

# Blasting from the past



The past and the future are finely balanced in Waiuku, “the heritage town of Franklin and gateway to Karioitahi Beach”, located 40km southwest of Auckland’s CBD.

While the business association trades on its history, the word “development” features in both its name ([Waiuku Business & Development Association](#)) and its vision statement.

Town Centre Manager **Sharlene Druyven**, *pictured*, acknowledges the contrasting imperatives.

“While we’re proud of our heritage, we’re really focused on economic growth and building prosperity for our 7000 residents, local business owners and the many others we’re keen to attract to our special part of town,” says Sharlene.

Waiuku is one of three townships in the city’s Franklin ward, Pukekohe and Beachlands being the other two. The district’s population is expected to grow by 56% in the next 15 years, creating a host of opportunities as well as challenges.

“We want to keep what’s special about our ‘vintage township’ and celebrate that through signature events such as *Blast to the Past* and *Waiuku Steel ‘n’ Wheels*.”



Franklin has a wealth of history; the Kentish Hotel in Waiuku lays claim to being the oldest continuously licensed pub in New Zealand.



Waiuku’s Steel ‘n’ Wheels is one of the popular events attracting locals and visitors in their thousands.

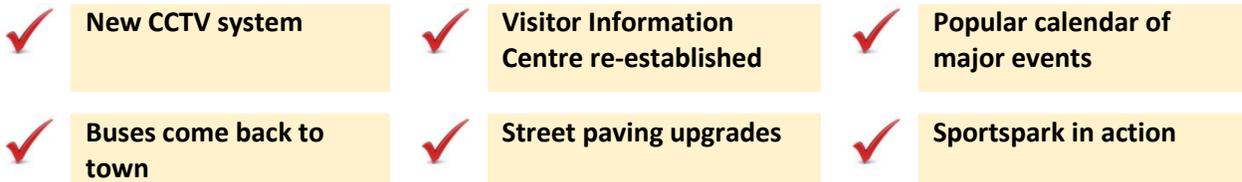
“But time can’t stand still, and we’re zoned in Auckland’s Unitary Plan for growth and plenty of it. Ironically, heritage protection rules could yet stifle development,” Sharlene says.

“With zero vacancies in our town centre, many of our landlords are relying on being allowed to develop their properties upwards, adding storeys to accommodate demand for more retail and office space.

“However, many of our older buildings have been tentatively classified as ‘scheduled historic heritage places’ with constraints on what changes property owners can make. It’s a situation we’re seeking to work through with council planners,” says Sharlene.

A small targeted rate already applied in Waiuku before a BID programme was formally established in 2011. An Auckland Council grant of \$25,000 helped get the BID proposal over the line and a new \$120,000 BID targeted rate was supported by the local business community.

## The BID programme has delivered several big wins during its formative years.



“We’re lobbying for better public transport services and infrastructure, ultra-fast broadband to support home-based businesses and teleworkers as well as facilities and services to help cater for our ageing population. We also want to make history as the first town be accredited as motorhome friendly,” says Sharlene, who was lobbied to stand (successfully) for election to the Franklin Local Board in late 2016.

With conflicts of interest – real or perceived – well managed by all parties, Sharlene’s dual contribution to the country town continues to deliver results.

In its recently published [Franklin Local Board Plan 2017](#), the board supports both a thriving local economy and an approach that ensures growth is dealt with effectively.

“We support the promotion and linking of local attractions, events and heritage,” it says. “We will advocate for better transport connections to ease the congestion that will increase with growth. “

With protection of the district’s productive soils a major local issue, it’s worthwhile to consider the white clay of Waiuku as a solid base upon which to build a growing economy.

## Plans in alignment

*The Franklin Local Economic Development Plan provides a blueprint for growing the local economy, including doing more to explore the district’s tourism potential.*

*This is reflected in the Waiuku BID’s own strategic plan and the Franklin Local Board Plan.*

