

Submission to Hamilton City Council in response to the 2021 Representation Review

5 October 2021

Summary

We invite Hamilton City Council to establish Community Boards in the city for the 2022 Local Government elections, as outlined in this submission (below)

- to ensure effective engagement between the Council and the people of Hamilton
- to promote the social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing of the city's various communities in the present and for the future (the four wellbeings), and
- to 'promote efficiency and effectiveness in council decision-making' enabling both councillors and staff to focus on decisions that have a real impact for the overall Hamilton community and are consistent with the purpose of local government in law.

Our call also fits with the council's official governance approach: "Enabling local democracy – with and through people, principles, policies and political processes".

Our proposed Community Boards are centred on neighbourhood clusters identified by Council's Community Profiles and Statistic NZ's areas in the map (below) provided in the 2021 (and 2018) Representation Review. These are readily acknowledged by locals as their home suburbs, in line with the definition of 'communities of interest'.

We are influenced by demographic and socio-economic characteristics and consider the proposed clusters satisfy the legal requirements for Community Boards, acknowledge the experience of existing neighbourhood facilities (including schools), and would respond well to the public call for stronger local democracy,



Community Profile Areas 2018	Statistical Area 2 Units	Population (Census 2018)	Population estimates (Statistics NZ 2020)
East Area 1	Flagstaff North, Flagstaff South, and Flagstaff East	9831	11460
East Area 2	Rototuna North, Rototuna Central, Rototuna South, Te Manatu, St James, and Huntington	18303	20270
East Area 3	Queenwood, Chartwell, Chedworth, and Miropiko	9891	10460
East Area 4	Porritt, Fairfield, Enderley North, Enderley South, and Fairview Downs	15477	16940
East Area 5	Claudelands, Peachgrove, Hamilton East Village, Hamilton East Cook, and Hamilton East	15933	16940
East Area 6	Greensboro, Hillcrest West, Hillcrest East, Silverdale, Riverlea, and Ruakura	15576	17650
West Area 1	Te Rapa North, Te Rapa South, Pukete West, Pukete East, St Andrews West, St Andrews East, Beerescourt, and Forest Lake	14967	15860
West Area 2	Crawshaw, Western Heights, Nawton West and Nawton East, Rotokauri-Waiwhakareke	14583	15780
West Area 3	Dinsdale North, Dinsdale South, and Temple View	9534	10100
West Area 4	Maeroa, Swarbrick, Kahikatea, and Frankton Junction	10230	11480
West Area 5	Whitiora, Kirikiriroa, Hamilton Lake, Hamilton Central, and Hamilton West	8757	10060
West Area 6	Melville North, Melville South, Bader, Deanwell, Glenview, Resthill, Fitzroy, and Peacockes	17817	19550

We recommend Community Boards centred on the areas named, with final boundaries to be adjusted after public consultation:

Stage One 2022:

- East Area 4 (Porritt, Fairfield, Enderley North & South, and Fairview Downs)
- West Area 1 (Te Rapa, Pukete, St Andrews, Beerescourt, & Forest Lake)
- West Area 2 & 3 (Crawshaw, Western Heights, Nawton, Rotokauri-Waiwhakareke, Dinsdale, and Temple View)
- West Area 6 (Melville, Bader, Deanwell, Glenview, Resthill, Fitzroy & Peacockes)

Stage Two 2022 - 2025

- East Area 2 (Rototuna, Te Manatu, St James & Huntington)
- East Area 5 (Claudelands, Peachgrove & Hamilton East)
- West Area 4 (Maeroa, Swarbrick, Kahikatea, & Frankton Junction)
- West Area 5 (Whitiora, Kirikiriroa, Hamilton Lake, Hamilton Central, & Hamilton West)
- East Area 6 (Greensboro, Hillcrest, Silverdale, Riverlea and Ruakura)

A further Representation Review by 2025 or earlier in response to community appetite might evaluate the city-wide benefits from new Community Boards more compact and centred in areas with increasing population density and/or special interests such as the CBD, the University of Waikato & the Ruakura Inland Port, Waikato Hospital, and residential growth areas such as Rototuna, Rotokauri, and Peacock.

Background

1. The case for Community Boards in Hamilton

Our submission follows on from Western Community Centre's Neil Tolan's request that you promote this option as part of your Representation Review consultation (September-October 6). [Council Open Agenda - 12 August 2021](#)

- Neil Tolan spoke to item 11 (2021 Wider Representation Review - Initial Proposal) and **requested that community boards be added to the initial Representation proposal to be consulted on**. He responded to questions from Members concerning the number of Community Boards he would like to see and his preferred representation format - (page 8 of 332, HCC Agenda 30 September 2021, minutes)

We take the opposite view to your governance advisors that there is 'no community appetite for Community Boards' and that

'Effective representation would not be enhanced by establishing community boards, having considered the identified communities of interest in terms of distinctiveness, representation, access and effective governance

And further, that

'Ward Councillors are NOT (our insert) likely to provide sufficient representation of communities of interest and therefore ensure adequate representation and access between Elected Members and the population.

