

# Building a better Kumeu-Huapai

Applying neighbourhood sustainability  
tools in Kumeu and Huapai

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## Message from the chairperson

In 2015, the Rodney Local Board commissioned Beacon Pathway to find out what Kumeu and Huapai residents liked about the area and what things needed to change. Our towns, villages and neighbourhoods are being affected by a growing demand for new places for people to live.

This information will be used to help the Rodney Local Board work out what must happen to improve our local neighbourhoods and the wider area. As we told you last year, this is one of the first steps to progress planning for this area.

We asked you to complete a questionnaire, we held public meetings and Beacon Pathway undertook an overall assessment of the area. We had many conversations which were extremely valuable and we met many of you which helped us understand what you felt was important and why you liked or loved living here.

This document is a summary of the technical information and the results we gathered. Please let us know if you would like a copy of the full research document titled *Applying the Neighbourhood Sustainability Tools in Kumeu and Huapai* and we can send it to you.

I would like to thank you personally for your contribution. We are continuing the journey to put in place detailed planning so that this area can be what you, as a resident, want. We won't be able to do everything at once but we do want to develop a plan so we can work alongside you.

Noho ora mai,

**Brenda Steele**  
Rodney Local Board Chairperson

May 2016



## Executive summary

This report summarises the results of a Beacon Pathway study applying neighbourhood sustainability tools to Kumeu and Huapai in July/August 2015.

### Tools include:

- Observational Tool - a process of measurement and observations of the physical environment as it currently exists. It provides ratings over nine distinct sections.
- Resident Survey – a survey of current residents about their experiences, perceptions and behaviours. These results are compared with results from the Census (Statistics NZ 2013), the Quality of Life report 2012 for Auckland (AC Neilson 2013) and Beacon's National Neighbourhood Baseline Survey (Beacon Pathway 2008).
- Three facilitated community meetings (sports clubs, sporting organisations, businesses and residents).

These tools measure the current state of defined neighbourhood areas to determine how Kumeu-Huapai achieves this goal:

*The neighbourhood built environment is designed, constructed and managed to generate neighbourhoods that are adaptive and resilient places that allow people to create rich and satisfying lives while respecting the limitations of the natural environment.*

The chosen Kumeu-Huapai neighbourhoods included a mix of rural and urban living areas with houses dating from the 1950's to present time.

Some neighbourhoods were undergoing rapid transformation from rural/rural lifestyle use to more intensive housing development. Other areas were more stable and established. Within established neighbourhoods, there is a mix of infill and replacement housing and the varied housing styles indicate that neighbourhoods are growing over time. In June and July 2015, an observational tool was applied and resident surveys were distributed in a defined area. A total of 770 self-report survey forms were distributed, with 214 responses received (response rate 28 per cent).

The observational tool was applied to urban areas (refer to figure 1 on page 7). Both the Urban One and Urban Two precincts achieved a low assessment overall. The street network in Area E achieved a medium assessment given its design which encourages slower travel (narrower streets and on-street parking).

The connectivity both within the neighbourhood and to existing and future development was also positive.

