce the negative health outcomes that could otherwise deepen inequities and prevent our communities from experiencing full well-being.

² New Zealand College of Public Health Medicine. Policy Statement on Climate Change. Wellington: New Zealand College of Public Health Medicine. (2013).

³ Howden-Chapman P, Chapman R, Hales S, Britton E, Wilson N. Climate change and human health: Impact and adaptation issues for New Zealand. Climate change adaptation in New Zealand: Future scenarios and some sectoral perspectives. Nottage, RAC, Wratt, DS, Bornman, JF, Jones, K.(eds). New Zealand Climate Change Centre. Wellington. 2010:112-21.

⁴ Frumkin H, Hess J, Luber G, Malilay J, McGeehin M. Climate change: the public health response. American journal of public health. 2008 Mar;98(3):435-45.

RESPONSES TO SPECIFIC LONG-TERM PLAN QUESTIONS

1. RPH **supports** the focus on water-based infrastructure and agrees it is a high priority for the city.
2. RPH **supports** the riparian planting programme.

RPH **supports** PCC's focus on investment in Three Waters infrastructure over the next 30 years. RPH **acknowledges** the need to improve and increase information about the health and condition of three waters assets and understand the need for Council to prioritise its renewals investment toward critical assets. It is important to ensure investment in Three Waters infrastructure over the immediate 10 year horizon is sufficient to cope with the increased demand associated with current, planned and potential urban development. The follow-on effects of insufficient investment such as sewerage contamination, insufficient supply and reduced freshwater quality have a significant impact on surrounding communities and the environment.

**E kore tātau e mōhio ki te waitohu
nui o te wai kia mimiti rawa te puna**
We never know the worth of water until the well runs dry

RPH **supports** Porirua City Council's investment in Te Awarua-o-Porirua Harbour. The harbour is a taonga (treasure) and significant natural resource for, mana whenua, Ngāti Toa Rangatira. Historically, the harbour was traditionally a source of food, plants, recreation and a refuge for waka. Of all the inhabitants of the Porirua Harbour catchment, the iwi have been most affected by the changes and degradation of the harbour.⁵ The contamination of the harbour and the consequences for kaimoana and the harbour waiora (health), have significantly impacted the mana (respect) and kaitiakitanga (guardianship) of Ngāti Toa Rangatira, and attitudes towards and perceptions of the harbour and city.⁶

RPH **acknowledges** the major concern around the current status of the water storage tanks in Porirua. If there was an emergency disaster, parts of the community may be left without any access to water, a particular concern for high priority populations. Wellington Water recommends having 20L of stored water per person, per day, for at least seven days.⁶ Investment in this area will improve our emergency response preparedness, as well as allow sizable renewals programme to be implemented. RPH **enquires** as to whether any decisions have been made around locations of future water tank storage. RPH **requests** the opportunity to discuss the locations of future water tank storage in order to ensure equitable access for all priority populations.

⁵ Te Awarua-o-Porirua Harbour and Catchment Strategy and Action Plan Oversight Team. Te Awarua-o-Porirua Harbour and Catchment Strategy and Action Plan June 2015. 2015.

⁶ Setting up a rainwater tank – Wellington Water [Internet]. Wellingtonwater.co.nz. 2021 [cited 14 April 2021]. Available from: <https://www.wellingtonwater.co.nz/your-water/drinking-water/looking-after-your-water/water-conservation/rainwater-tanks/>

3. RPH **supports** funding for multi-use community facilities in northern Porirua, Titahi Bay and Whitby.
4. RPH **supports** the proposal to build a Cultural Arts Centre in Porirua City Centre.

Food environment and food security

Nāu te rourou, nāku te rourou, ka ora ai te iwi

With your food basket and my food basket, the people will prosper.

Food resilience and sovereignty is the 'physical and economic access by all people, at all times to enough food to maintain an active and healthy life'. This exists when everyone can access a reliable supply of healthy food which is nutritious, affordable, safe and culturally appropriate, and that is able to sustain a person's physical, mental and cultural wellbeing. A local food production and distribution system based on ecological sustainability and able to withstand natural and man-made shocks is a vital part of food resilience.⁷

Currently too many people in our communities are dependent on food from charitable sources and on industry-donated surplus food. Providing 'good food for all' in a way that is mana-enhancing is vital for the well-being of our communities. Our vision is to change our current food system by promoting opportunities for food resilience and locally produced food. We believe a co-ordinated regional response is required to achieve this.

