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Published: 18 September, 2019 / No Comments

Council clarifies Waikato Times growth article



By Chief Executive Richard Briggs

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The Waikato Times has today published a story regarding Hamilton’s growth which includes factually incorrect information and references unsubstantiated claims.

The lead article in its print edition and online earlier today makes statements about Hamilton’s growth capacity, housing affordability and the accuracy of the Council’s planning processes. It cites a report commissioned by a local developer. It’s frustrating and disappointing the Waikato Times was aware statements and conclusions in the report were incorrect before it published the article.

The Times was supplied the latest data on Hamilton’s housing affordability (defined through the house price to income multiple) which shows Hamilton’s affordability index at 6.53. Despite this, the article stated Hamilton’s figure has risen from 6.8 to 9.3 in the past 10 years. Not only is this wrong, it contradicts another Times housing article just two weeks ago which stated Hamilton’s figure was 6.2. The latest data shows Hamilton is more affordable than Auckland, Queenstown, Tauranga, Napier and Wellington City.

[View the latest data here](#)

The Times was also supplied information noting other key assumptions in the report were blatantly wrong.

We have raised this issue with the Times.

I have absolute confidence in this Council’s data, projections and reporting.

We have a nationally-respected team to model growth and financial projections using the latest information.

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We work closely with Treasury, MBIE, Stats NZ and other highly-respected agencies, economic analysts and data companies to ensure the highest degree of accuracy possible. Our growth and funding projections are continually updated, refined and reported publicly to the Council.

Just yesterday the Council received a staff report on the city's resilience to growth changes. The report clearly shows Hamilton is in good shape to respond to increases or decreases in our projected growth patterns. It's built on facts and its assumptions are tested. In all tested scenarios the Council remained within self-imposed financial limits.

Hamilton has an extended lead time for continued growth based on new dwelling consents in the past 12 months which have been at a 40-year record. The Council is insulated by historic national resilience to global economic changes, the ability to adjust its approach through the 10-Year Plan and Annual Plan cycle, and the nature of its revenue base.

The city is also buffered from a growth perspective by its proximity to Auckland and its location within the 'golden triangle' of freight movements between Auckland, Hamilton and Tauranga as well as its relative housing affordability compared to its northern neighbour.

Our city's resilience is further improved by changes to the way the Council delivers our capital programme. Organisational changes last year mean a more holistic approach to capital spend across the organisation, finding efficiencies and economies of scale through the creation of a Development Group, responsible for the Council's entire capital programme.

Hamilton is growing rapidly and we have great people and great systems to ensure that growth is managed well.

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newzealand.govt.nz

Contact Us

Hamilton City Council, Private Bag 3010,
Hamilton, 3240, New Zealand

Email: info@hcc.govt.nz | **Phone:** +64 7 838 6699 | **Fax:**+64 7 838 6599

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