### ✧ Main road shops



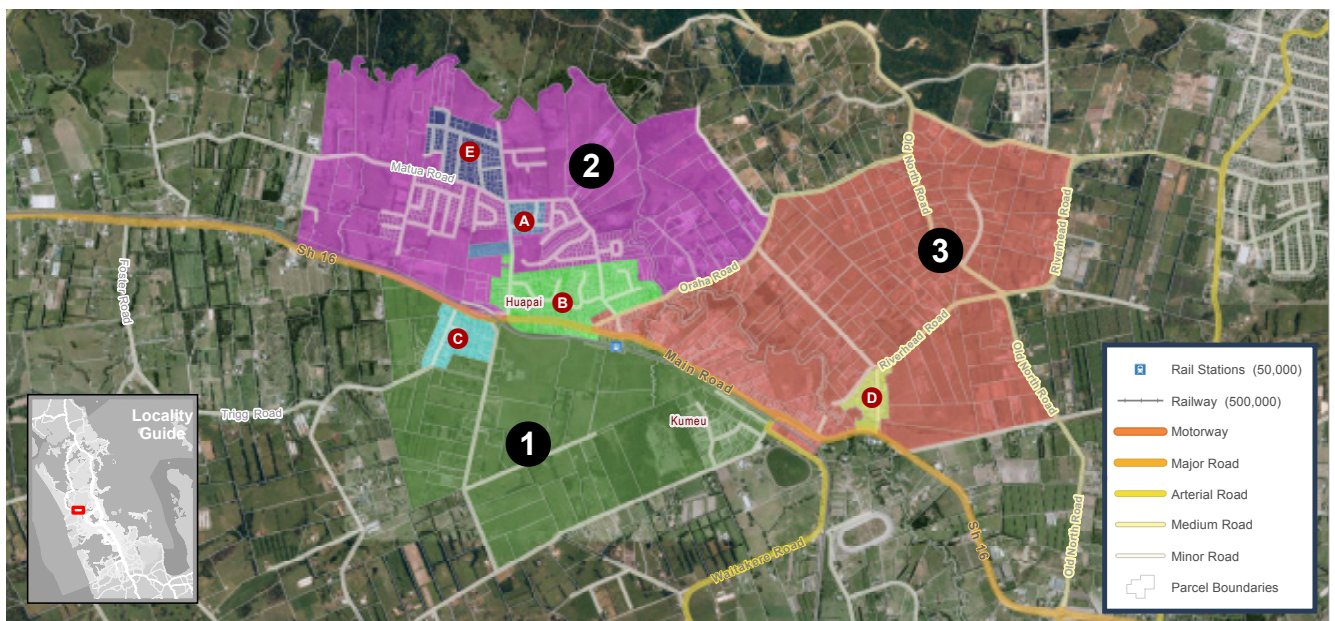
Areas were identified as having potential improvement, and future planning for Kumeu and Huapai will consider these. Several priority areas for focus:

- Walking access to basic everyday facilities and in particular safe connections between neighbourhoods/localities which are currently severed by the main road and other busy roads.
- Improving the frequency of public transport.
- Increasing the mix of dwelling types and land uses in the future neighbourhood and immediate environment. For example, providing for a range of household sizes, particularly small households; providing healthcare, childcare or professional services, start-up spaces for artists or commercial enterprises and/or live/work premises.
- Dwelling sustainability features including house size and options to reduce resource use e.g. rainwater tanks.
- Quality of space – there were pockets of public space and streetscape development, however these were limited. This correlates with the Self-Report responses which also identified streetscape/streets as an area of relative weakness.

## Method

Neighbourhoods include a mix of rural (areas 1, 2 and 3 excluding areas A-E) and urban living opportunities (areas A-E) in Kumeu and Huapai townships with houses dating from the 1950s. Some neighbourhoods are undergoing rapid transformation from rural use to housing developments, while other areas are more stable and long established. Within established neighbourhoods, there is a mix of infill and replacement housing and the varied housing styles indicate that neighbourhoods have grown over time.

Rural neighbourhoods were analysed together as their primary use is similar; lifestyle block living with a few having rural uses. Changing from rural land use to smaller lifestyle blocks with large homes has occurred predominantly over the past 20 years. Urban neighbourhoods are grouped into two clusters. Urban One includes new developments (A and E). Area A is developing and Area E is has been developed in two parts – Park View Lane (64 Tapu Road) comprising 30 two-bedroom units built in the early 2000s and east of Tapu Road which started developing in the late 2000s and is still underway. Urban Two (B, C and D) is mostly established neighbourhoods dating from the 1950s to 1990s.



≈ Figure 1: Neighbourhoods in Kumeu and Huapai

### Rural and urban areas were assessed in slightly different ways:

- Rural areas used the Resident Survey which was adapted for Kumeu and Huapai by the Rodney Local Board and Beacon Pathway. This survey was dropped directly into all letterboxes. No follow up visits or reminders were used except on the local board and the local board member's pages on Facebook. The Observational Tool was not used as it is designed for urban neighbourhoods.
- Urban areas used the Observational Tool and the Resident Survey. In these areas, the Residents Survey was dropped directly into residents' letterboxes, and households who had not yet responded were visited on two consecutive weekends following the original drop off. Where households could not be contacted, a note stated that the surveyor had visited and reminded householders to complete the survey.

An incentive of entering a draw to win one of four \$50 vouchers for a local restaurant was provided with all surveys.

