

Town Centre Manager's Report for 2022/23

I took on the role of Town Centre Manager in July 2022, and the first year has flown by with pace. For the first few months I was flying solo whilst I re-familiarised myself with the Waiuku business and social landscape. My previous experience working at WB&DA from 2013 to 2019 and then Papakura Business Association, held me in good stead to manage the varying aspects of the new role.



In February 2023 we took on our Assistant, Michelle Crow. Michelle has proved a wonderful asset to the association, ensuring our events and functions run smoothly, looking after new members, engaging and managing volunteers for events and at the Information Centre, keeping our website maintained up-to-the-minute and managing social media.

Events

We managed to bring back community and member events which had not been held for some time, following the massive economic and social challenges experienced from 2020 to 2022.

The **Glenbrook Vintage Railway Centenary held in October 2022** was a wonderful day hosted by Glenbrook Vintage Railway and Waiuku Cosmopolitan Club and supported by WB&DA with a market and entertainment for the community and enthusiasts to enjoy.



We held the **NZ Steel Christmas Festival & Parade in Dec 2022**, after being cancelled the previous 2 years, which was met with such a great response from the whole community and was a joy to be a part of once again. We had more than 30 parade entries and some really amazing floats. The winners were rewarded with town credit notes to spend at local businesses.

A great **Breakfast Connective in March 2023** was enjoyed by many of our members, with the Franklin Economic Broker presenting on the huge development and economic opportunities taking place in our region.



The **Waiuku Steel 'n' Wheels Festival, held in April 2023** proved to be a wonderful day, despite marginal weather conditions, well supported by the community and the whole region, with visitors and exhibitors from greater Auckland, Waikato and further afield. This event was not able to be held in 2022, so it was great to bring it back.

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

Growth

There is positive business growth currently in Waiuku, with new businesses opening and new associate members joining the association. We had a small number of businesses close, however these have been swiftly replaced with new ones or are under new management. Some small businesses have endured high rent increases, and sadly this has meant some have had to close their doors or move to home-based businesses. Feedback indicates that many of our small businesses still face challenges with the rising cost of living and the effect on sales.

However there continues to be demand for retail space in Waiuku, as we field enquiries almost every week. We have some wonderful businesses and we want to retain these and attract more to open, whilst encouraging landlords to consider a healthy retail mix to support all. With some of the major banks closing their local branches, we continue to advocate for a shared retail bank hub facility to service our growing community.

The existing and projected industrial growth in Waiuku and surrounding areas, such as Fernleigh industrial estate in Cornwall Road which is close to being fully taken up, and the employment it will bring, will increase demand and opportunity for local business and services. Fernleigh alone will supply approx. 1300-3000 new jobs.

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 the growth which is coming. We are promised to have increased bus services to Pukekohe in 2026. Watercare have confirmed the site for their new wastewater plant which we've been waiting for, planned to be in service for 2026.

All of these elements paint an overall positive picture for economic growth in Waiuku and the surrounding communities, with a lot of interest in our town.

Promotions



Christmas promotions included the return of Shop & Win which proved very popular and well supported by local businesses, and some very thrilled winners who could then spend their winnings at their favourite local businesses. We also tried some new Tik Tok competitions for best photo of Christmas Tree lights and best Waiuku Christmas song/dance. Again, winners were rewarded

with town credit notes to spend. Late night shopping had a fairly low uptake, so rather than one large event, we promoted all the retailers opening late each week to encourage foot traffic and spend. We had a Christmas window dressing competition which inspired some of our businesses to dress up their shop fronts and be up for a prize. Vanilla Homewares took out first place with their stunning display.

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.

Waiukutown.co.nz We are proud of the progress we've made with the website over the last few months, having carried out a full audit of listings and new information available.

Fabulous Franklin magazine We enjoyed a comprehensive showcase of Waiuku and Awhitu attractions in this magazine insert in the Franklin County News (Stuff) in March 2023.

West Franklin Breeze We advertise all our large events in the Breeze and support them as much as possible, as they produce such a great publication, writing about everything important to Waiuku and surrounding areas.

2022 Franklin Map Waiuku is advertised in this brochure which goes to several locations across the country.

Waiuku heritage brochure We continue to distribute our town brochure to local tourist operators, real estate agents and other businesses, civic centres and Information centres in other regions. The brochure contains all our local eateries, accommodation, attractions, services and maps for visitors. We hope to renew the brochure in 2024.

Instagram is part of our plans for promoting Waiuku and local business leading up to Christmas, now that we have our Assistant to help with online initiatives. We will be visiting businesses and posting photos and info on this well used platform, particularly for the younger generation and the tech savvy.

Community Placemaking



We were fortunate to receive a \$20,000 grant for community placemaking and initiatives for the 2022/23 financial year, despite Auckland Council's annual budget cuts. In this round we funded the new lights for the Waiuku Christmas Tree and new Town Flags with our new branding. We were very fortunate to receive sponsorship from Waiuku Business Park which funded the remainder of the cost for the new lights. We enjoyed the new Christmas Tree lights during the festive season and Matariki celebrations.

Unfortunately the summer weather was not favourable for outdoor town events so we hope to do some outdoor activations in the town centre next summer, such as our giant board games.

We continued the building façade beautification subsidy for landlords however this was only taken up by a small number. We intend to extend this initiative and encourage more to clean and beautify their buildings to improve the perception of our town centre as a safe and attractive place to shop, do business and eat out.

Safety & Crime Prevention



We upgraded our town CCTV system in March 2023 to the more popular and superior NX Witness system, which is backed up with local technical support rather than overseas which was proving challenging. The new system has been a huge help to Police to track and apprehend offenders with better functionality. The more successes with the system, the less likely criminals will target our town, knowing there is a robust camera system in place. More upgrades to cameras are happening in this new financial year.

We held a Coffee With A Cop meeting in Nov 2022 and a Crime Prevention meeting in June 2023, providing the opportunity to engage with Counties Manukau Police, give feedback, encourage good reporting and share knowledge and tools to tackle crime. Following this meeting some businesses took up the government subsidised fog cannons and we have enjoyed improved engagement with members on crime issues.

We also introduced a weekly Community Cops drop-in session at the Information Centre for locals to come and have a chat in a low pressure environment with one of our Community Policing team, which has been well received.

Our WhatsAPP group for Waiuku businesses is used by many to share and support in real time for any incidents or known offenders in town, proving incredibly useful on many occasions, and even helping to prevent crime.

Advocating for Local Business

We have put in submissions this year for the Plan Change 73 Appeal, for improved Public Transport and for improved roads and round-a-bouts needed in Waiuku to help with congestion and better access for all to enjoy. 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. Two new regular volunteers joined the team this year. Sadly due to the January floods and resulting serious road slip on the Awhitu peninsula, visitors have not been able to visit the Manukau Heads Lighthouse, and we receive enquiries regularly about when it will be open. We work hard to promote all the attractions and events in our area to show visitors how much Waiuku and surrounding areas have to offer. We are constantly requesting and re-stocking brochures for local attractions to keep up to date for our locals and visitors.

Community groups and event organisers regularly bring in posters or information so we can display this for them 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, we had a display for the Have Your Say on the Local Board 3 Year plan, and 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 gives exposure to all the businesses, attractions and community groups with their information on display.

In closing, I'd like to sincerely thank my executive committee, Council Communities and Franklin Local Board for their wonderful support and enthusiasm during my first year as manager. There is so much more we want to do to help our businesses and community to thrive, as we head into the next fiscal year with much experience and learnings under our belt. I look forward to working with you as we head towards the summer season and into 2024.

Vanessa Newman
Waiuku Town Manager