2. Our Focus

We note that current elected members are divided on whether to have one ward or two, with a majority in favour of the current two. While our discussions indicate increasing interest in a 'one city/one electorate' approach (a single 'ward' to dovetail with the new city-wide Maori electorate), our focus in this submission is the restoration and enhancement of democracy at the neighbourhood or flax roots of our city.

3. The Background

We consider it important to review history as we plan for the future.

Two key aspects influence our thinking. Currently Central Government is set on reforming Local Government to centralise a range of infrastructure and planning functions while the promotion of 'wellbeing' will remain a core governance purpose (local and national). This coincides with well researched concerns at public disengagement and calls for improved education about democracy and public participation.

Cabinet Paper CAB-21-MIN-0110 suggests the Local Government system is seriously broken and 'active community participation' is a common thread in suggestions for the cure. The government's Review into the Future for Local Government is underway, to scope 'what local government does, how it does it, and how it pays for it... Key points are what is required to build

- a sustainable local government system that has the flexibility and incentives to adapt to the future needs of local communities,
- public trust/confidence in local authorities and the local regulatory system that leads to strong leadership
- effective partnerships for wellbeing
- embodying and upholding the Treaty (Te Tiriti o Waitangi)

Community boards were created by the local government reforms of 1989. Hamilton was one of the few councils not required to establish boards and (although we look forward to future research) we have concluded that this subject has had minimal exposure over the past three decades, even among community activists.

Hamilton City Council's 2018 Representation Review included public consultation, plus meetings at two community centres, but we have uncovered no recollection of serious discussion on the merits of Community Boards for the city (NB the council officer at the time is currently on leave).

Hamilton's vigorous network of Community/Neighbourhood Houses has arisen from local residents and local activism, yet with no awareness that they could 'step-up' and seek Community Board status. In response to the Council's current 2021 Representation Review, Community Waikato invited representatives from the Neighbourhood Houses to consider the matter and reach agreement and develop this submission.

Hamilton now has the opportunity to establish the first Community Boards for the city as part of the 2022 local elections in October next year and dovetail with the Government's review.

4. Community Boards

Because of the apparent lack of knowledge in Hamilton about Community Boards, we have included in this submission some links to LGNZ's extensive information plus some other references.:

On the significant 1989 Local Government reforms, former Palmerston North mayor and Local Government Commission chair **Sir Brian Elwood** argued for Community Boards to ensure communities of interest had representation in large councils.

A decade later LGNZ president **Kerry Marshall** considered Community Boards had clearly 'made a difference'.

‘They keep the local in local. They help councils deal with diversity in their communities. They provide both sources and lines of communication. And they provide for citizen involvement in the making of local policy.’ (1997)

Carterton Mayor **Georgine Beyer** described Community Boards as a ‘vital link in the democratic chain’

“District and City Councillors have an overview of their district of city, but it is the community board members who are working at the local service station or shop and are readily available, day in and day out.”

Some 110 community boards in just over 40 councils plus 21 in Auckland now operate in both urban and rural areas throughout New Zealand. They carry out functions and exercise those powers delegated to them by their councils. They are remarkably diverse, representing communities ranging from fewer than 500 residents to more than 60,000, with some covering a complete city or district, and only partial in others. View all [community boards](#).

National Community Board executive committee chair **Mick Lester** (in the preface to the latest LGNZ Good Governance Guide) says while “not everyone was confident that they would be a lasting element...we have proved the doubters wrong.

“Community boards are now a valuable and permanent part of the local governance landscape...and can make a real difference to the quality of life in a community.

“The strength of community boards is their connection to neighbourhoods and their ability to bring decision making down to a level where citizens can have real influence...

“Through their ability to reconnect communities with governments, community boards make a positive contribution to the underpinning fabric of communities through the opportunities they provide for participation in decision-making about local and neighbourhood matters

“Boards are a mechanism through which individuals can practice and learn to skills necessary to be effective and active citizens.”

As well, “for many people membership of a community board is their first step in a journey that may eventually lead to a role as a councillor, mayor or even a member of parliament.”

<https://www.lgnz.co.nz/assets/Reason-for-Community-boards.pdf> (August 2021)

<https://www.lgnz.co.nz/local-government-in-nz/community-boards>

5. Requirements

The legal requirements for Community Boards cover

- the nature of the community and
- the structure of the community board.

The Local Government Commission advises that consideration needs to be given to the number of community boards, their names and boundaries, the number of members for each board including any appointed members, and whether the board area should be subdivided for electoral purposes.