A prolonged period of rain hampered the survey delivery and collection. Several residents acknowledged their letterboxes leaked and recalled throwing out the survey as it was soaked. Up to 10 per cent of residents in some areas stated that they had not received the survey despite it being delivered by the writer. In addition, a number of scheduled delivery and pickup days were rained off, resulting in a more drawn out process.

Where appropriate, results were compared to 2013 Census data for the combined Kumeu East and Huapai Census Area Units, Auckland Region and New Zealand as a whole, Quality of Life data for Auckland (2013) and NZ Urban Areas data (2009).

## Observational Tool

This tool assesses the sustainability of neighbourhoods highlighting strengths and weaknesses to identify improvements. The assessment covers the main aspects of neighbourhood sustainability but does not replace in-depth analysis by professionals.

### There are nine parts to the assessment:

- walking access to basic everyday facilities
- access to public transport
- efficient use of space and viability of local centres
- protection and enhancement of the natural environment
- dwelling sustainability
- quality of space
- diversity
- street network
- eco-alternatives and innovation.

### » Kumeu Arts Centre







## Resident Survey (Resident Self Report Tool)

The Resident Survey assessed what residents thought about their neighbourhood through a self-complete survey process. The survey captures and analyses residents' self-reported behaviours and perceptions in relation to the neighbourhood sustainability framework:

- functional flexibility
- neighbourhood satisfaction
- minimised costs
- effective governance and civic life
- appropriate resource use and climate protection
- minimised bio-physical health.

### **The Kumeu-Huapai Resident Survey questionnaire included questions on:**

- demographics about the respondent and the household
- transport – motor vehicle ownership, modes, monthly kilometres travelled
- use of local facilities, activities and perceptions
- perceptions about the local environment including safety, involvement with neighbours, the community and quality of the neighbourhood and their home
- sustainability/resilience – natural disaster preparedness, composting
- plans to move and why
- thoughts on and understanding of new housing developments.

### **In addition, the questionnaire included open-ended questions on the Kumeu Huapai area such as:**

- What do you like most about living in Kumeu or Huapai?
- What do you dislike most about living in Kumeu or Huapai?
- What are your aspirations for Kumeu or Huapai over the next year?
- What do you think could be done to make the impact of new housing developments good for the whole community?
- What are the three things you would like to see built or developed to improve this area?
- Any further comments.

### **≈ Te Toanga Waka, Portage, Kumeu**

# Results

## Observational Tool

Across the urban defined areas sustainability was assessed as low. There was a medium score for street network in Area A (refer to figure 1 on page 7). The assessment identified no diversity in local facilities or non-residential activities and few local services within walking distance. While Huapai School was within walking distance the route was considered unsafe with no designated crossing points on State Highway 16 and no footpaths on parts of Tapu Road. Generally, walking access to basic every day facilities between the residential localities and continuous footpaths through the town centres and other parts of the area is limited.

The Kumeu shopping centre provides for most of the needs of the local community but has developed as a car-based destination. There is a pedestrian bridge at the end of Weza Lane which provides improved access to some local shops. Huapai Domain is an important community asset which provides for cricket and football sports but can't be accessed from neighbourhoods in the south. Access to public transport is limited and although Area A is within 800 metres of a bus stop, the service is inadequate.

There is a mix of housing styles, sizes and types across the study areas. Park View Lane has 30 small dwellings on same sites in a village setting.

The remainder of areas A and E are large footprint homes on 600-700m<sup>2</sup> sections with some larger 1500m<sup>2</sup> lifestyle sites. Residential development started along Tapu and Main Road in the 1950's with more recent developments in areas B, C and D at Merlot Heights (1980s) and Sunny Place (1990s).

Park View Lane is a gated cul de sac with houses oriented to the street which provides good passive surveillance. Passive surveillance was mixed in the study areas as generally houses were set well back from the street. Shared public space has been developed by residents and is well maintained. Areas of developed public space are limited with the exception of the entrance to Maple Lane which is planted and well maintained.

Across all areas A and E, the streets were laid out at 30 degrees of east/west to optimise solar access. Roads are relatively narrow and on-street parking is allowed in both areas.



