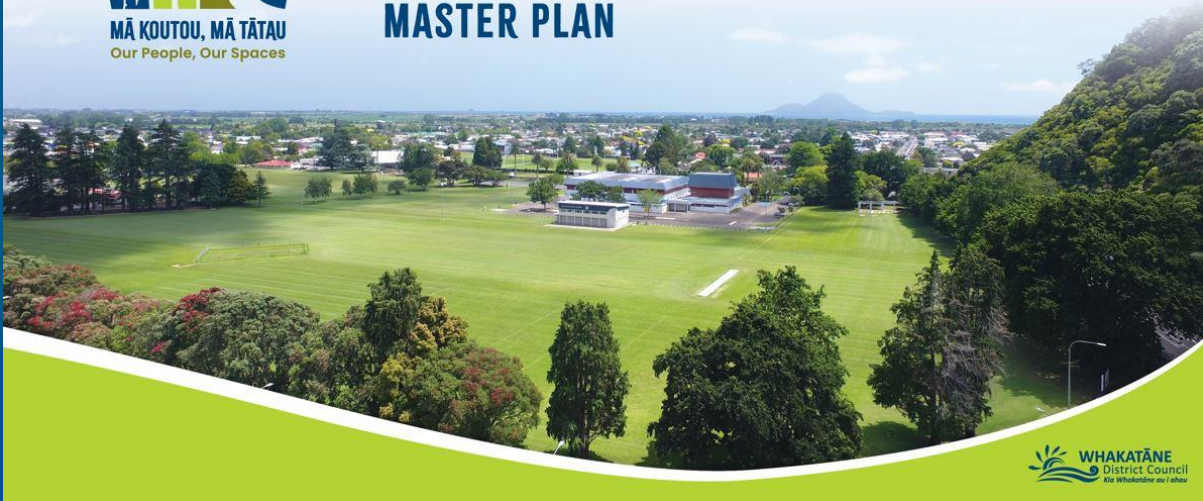




## REX MORPETH RECREATION HUB MASTER PLAN



# Rex Morpeth Recreation Hub Master Plan

*FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS*

### What is the 'Rex Morpeth Recreation Hub'?

Whakatāne War Memorial Hall, the 17 hectares of surrounding reserve land at Rex Morpeth Park and Rugby Park, Whakatāne Aquatic and Fitness Centre and the Whakatāne Arts and Craft Centre is collectively referred to as the 'Rex Morpeth Recreation Hub'.

### What's happening?

We're handing you the pen and asking you to have your say on some draft redevelopment plans we've had developed for the Rex Morpeth Recreation Hub.

### Why are we doing this?

Rex Morpeth Recreation Hub is one of Whakatāne District's most loved and used community assets. It's a special place where memories are made, and lifelong friendships and skills are developed. The hub is used by a large cross-sector of our communities, including those from outside Whakatāne District. The Whakatāne War Memorial Hall in particular is a really important facility as it is the district's primary indoor courts space, event/function facility, theatre, and civil defence facility. It has served us well however, the space isn't fit for purpose anymore.

The hall and theatre haven't been updated for 50 years and changes are required in response to varying uses and challenges. For example, basketball and volleyball are two of the most popular sports in our district, but demand for court space exceeds supply. This means our tamariki and rangatahi are missing out. In addition, the Rugby Park grandstand requires seismic strengthening while the function centre (previously a popular venue for a range of events and uses) is no longer a preferred choice given the need for refurbishment.

This is not a new project. Some time ago Council acknowledged the need for significant upgrades and a commitment was made to upgrade the hall and develop a master plan for the surrounding fields and facilities as part of the 2021-2031 Long Term Plan.

### What is a master plan?

The purpose of the master plan is to set a long-term vision for the Rex Morpeth Park Recreation Hub which will help inform its development over time. The master plan identifies core infrastructure, key land uses for active and passive recreation, and the location of facilities and buildings needed to meet the needs of our community now and in the future.

### **What area is included in the plans?**

The plans look at changes to Whakatāne War Memorial Hall, the 17 hectares of surrounding reserve land at Rex Morpeth Park and Rugby Park, Whakatāne Aquatic and Fitness Centre and Whakatāne Arts and Craft Centre - collectively known as the Rex Morpeth Recreation Hub.

All of the master plan options provide for a wide scope of potential changes to the existing spaces and facilities within the Rex Morpeth Recreation Hub. The options range from doing the bare minimum to maintain the existing facilities, to a full redevelopment which proposes alternative locations for an events and indoor sports space within the existing park. In addition, one option provides for the theatre to be moved offsite to an alternative location.

Although implementation of any of the master plan options would be a staged approach, we are taking a comprehensive approach at examining options for the area to ensure our short term investment decisions contribute to great long term outcomes.

### **Have you talked to the community about this?**

Some time ago, Whakatāne District Council acknowledged the need for significant upgrades to the Whakatāne War Memorial Hall and a commitment was made to upgrade the hall and develop a master plan for the surrounding fields and facilities as part of the 2021-2031 Long Term Plan.

Earlier this year we asked for your thoughts about the Rex Morpeth Recreation Hub Master Plan project and what the future of this space could look like. We worked with a wider sector of our communities and key users of the facilities to better understand current uses and consider needs and wants. Since then, we progressed with the master planning process and three master plan options have been developed based off your feedback.

Some common themes came through and we took those on board. We agree there are many things to consider, including parking, traffic management, 'hubbing' of sporting codes, disconnection of Rugby Park and Rex Morpeth Park, demand for field space, upgrades to the theatre and much more.