Within community facilities, Council can take a lead in creating supportive environments for healthy eating. This could include:

- limiting or having no unhealthy food advertising including unbranded drink fridges or vending machines
- having no, or limited sugar sweetened beverages available,
- ensuring healthy food is available.

PCC could also consider having a space for community gardens or fruit trees in the multi-use community facilities. Community gardens are often established in the hope they will function as alternatives to the current food environment, providing opportunities for food and income generation and for urban residents to engage in outdoor physical and social activities.

Community connectedness

Community Hubs help to build resilient communities, and act as a space for social interaction supporting a sense of community and cultural wellbeing. Ensuring a supportive environment for a healthy lifestyle when designing and building community hubs will help to achieve healthier communities. It is key to

⁷ Shaw DJ. World Food Summit, 1996. In World Food Security 2007 (pp. 347-360). Palgrave Macmillan, London.

ensure that community hubs are accessible to all communities, so that communities are able to gather together and build community resilience.

RPH **supports** the proposal of the Cultural Arts Centre as it would encourage cultural wellbeing through sharing community history and preserving arts, culture and heritage. It also gives the community the opportunity to express and explore their identities. Strengthening cultural identity is important for mental wellbeing of our Pasifika and Māori whānau.⁸

Although not explicitly outlined in the LTP, RPH **supports** the Porirua City Council's Community Space and Places Provision Framework and Findings Report, particularly around provision hierarchy, access, catchment/size and general design characteristics.⁹ This report acknowledges Porirua's expected population rise of 44% by 2043, highlighting the need for more community facilities. RPH **commends** PCC for accommodating population growth in their planning and for implementing the findings of this report in their LTP.

The report recognises that community spaces in Porirua are currently relatively passive, and that in the future the hope is to create community spaces that enable communities to self-activate in these spaces. RPH **recommends** that Council consider the following key points in the design of the community facilities, to support 'activation' of community spaces. This will also support Council's goal in being an enabler for civil society, social capital and healthy activity.

- A breastfeeding-friendly space which includes comfortable armchairs, hot water access, a power point, microwave, sink and running water, a door/ divider for privacy.
 - Breastfeeding has many benefits for both mother and baby, and is recommended exclusively for the first 6 months of life. Having a supportive environment for healthy lifestyle and nutrition for everyone includes spaces where parents are able to breastfeed and access the required resources such as hot water, sinks, power points etc.
- Greenspace or community gardens for mental health.
 - Green spaces provide vital health services as well as environmental services; they reduce socioeconomic health inequalities, facilitate activity and promote better mental health and well-being.¹⁰ Including greenspaces or community gardens can function as an upstream preventive mental health promotion intervention.¹¹
 - The integration of natural design may provide a cost-effective public health intervention, which promotes the evident positive links between green spaces and mental health.¹¹
- Accessibility to the venue to ensure it is able to be used by all.
 - Ensuring adequate pedestrian crossings or traffic light, wheelchair and pram accessibility
 - Accessibility via public transport routes

Please see the attached infographic for more aspects to consider in the design and development of community facilities.

⁸ Ataera-Minster J, Trowland H. Te Kaveinga: Mental health and wellbeing of Pacific peoples. Results from the New Zealand Mental Health Monitor & Health and Lifestyles Survey. Health Promotion Agency. 2018.

⁹ Porirua City Council. Community Space and Places Provision Framework and Findings Report. 2020.

¹⁰ Pitt H. Therapeutic experiences of community gardens: Putting flow in its place. Health & place. 2014 May 1;27:84-91.

¹¹ Barton J, Rogerson M. The importance of greenspace for mental health. BJPsych International. Cambridge University Press; 2017;14(4):79-81.

5. RPH **supports** the need for solutions to parking in Porirua, but **recommends** that any decisions on pricing include assessment of affordability, accessibility and equity for the affected populations and that opportunities for mitigation are explored.