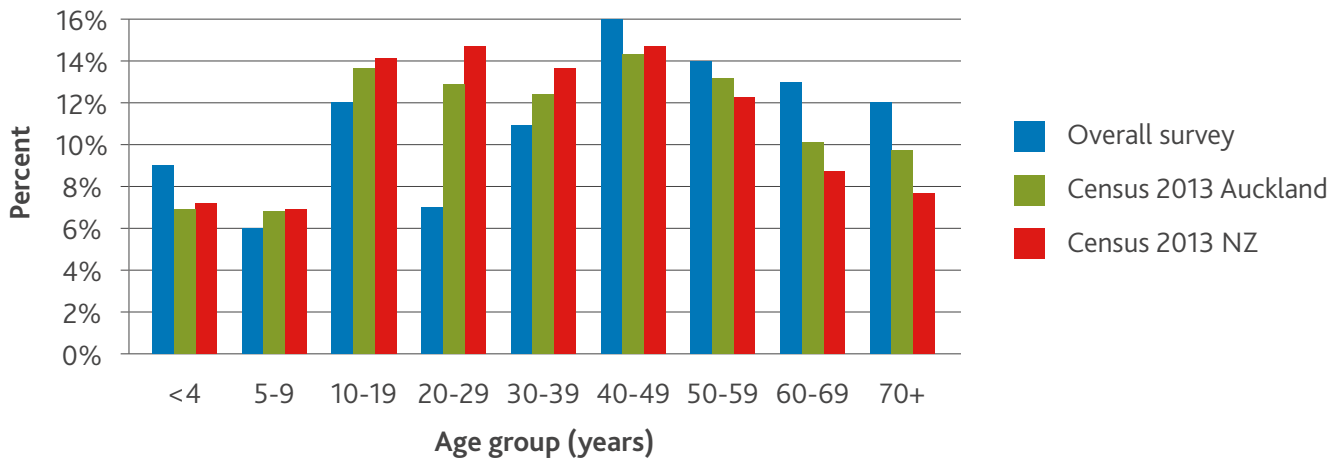
« Aerial view from SH16 coming into Kumeu

## Resident Survey

The survey was delivered to 770 homes with varying response rates across defined neighbourhoods. A total of 214 surveys (28 per cent) were returned with four more surveys returned after data analysis was completed.

Surveys were completed by a range of residents from 22 to 95 years.

## Age distribution of household members - overall results



≈ Figure 2: Comparative ages of household members (Overall results)

The results indicated 85 per cent home ownership from the respondents and 40 per cent had lived in the same home for 10 or more years. Comparable home ownership rates are 62 per cent across Auckland and 65 per cent nationally.

A majority of respondents (84 per cent) had no intention of moving house in the next year.

Car ownership rates (80 per cent of households own two or more vehicles) and travel distances are high when compared to Auckland and New Zealand as a whole, which is to be expected in a semi-rural location with low levels of public transport service.

The median for surveyed households was 1,200km travelled in the month prior to survey with 69 per cent driving less than 2,000km per month and 14 per cent driving more than 3,000km.

Almost all survey respondents frequented local shops and businesses (98 per cent) at least once a week with 55 per cent buying over half their food locally. Most respondents visited local cafes and vineyards (80 per cent) at least monthly, the local library and facilities (62 per cent) and parks, reserves, rivers and forests (51 per cent).

Overall, 90 per cent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their neighbourhoods are great places to live. Seventy-seven per cent of respondents said they knew three or more neighbours, 87 per cent greet one another, with 84 per cent knowing one another's

names and 58 per cent are comfortable asking for small favours. These rates are lower than the reported rates across all NZ urban areas, where 94 per cent greet each other and chat together, 88 per cent know one another's names and 77 per cent are very friendly.

Eighty-four per cent of respondents agree or strongly agree that a sense of community in my neighbourhood is very important to me, yet only 53 per cent actually feel that their neighbourhood has a strong sense of community. These rates are higher than findings across Auckland by the Quality of Life Report 2013 (74 per cent and 52 per cent respectively).

A majority of respondents also felt that their neighbourhoods were fairly or very safe for being at home (during the day 97 per cent and 94 per cent after dark). Eighty per cent felt it was less safe outside than inside their homes when walking during the day. Local neighbourhoods are felt to be a bit unsafe or very unsafe for cycling (56 per cent).

