

## DRAFT DISTRICT PLAN

*Topic summary:*

# PUBLIC ACCESS

## KEY OUTCOMES

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- *Great urban areas*
- *Greenfield growth in the hills*
- *A premier park for Ahuriri Estuary*



## BACKGROUND

*Public access corridors provide opportunities to improve connections within and between neighbourhoods, open space, the coast and other water bodies, and between places of living, work and play.*

Greater public access and connectivity:

- encourages walking and cycling for transport and recreation, contributing to a healthy lifestyle and reducing reliance on private motor vehicles;
- encourages community interaction and reduces potential for crime through enhanced surveillance;
- provides opportunities for planting, contributing to ecological connectivity and amenity;
- provides opportunities to enhance mana whenua values including recognising the cultural history of the area.

The Draft District Plan identifies indicative public access routes that will assist in achieving the key outcome of 'Great Urban Areas'.

Another key outcome of the District Plan is 'Greenfield growth in the hills'.

Future-proofing the opportunity to provide public access through the western hills, including beyond Napier's territorial boundary, will ensure that the potential for an integrated public access network is not lost for future generations.

The indicative public access routes through the western hills also provide opportunities to enhance ecological and mana whenua values over time.

Council – along with other bodies – are currently working towards developing a "Premier Regional Park for Ahuriri Estuary. This outcome recognises that the values of the estuary, including public access, are important for Napier. More broadly, Napier's coastline including the Ahuriri estuary are a integral to Napier's identity and provide important recreational opportunities for our community.

Ensuring the public are able to access these places is a matter of national importance under the Resource Management Act (RMA) and a key objective in the New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement 2010.

The Draft District Plan provides for public access to these areas, stipulating that esplanade reserves must be included in any subdivision plans for land immediately adjoining identified water bodies. It also acknowledges that access should be restricted in areas of significant ecological value and sensitivity.

The Draft District Plan seeks to provide a balance between protecting future linkages that will support these outcomes, and enabling development.

## MOVING FORWARD / OUR PROPOSAL

To achieve our key outcomes, the public access provisions provide for the following:

- A. Identification and mapping of indicative public access routes, including:
  - Indicative Western Hills walkway and future connections
  - Access from Poraiti to the Ahuriri estuary
  - Esplanade reserves for the Taipo and Petane streams
  - Better connections between roads in Maraenui to support community wellbeing and safety goals
  - Connectivity corridors in the rural south-east of the city
  - Enhancement of key connections within the inner city and along the coast.
- B. Requiring the indicative public access routes through private land to be made available for public access at the time of subdivision or development (either through vesting of land, an easement or alternative legal mechanism) (see SUB-S17)
- C. Avoiding new buildings, plantation forestry and shared driveways within an indicative public access route to protect these linkages for the future (see PA-R1 and PA-R2)
- D. Requiring the vesting of esplanade reserves at the time of subdivision in accordance with the Resource Management Act (see SUB-S18).

## KEY ISSUES AND CHANGES

### *Achieving the benefits of improved access*

Providing and designing better public access and connectivity routes within and between neighbourhoods, open space and commercial areas benefits social and community wellbeing, as well as health and safety by:

- encouraging walking and cycling and accessibility to adjacent neighbourhoods;
- providing easier access to public open spaces for recreation and gatherings;
- limiting any sense of entrapment (e.g. from tall closed fences along narrow walkways, and from convoluted single entrance/exit routes)
- providing for several feasible evacuation routes in emergency situations
- clarifying and enhancing wayfinding by removing impediments to people's movements.

Council has identified some key routes across privately-owned land that would assist in achieving these benefits. These routes include extending cul-de-sacs to connect to public roads throughout Maraenui, a direct link between Hastings Street and Marine Parade opposite the civic precinct, and enhanced cycleways along the coast including a new I-way route connecting Westshore to Whirinaki. These have been identified on the planning maps, and will be required to be provided for public access at the time of subdivision and development (see SUB-S17) and in the meantime kept clear of buildings and shared driveways (see PA-R1).

Other connections may be appropriate at the time of subdivision and development of larger sites. Decisions will be made against relevant assessment criteria and design guidelines for residential and commercial zones, and may require consideration of improving connectivity at the time of resource consent (e.g. see GRZ-AC1(d) and MUZ-AC1(c)).

### ***The need to ensure public access to the coast, estuary, rivers and lake***

People expect to have reasonable access to the city's coastal environment, Ahuriri Estuary, waterways and recreational reserves. The maintenance and enhancement of public access to the coast and water bodies is recognised in the RMA as a matter of national importance. The New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement 2010 also specifically outlines the requirement to provide access to - and along - the coastal environment. Council therefore has a legal responsibility to protect, maintain and enhance access to, and along the coast and other water bodies as a community benefit that improves people's enjoyment of the city. The esplanade reserve rules generally require a 20m-wide strip of land to be vested at the time of subdivision (see SUB-S18) although there is some exemption in specific areas.

### ***Access through the western hills***

Napier has a large network of interlinking off-road pathways, which are increasingly popular for people seeking to undertake active recreation. The pathways also have an important role in ensuring connectivity between neighbourhoods and open spaces to provide

access to the coast. There are a number of existing significant reserves in the western hills (Ōtātara, Sugar Loaf, Dolbel), and some proposed reserves (Mission Development Area) but these features are not linked in a manner that allows people to travel through the western hills between them. Council is keen to see greater public access and connectivity between public open space areas within and along the western hills leading to the Ahuriri Estuary and the coast.

One risk is possible fragmentation of the land through subdivision, which could potentially result in the loss of any future connectivity opportunities in the western hills. There is also the long-term potential for urban expansion of Napier to occur west of the city's boundary. Protecting east-west connection opportunities through the western hills will ensure any future urban expansion can have quality connections for biking and walking to Taradale and the wider Napier urban area.

Requiring identified public access corridors to be vested at the time of subdivision and development will ensure these linkages are provided for future generations (see SUB-S17). Prior to subdivision/residential development the rules require these indicative public access rules are kept clear of buildings, shared driveways and plantation forestry (see PA-R1 and PA-R2).