Transport planning decisions can potentially improve equity or exacerbate inequities. Without adequate alternatives, increasing parking fees could be an equity concern for low-income populations. It will be important that potential equity impacts are addressed to ensure that low income earners, those living with disabilities, those who do not have easy access to public transport and shift workers, are not negatively affected by potential pricing changes. Services within Porirua City Centre need to be accessible to all, and the introduction of parking regulations will need to be weighed up against the potential to decrease accessibility to services for some populations.

RPH **encourages** PCC to engage with people who may be disproportionately affected by changes to parking, and develop a plan to mitigate negative impacts.

Public transport plays an important role in the health and wellbeing of whānau, and is key to accessing almost all services, such as education, employment, and social activities. Transport planning decisions have a significant impact on health and wellbeing, by influencing traffic crashes, vehicle emissions, physical activity, access to services, and mental health.¹² Evidence suggests that effective car parking management can have large benefits for safety, pollution reduction, physical activity, and reducing congestion.¹³

Improving public transport, increasing walkability and bike use, and working towards a greener and carbon neutral Porirua, can contribute to improved health outcomes in Porirua. Connected, accessible and timely public transport are particularly critical to ensure those living on the periphery of main centres have reliable, affordable and sustainable options for accessing employment, education, social activities, and other amenities, without relying on private vehicles.

6. RPH **supports** improvements to the quality of the Moana Court complex. RPH **recommends** the option of selling to a Community Housing Provider, as well as the continued development and maintenance of social housing.

A warm dry home is the foundation of health and wellbeing throughout life¹⁴. Housing is an important underlying determinant of health, with housing quality and household crowding playing a major role in respiratory illnesses such as asthma, skin infections and acute rheumatic fever. Housing is contributing to preventable hospitalisation and rehospitalisation rates for children and elderly in New Zealand. These poor housing conditions also increase risk of future ill health and poorer performance across a range of social indicators and the burden of disease associated with housing conditions is particularly high for Māori and Pacific whānau.

¹² Litman T. Transportation and public health. Annual review of public health. 2013 Mar 18; 34:217-33.

¹³ Mullan E. Do you think that your local area is a good place for young people to grow up? The effects of traffic and car parking on young people's views. Health & place. 2003 Dec 1;9(4):351-60.

¹⁴ New Zealand College of Public Health Medicine (2013). "Housing Policy Statement." Available from: https://www.nzcpmh.org.nz/media/120350/nzcphm_healthy_homes_standard_submission_2018.pdf

RPH **supports** investing in improvements to the quality of social housing units in Moana Court and **strongly supports** the complex remaining as social housing. RPH **requests** further detailed information on the option to sell the Moana Court complex to a Community Housing Provider or the Crown, including on the planned process. Support of social housing tenants is key as many tenants are part of vulnerable groups with existing health and social challenges, including elderly, refugees and migrants, people with disabilities, and Māori and Pacific whānau.

RPH believes that everyone should have access to an affordable home that's safe, warm, dry and liveable in neighbourhoods where they can thrive. Too many people are currently missing out on this opportunity. Access to safe and affordable housing is a prerequisite to ensuring that other important health needs can be met. If housing is not affordable or secure, whānau are unlikely to be able to afford the other requisites of health e.g. access to nutritious food and the ability to safely heat their homes.

RPH **supports** Council to continue to work with other community partners, social housing providers, agencies working to sustain tenancies, iwi and others to explore how council can support these issues to be addressed in Porirua.

7. RPH has **no comment** on the Village Planning Programme
8. RPH has **no comment** on Te Rauparaha Arena hours.

9. RPH **supports** the Council extending the living wage to contractors.

Living wage

Income is a key determinant of health that influences various health outcomes. Poverty, in particular, impacts on children and is a major health concern in Aotearoa.¹⁵ Action is required by all to reduce the adverse effects of poverty on the health of children and families with low incomes. Council has the opportunity to support this by increasing the hourly rate of all employees and contractors to the living wage.

Living wage is the hourly rate that has been deemed to be the income necessary to provide workers and their families with the basic necessities of life.¹⁶ The Living Wage Movement Aotearoa was a response to the increasing inequities and increasing poverty in New Zealand. RPH **commends** the Council for increasing the minimum hourly wage for Porirua City Council employees to the living wage in 2016/2017. As discussed in the LTP, the current status does not require contractors of the Councils to be paid the living wage. Contractors of the Council include people in positions such as cleaners, security and gardeners, and people in these roles would benefit from the additional \$4,000 per year that they could receive under the Living Wage programme.