Respondents were asked about their views on new housing developments and whether they would recommend their community to people looking for a new place to live. Fifty-eight per cent would recommend Kumeu and Huapai to people looking for a new housing development with 24 per cent agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement; the new housing developments are good for the area and 48 per cent disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with this statement.

## What people like

By far the most popular response was enjoyment of a semi-rural environment (103 responses) as well as the friendly community atmosphere of the township and neighbourhoods (86 responses). This relates to the proximity of the outdoors, nature and farming activities, large property sizes, low densities and open spaces. This also includes access to local amenities and businesses such as wineries, cafes and restaurants. Respondents also enjoy the village atmosphere, proximity to local townships and to Auckland.

### Direct quotes include:

*"Semi rural; quiet; sense of community feel; all basic needs met."*

*"A bit of rural life but not far from the city – good combination."*

*"Rural aspect. Beaches. Restaurants. Neighbours."*

*"Sense of community. Friendly place, with a sense of belonging. Proximity to vineyards, wineries, Muriwai, forests etc. Convenience of local facilities/service, including cafes/ shops/library/playgrounds (especially for a family with young children)."*

*"We really enjoy living in this area and have noticed how friendly people are especially shopkeepers. Love the fact that we can easily walk to the shops even New World."*

Many respondents (44) also expressed their sense that the things they enjoy are under threat and already changing rapidly.