### **What are the options?**

The options provide for a wide scope of potential changes to the existing spaces and facilities within the Rex Morpeth Recreation Hub. They range from doing the bare minimum to maintain the existing facilities (status quo), to a full redevelopment which proposes alternative locations for an events and indoor sports space within the existing park. In addition, one option provides for the theatre to be

moved offsite to an alternative location. All options beyond status quo will be costly to develop with initial high-level costings ranging from \$75m to \$154m+ and will be staged over time.

### **How much will this project cost?**

All options beyond status quo will be costly to develop with initial high-level costings ranging from \$75m to \$139m+ and all master plan options would be stage over time.

The high costs are primarily due to the scale and nature of the park and in particular, the Whakatāne War Memorial Hall component which is a large portion of the project. The Whakatāne War Memorial Hall is a costly project because it has not had any substantial investment since it was constructed, and therefore requires substantial work to make it fit for purpose for the next fifty years. In addition, our population has grown and it needs to increase in size to meet demand.

Other key costs include developing more carparking, better access throughout the Rex Morpeth Recreation Hub, constructing new shared club facilities and spectator seating, as well as other key improvements.

The costs are based on early concept master plan phase. Therefore, there is a high level of variability, and the costs will be finalised when a preferred options is determined. We felt it was important to provide our communities an indication of the likely cost of this project.

We do know that it is unaffordable for our community to invest in any full master plan delivery at this time. Nor can we fund this alone as a community. For this reason, it's important to plan now for future generations, so we can work towards staging development over time and have credible plans in order to seek external funding. We can't seek funding without providing a plan.

Typically, community facilities such as this can attract a significant portion of funding to match that of the direct ratepayer and community contribution.

### **How is this being paid for?**

We do know that it is unaffordable for our community to invest in any full master plan delivery at this time. Nor can we fund this alone as a community. For this reason, it's important to plan now for future generations, so we can work towards staging development over time and have credible plans in order to seek external funding. We can't seek funding without providing a plan.

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### **Why are you talking about investing in the district when times are tough?**

This is a unique opportunity to ensure that we meet the current and future social, cultural, and sporting needs of our communities. It's tricky to discuss investing in our district at a time when the cost of living is front of mind. However, it's important to plan now for future generations so we can work towards staging development over time and have credible plans in order to seek external funding.

Typically, community facilities such as this can attract a significant portion of external funding so it's important to keep this in mind when having a say on preferred options.

### **Are you knocking down the Whakatāne War Memorial Hall?**

That decision hasn't been made yet – no decisions have. Each master plan option shows a different way of upgrading the hall.

- Option 1 extends and upgrades the existing hall
- Options 2 and 3 will require the demolition of the existing hall and a new building constructed elsewhere on the site.
- Option 4 retains the existing hall and footprint with minor necessary upgrades.

### **What will the final buildings look like?**

The detailed design of the buildings will be worked through once a master plan option has been selected and progressed through Councils Long Term Plan process.

### **Will you look at access and car parking?**

We know that there is a parking shortfall on busier days and this affects the wider area and connecting roads. This has been a key driver in undertaking the master plan process and improving the overall situation of the Rex Morpeth Recreation Hub. The location of access into and through the site and car parking are key considerations for each of the master plan options.

### **When will building work start?**

At this stage no timeframes have been set as no decisions have been made. We are very early on in this project and a preferred option still needs to be included within the 2024 – 2034 Long Term Plan consultation. Any significant works would be unlikely to start for a few years, though smaller improvement works could be made within the next two to three years.



If you do redevelop the Whakatāne War Memorial Hall, where do we have our shows / events / indoor sports / civil defence centre while construction is in process? Is there an alternate venue?

Any redevelopment option will be completed in stages and timing of this will be discussed with users of the Rex Morpeth Recreation Hub. Council will work with users to find alternative venues during construction phases.

### **Why are you proposing to move our club / field space?**

Each master plan has been developed on the basis of improving functionality, flexibility, and accessibility within the Rex Morpeth Recreation Hub. Each option delivers on these principles in different ways and no final decision has been made on relocating uses and users.

### **How would shared buildings or 'hubbing' work for different clubs and users?**

Any shared use buildings will be discussed further and designed collaboratively with the clubs and users they are intended for. As a general rule, shared facilities are more viable to build and maintain as they have more users.

### **How do I have my say on the draft master plan options?**

We're seeking community feedback on the options from Monday, 11 September until Monday, 9 October at [www.koreromai.whakatane.govt.nz/ourpeopleourspace](http://www.koreromai.whakatane.govt.nz/ourpeopleourspace)

We'll also be hosting community pop-in sessions and attending Community Board and resident association meetings.

#### *Community pop-in sessions:*

- Saturday, 9 September, 10am to 12pm, Te Kōputu a te whanga a Toi / Whakatāne Library
- Wednesday, 13 September. 1pm to 3pm, Main Council Building
- Thursday, 14 September, 4pm to 6pm, Whakatāne Aquatic and Fitness Centre
- Thursday, 21 September, 11.30am to 1.30pm, Wharaurangi

Submissions close 5pm, Monday, 9 October

### What happens next?

Following community feedback an evaluation report will be presented to elected members along with a preferred option to be included within the 2024 – 2034 Long Term Plan consultation.

### Who do I contact for more information?

[ourpeopleourspace@whakatane.govt.nz](mailto:ourpeopleourspace@whakatane.govt.nz)