¹⁵ Child Poverty Action Group. Annual Report, April 2019 – March 2020. [Internet]. 2020. Available from: <https://www.cpag.org.nz/assets/AGM/240720%20CPAG%20Annual%20Report%202020%20pdf%20Version.pdf>

¹⁶ Living Wage Aotearoa. Available from: <https://www.livingwage.org.nz/>

OPPORTUNITIES TO WORK TOGETHER

We have identified the following areas where there are synergies in our work and an opportunity to work together to support the health, wellbeing and resilience of the community.

Future collaboration

PCC and RPH have a common agenda – working with communities to improve and protect their quality of life. By finding mutual points of interest and working together we can be more efficient, reduce the burden of engagement on our communities and be more effective in our policy implementation. RPH see LTPs as an opportunity for collaboration and we are keen to provide our support and expertise to help the Council achieve its outcomes.

We note that Council has undertaken a lot of groundwork to shape the direction of the LTP. RPH is keen to participate in early direction-setting discussions and understand that this is a significant opportunity to influence. Please add us to your database of community and agency consultation stakeholders.

Water

RPH would welcome the opportunity to work with Porirua City Council to identify locations for water storage containers. In order to ensure equitable access to water during an emergency, the accessibility of tanks to priority populations should be considered.

The local food environment

RPH **welcomes** the opportunity to work with Council on strategies for building food resiliency and tackling food insecurity.

Currently too many people in our communities are dependent on charity and food waste from industry. In 2020/21 RPH and the Common Unity Project co-hosted ‘Kai and our community’ Hui across the Greater Wellington region to explore the potential and purpose of a regional food network. This identified;

- How fragile our current linear food system is, requiring handouts and dependency for those who can't afford to participate
- The need to begin a movement to develop a circular food system/economy which is participatory and walking with vulnerable people and communities
- The importance of including those most affected and co-designing for change from the top down and the bottom up.

Additionally, RPH recognises that our food system contributes an estimated 24% of greenhouse gas emissions (UN, March 2021) from transportation and the use of artificial fertilizer. A significant lever for

reducing our national carbon footprint and building local resilience is therefore producing and consuming food locally, and utilising compost instead of artificial fertilizers.

The draft Wellington Regional Growth Framework implementation plan includes the development of a regional strategy for food production to ensure food security and efficient supply chains and to include an emphasis on employment opportunities. This will require strong partnership between and within local government, iwi, central government and other groups

RPH **appreciates** Council’s contribution and participation in this work, including with the Council officers and the Mayoral Forum. Addressing these issues and regionalising our food system will require a collaborative approach across councils, and has strong alignment with Council’s plans for future housing growth and activities to build in resilience to climate change and other public health threats.



Housing

RPH **encourages** PCC participation in the cross-sectoral [Wellington Regional Healthy Housing Group](#) (WRHHG). Their vision is “Everyone in the Wellington region lives in warm, dry and safe housing by 2025”. The group is made up of more than 50 organisations including central government departments, local councils, district health boards, RPH as well as research, social outreach, health and community organisations. Members work in partnership to reduce housing related health inequities.

A key value of the group, from RPH’s perspective, is the strengthened connections between Council members and wider stakeholders such as ourselves on regional housing issues. The group provides a forum for the sharing of ideas, information and resources and provides meaningful opportunities to work in partnership toward the vision. RPH would be happy to discuss this further, or you can contact Amanda Scothern, WRHHG Executive Officer on: info@wrhhg.org.nz

Healthy urban planning and design

RPH’s recommendations around the planning and design of the multi-use community facilities (ie. green spaces, community gardens, etc.) align with your Council Community Spaces and Places Provision Framework and Findings Report.

RPH is interested in opportunities to contribute to the design of community facilities in Porirua to ensure the public health needs of the community are considered.

CONCLUSION

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on your long term plan. We would welcome the opportunity to speak with Council officials on the opportunities we have raised in this submission.