## Housing development - respondent understanding and perceptions - overall survey

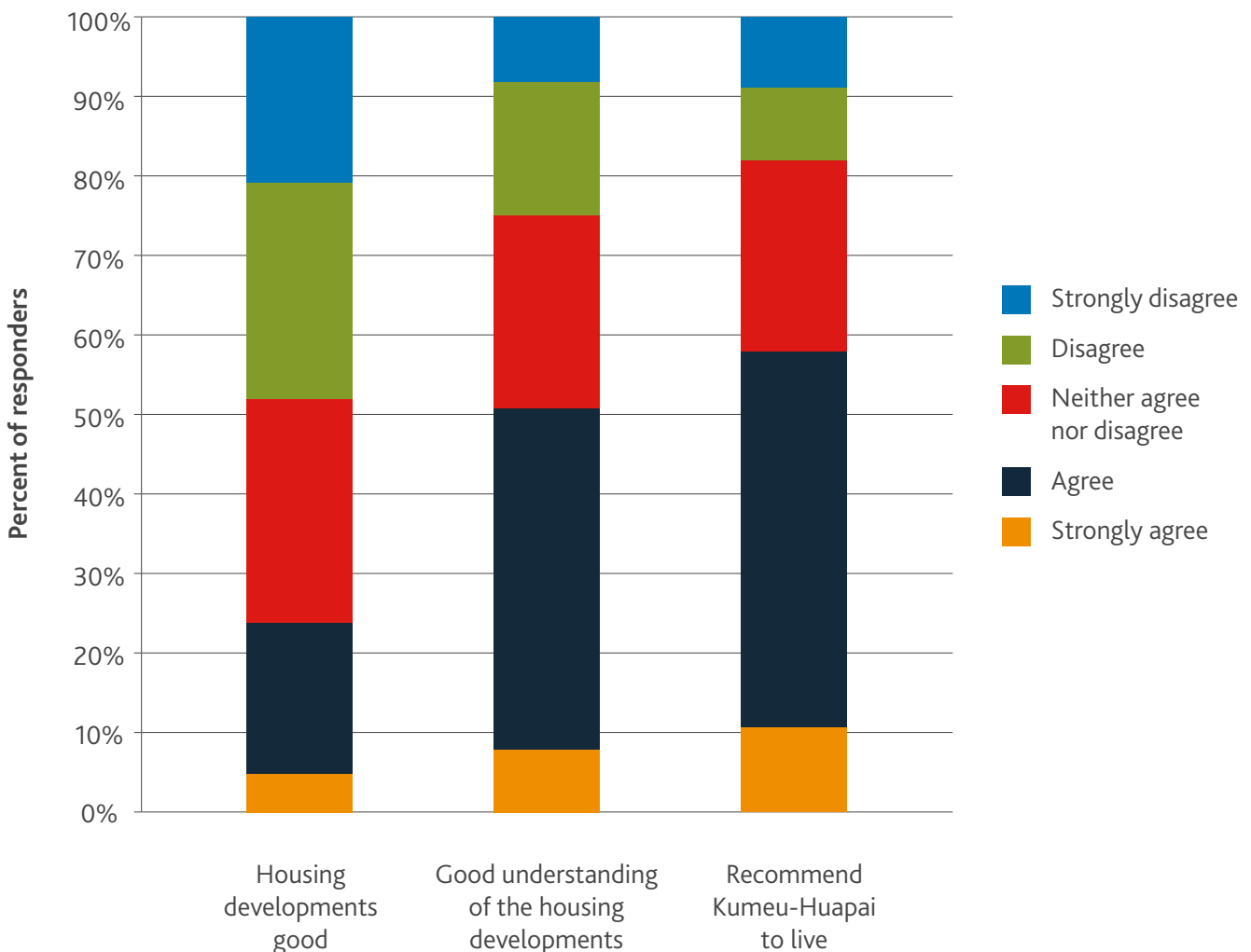


Figure 3: Understanding and perceptions of housing developments (Overall results)

## What people dislike

Ninety-four per cent of respondents (203 respondents) shared things they disliked. Overwhelmingly the largest response to this question concerned transportation, including roading and traffic issues (133 responses), a dislike of the limited public transport on offer and walkway and cycling infrastructure coupled with an overall lack of infrastructure.

No secondary school was seen as a limitation as was street lighting and public amenities including no swimming pool or town centre hub. Social infrastructure was also seen as inadequate.

Respondents expressed anger and frustration at the impact of housing pressure and growth. They were upset about the lack of engagement by the council and central government in regard to the housing development boom and the speed of change and quality of resulting neighbourhoods. Several respondents disliked the lack of rural feeling and village atmosphere while other respondents noted the unkempt and ugly nature of several public spaces.

### Direct quotes include:

*"Roading, footpaths and pedestrian crossings.*

*Lack of public transport. Lack of infrastructure to support new housing."*

*"The main road through Kumeu is horrible, the grass verges are always messy. The roundabout is a disgrace. There is no pride in how Kumeu looks. The council takes our rates but I don't see it being spent in the area."*

*"The noise from all the new housing development.*

*The housing developments themselves. The traffic which is worsening each day."*

*"We are about to lose some of the above (the rural). The horses' paddocks will become housing developments. I will recognise less and less locals. Small properties will be the norm. Hopefully we won't be forced onto city water (it tastes like chemicals)."*



≈ Dining at a local vineyard in Kumeu

## Community discussions

Three community meetings were held in August 2015. A fourth meeting with youth was scheduled but did not take place. The meetings were set up to have face-to-face conversations with residents to ascertain their personal views on the area.

In an effort to engage with a cross section of residents; meetings were arranged with business, sport and recreation clubs and the community to find out what people like and don't like about the area where they live.

### At each meeting, six questions were the focus:

- What do you like about living here?
- What doesn't work so well?
- What are the opportunities?
- What is valued?
- What needs changing/increasing/decreasing?
- What is a quick win?

Meetings were facilitated by Beacon Pathway representatives using techniques that ensured all attendees had equal opportunity to give input into the conversations.

