



Rob Thomas, *pictured*, has a strong working knowledge of the BID world, working closely with both Uptown and Newmarket.

The Waitematā Local Board area contains six business improvement districts, the most recent of which – Uptown – was established with Rob’s strong support back in 2011.

He currently represents his local board in its collaborative relationship with Newmarket.



Backing BIDs



“For six years (2010-16) I served on the Uptown BID, governed by the first chair Ron Harcus and, in recent years, former MP Laila Harré. The two aspects I enjoyed was being the council confluence to leverage opportunities and the comradery within the board,” Rob said.

Rob expresses admiration for the work Gary Holmes has carried out in Uptown.

“Establishing the Uptown Business District required a manager that could deliver on a vision, had fortitude and entrepreneurial flair. Gary has certainly met the bill.

“It was important to have a rallying cry,” Rob said.

“For Uptown this was *‘being forgotten’* when the area at the time had just lost bus services, the closure of the bank and postal services.



“There was a massive opportunity to be a voice to the immense growth happening around Symonds Street, Grafton, Newton and Mt Eden. Establishing a board, agreeing on a strategy and resourcing that strategy were all important foundation stones to establishing the BID.

“It was a difficult time because council rates and water charges were on the rise. The appetite for paying more was not welcomed but the sense of ownership and taking control of one’s own destiny won the hearts and minds. Ron Harcus and the board did an enormous amount of leg work door-knocking businesses asking them to vote. The first Uptown AGM ratified the postal ballot and it was passed by just two votes based on a reduced targeted rate,” said Rob.

“I recently heard former PM John Key say that with businesses you get to choose the people you hire but in politics you have to work with the people you are given. During Uptown’s formative years, there were challenges on the board and it was an uphill battle to deliver projects with a limited budget. Over time, however, (Uptown) started to stand on its own two feet and was not afraid to champion its future through the media, with Council, with Auckland Transport and started making plans for the future.”

“Over the years, I’ve seen BIDs add tremendous value through creating a sense of local identity, delivering renewal projects, events and making Auckland a better place to do business”.

ROB THOMAS

From late 2016, Rob Thomas has represented Waitemata Local Board in its collaborative relationship with Newmarket Business Association.

“(NBA) runs a tight ship and (CEO) Mark Knoff-Thomas certainly personifies the Newmarket brand. Mark and his team have worked hard at realigning the strategy and have seen some great success, most notably on the consumer front with slick marketing,” Rob said.

“The Newmarket BID is vastly different to Uptown as it is more retail-focused with a larger budget. While Newmarket is still known as the fashion capital of New Zealand by many, it has also become highly regarded as one of Auckland’s major metropolitan centres and is home to a who’s who of NZ head offices,” he said.



“At the annual awards night you truly get to appreciate the dedication, passion and breadth of the businesses in Newmarket that strive to be New Zealand’s best,” said Rob Thomas, pictured above with wife Valentina.

“Every area needs to have a local champion and I’ve seen BIDs do this well through good governance and professional delivery.”

ROB THOMAS

There’s gold in that there plan!

TAKE TWO: City Fringe Economic Development Action Plan

Working alongside its local “fringe” business districts - Ponsonby, K’ Road, Uptown, Newmarket and Parnell plus non-BID Grey Lynn - the Waitemata Local Board is now on to its second plan to deliver initiatives in the area.

Rob Thomas says the new plan will enable BIDs to leverage funding and advocacy opportunities.



Rob said the first plan stretched over six years and included a range of projects from local area planning for Uptown & K’ Road through to supporting ultra-fast broadband.

“These projects are now complete, so we’ve recently launched the second iteration of the plan.

“The two key focuses in the new plan are creating a sense of identity and developing a better working relationship with Auckland Transport,” he said.