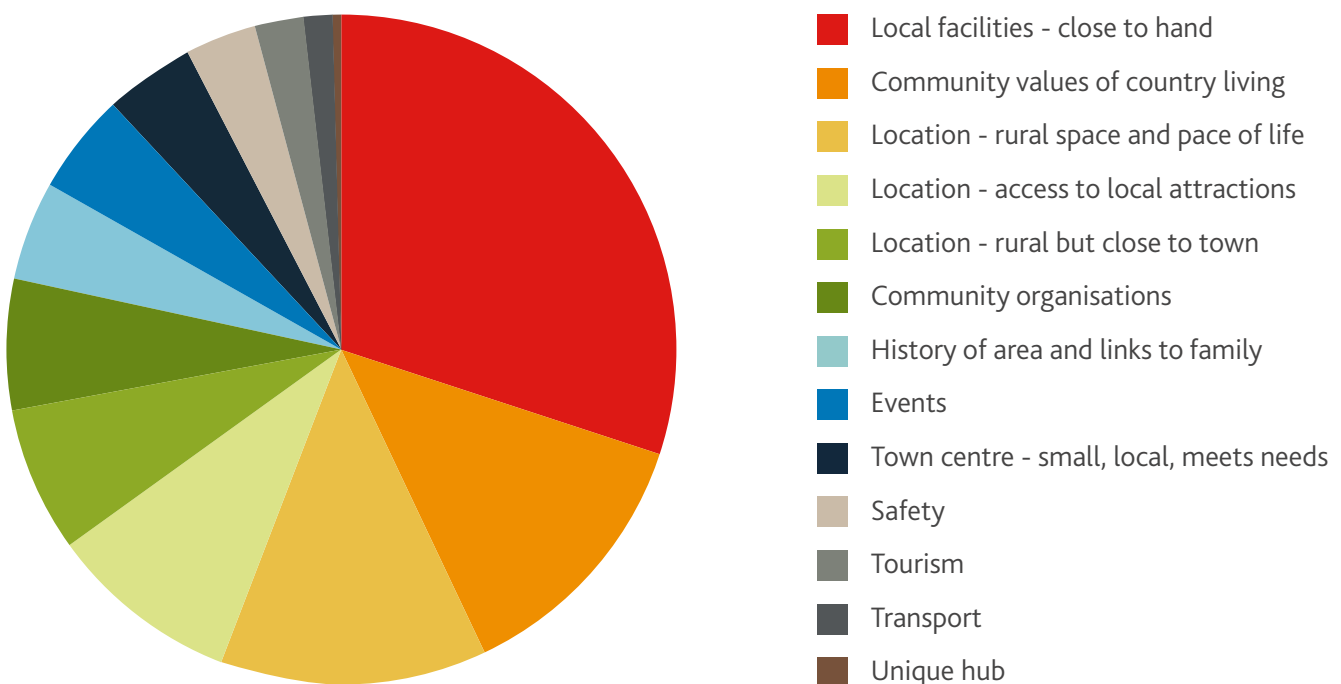
The meetings' highlight was hearing and recording the valued comments relating to the different aspect of life in the area. Figure 4 illustrates these aspects.

A full record of proceedings from the meetings has been recorded and is included in the final report. A key result came from asking what were the top three things that should be kept the same in order to have a good life in Kumeu-Huapai? The rural outlook, local businesses, rural village feel and rural lifestyle all were common themes. The most commented point to improve living in the area was to improve passenger transport/buses/trains in the area.

Comments shared at the meetings clearly expressed that the existing community felt strongly connected with their area. Several people also held strong intergenerational connections that provided a strong foundation for them.

The feedback provides some strong views and ideas for the future planning and development of the area and these will be significant contributors in creating a viable local business and local community in the future.

## Value attached to different aspects of Kumeu/Huapai life



≈ Figure 4: Value attached to different aspects of Kumeu–Huapai life

## Aspirations for the short term – looking forward 12 months

Improvements to traffic congestion, the possibility of a by-pass, improved traffic management and roading are the most commonly mentioned aspirations. Improved public transport, particularly trains and buses around the local area and connecting with other parts of Auckland are local aspirations.

A desire to retain the country (rural) feel of the area and township, to improve walking paths for recreation as well as regular activities such as walking to school and to the local shops. Upgrading the main road and town centre areas including regular berm mowing, improved plantings and greenery, and signage. Walking routes, more seating and beautification through art, sculpture and welcoming public gathering places are also aspirations.

### Direct quotes include:

*"Remain a good place to live. Have the grass verge along the main road mown. Our town looks like a dump."*

*"To have a sensible infrastructure plan in place to manage the pressures associated with the exponential growth planned for the area. To retain its sense of community as the population grows."*

*"More schooling options particularly intermediate and secondary level. Bypass for Kumeu to reduce congestion. Roundabouts at major intersections at Waimauku School and Tapu/Station Roads."*

*"Retain the same sense of community and pride. Good connections with other areas i.e. transport. Sense of being able to retreat from the quick pace of city living."*

*"I am looking forward to the new shopping centre and increasing population and hoping some sort of roading solution to the congestion will be found (eg. bypass) and public transport improvements. Hoping for improvements to pathway in Huapai Domain."*

*"Am favourable to housing development as long as it preserves the good things of the region and provides the new residents options to commute to work."*

*"More community living, less faceless development. More children's facilities, i.e. skate ramps, bike trails."*

*"For national govt/Council to provide community info, planning and process and put in infrastructure to support rapid growth and SHAs, esp. SH16 and rail/bus. History and local culture maintained and area becomes a destination not a dormitory suburb by using best urban planning with full community partnership process."*

Overall there is a desire to create a well-planned and functioning community which is a destination and great place to live.

### ✧ Residents and visitors enjoying the Kumeu Show



## What people would like to be involved with

Primary interest is in being part of planning processes with a particular emphasis on planning for new neighbourhoods, improving roads and traffic congestion, public transport and infrastructure.

There was also significant interest in being part of local community projects that improve the area especially with regard to cleaning up, planting and beautifying the area, welcoming new families, involving older people, growing neighbourhood support networks and developing more community events.

### Direct quotes include:

*"I believe we are planning to have some visiting of the new families with friendly offers of help with any needs they may have. Meals for new mums, babysitting etc."*

*"Don't know, as feel the damage has been done."*

*"Getting to know more people. I could volunteer to help out at the library or op shop."*

*"Street widths in new housing developments. The streets are too narrow. Take some of the area of the berms and give the roads more width. Did my bit 5 years ago."*

*"Local sports for children. More natural playground structures. Green spaces reserve/maintained. Community gardens."*

*"I would like to see the reinstatement of local events like the scarecrow competition, jandal festival, free concerts, Kumeu market all of which died when Rodney became part of the super city so would be happy to help organise community events."*

*"I am involved in Senior Net locally and I am a member of our community patrol. If asked to help out on other community projects I would give it consideration."*

*"Helping design a fitness trail or better to that being completed in Bill Moir Park, Whenuapai. Neighbourhood street party."*

*"These surveys are a good idea. Community galas/markets."*

*"Street pride: best garden street, best Christmas street. Mr Whippy visiting continued. Planting flower bulbs and spreading wild flower seeds in every conceivable sidewalk and nook and cranny in Huapai/Kumeu."*

« **Phelan Pirrie, Jeff Lyford, Monte Neal and Gary Moss try out a new section of the perimeter path at Huapai Domain**





## Conclusion

The existing community feels strongly connected with Kumeu and Huapai, with 90 per cent of respondent households agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement the local area that you live in is a great place to live. High home ownership and a high proportion of households have lived in their home for 10 years or more. Eighty-four per cent of households have no intention of moving in the next year and 64 reported an intention to move within the community.

New housing developments were not viewed positively but over half of the households agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “I have a good understanding of the housing developments that are happening here.”

Enjoying the semi-rural environment, friendly community atmosphere, proximity to local townships and central Auckland were seen as positive attributes. The local school, library and successful local businesses were seen as positive assets along with the peace, quiet and the safety of the area.

When asked what they didn't like the most frequent response concerned transportation including roading and traffic congestion issues, limited public transport, and poor walking and cycling infrastructure. In addition, the lack of a secondary school, inadequate street lighting and new public amenities such as a public swimming pool and town centre hub and social infrastructure were all identified.

There is a notable concern at the speed of change, the quality of the resulting neighbourhoods and impacts on infrastructure especially roads.

The lack of comprehensive planning and the potential loss of the rural feeling and the village atmosphere were all raised. Other comments noted the unkempt nature of some of the public spaces.

The results from the application of the different tools show that, while the existing community feels strongly connected with Kumeu and Huapai, the existing residential development does not perform well with regard to the goal:

*The neighbourhood built environment is designed, constructed and managed to generate neighbourhoods that are adaptive and resilient places that allow people to create rich and satisfying lives while respecting the limitations of the natural character.*

The tools clearly identify opportunities for improvement which could be incorporated into future wider master-planning. Key areas include:

- providing for a wider range of households, including people of various ages, life stages and incomes
- improved frequency of public transport
- safe walking and cycling
- building on residents' enthusiasm and appreciation of their neighbourhood.

These are likely to be factors in terms of creating viable local businesses and contributing positively to a local economy for the future.



⌘ Shopping centre in Kumeu Village

## References

Applying the Neighbourhood Sustainability Tools in Kumeu and Huapai: a report to the Rodney Local Board.  
Prepared by Beacon Pathway Incorporated, December 2015. NH2015/1.