Official data already exists to provide the electoral and demographic profiles to frame our proposed Community Board boundaries in Hamilton and are illustrated by the maps in the council's review document as 'Communities of Interest', Community Profile areas and Statistics NZ census and population profiles (illustrations reproduced above).

We recommend Boards are centred on these clusters' and adjusted in response to community feed-back.

Every Board must consist of at least four elected and not more than 12 members in total, with the number of appointed members to be less than half the total number of members (Local Electoral Act 2001). Members receive remuneration which is set by the Remuneration Authority.

LGC Representation Review guidelines focus on whether Community Boards 'are (or would be) appropriate to provide fair and effective representation for individuals and communities in its district' (s19J). <http://www.lgc.govt.nz/assets/Representation-Reviews/Representation-Review-Guidelines-2021.pdf>

- Will the proposal promote good local government of the parent district and the community area concerned?
- Will the district and the community have the resources necessary to enable them to carry out their respective responsibilities, duties and powers?
- Will the district and the community have areas that are appropriate for the efficient and effective performance of their role?
- Will the district and the community contain a sufficiently distinct community of interest or sufficiently distinct communities of interest?

6. Communities of Interest

LGC, LGNZ, and other sources provide a range of background information on 'communities of interest', including a new analysis with reference to a 1955 paper which classifies 94 definitions (Hillary) and the 'basic agreement' that

"Community consists of persons in social interaction within a geographic area and having one or more additional ties."

Then there is:

"Common identity, affinity, collective perspective, sharing common concerns, sense of common purpose, core of commonality, sense of belonging, a coherent social and economic whole, acting in the interests of community, and speaking with a united voice...each tending to cover only one aspect of the broad dimensions in which the concept of community of interest can be applied in local government."

And the summary applying to "a group of people in a residential locality" and having one or more of three dimensions: Perpetual (sense of belonging), Functional ((ability to meet requirements for services), and Political (representing interests and reconciling conflicts).

<http://www.lgc.govt.nz/assets/Uploads/The-Concept-of-Community-of-Interest-Discussion-Paper.pdf>

7. Their Role

The purpose of a community board is to:

- represent and act as an advocate for the interests of the community;
- consider and report on any matter referred to it by their council, and any issues of interest to the community board;
- make an annual submission to their council for expenditure within their community;
- maintain an overview of services provided by their council within the community; and
- communicate with community organisations and special interest groups in the community, and
- undertake any other responsibilities delegated by their council (s51 LGA2002).

The role of Community Board members is more fully described on the LGNZ website portal:

Advocacy

- To promote residents' issues and initiatives to the community board and the council.
- To be an advocate for local issues and initiatives on behalf of residents, to the city or district council, or to central government.
- To monitor the range and level of council services provided within the community board's jurisdiction, and to advocate changes as necessary.
- To be proactive and to anticipate strategies and policies that may have a future impact on the local community.
- To respond to resident and community issues and submissions, and to act as leaders in the community where problems may arise and where issues or initiatives need to be promoted.
- To engage in community development activities in conjunction with council officers.

Board members frequently assist with the initiation and facilitation of community development initiatives and may liaise with council officers who are responsible for taking action and reporting back.

Public Face and Consultation

- To represent the community to central government agencies and wider community forums.
- To liaise with, and to communicate with, community groups regarding local issues and initiatives, and the processes, services and decisions of the community board and the council.
- To clarify and promote the role of the community board in the ward and wider communities.

Governance Role Relationships and Facilitation

- To work in cooperation with the council. Community boards are part of the local authority and must work within the framework of the powers and functions set out in statute and delegated by the council.
- To act as an interface between the council and the community.

Board members should listen to the diversity of viewpoints and concerns in their community, represent and communicate these to the council, and work towards a common understanding.

- To attend meetings of the community board and any other bodies the member has been asked to serve on.

Decision Making

- To contribute to the development of community board policies, to set and monitor key performance indicators.
- To ensure the integrity of the community board and its decisions, and represent these to the community and particular groups in a way that promotes the board rather than the individual.
- To scrutinize council policies and services within the community board area and, to advise the council on ways of enhancing effectiveness.
- To ensure that decisions are made on the basis of sound information and rationale, and that they reflect the interests of the communities represented by the Board.
- To ensure that the structures and systems used by the board (i.e. agenda) support and encourage effective democratic decision-making. Information Gathering
- To actively seek good quality information and keep well informed of community priorities, broader issues and local initiatives.
- To attend specifically to information directed to board members, such as emails, submissions, deputations, and financial reports.

Accountability

- To sit on hearing panels and engage in decision-making processes with no bias, acting at all times with integrity and professionalism.
- To act in accordance with democratic accountability to all residents within the area.
- To act in accordance with the community board or council's code of conduct.
- To prepare for and attend all community board meetings

8. Why?

In contrast to the 'no appetite' theme, we base our call for Community Boards in Hamilton on the agreement that 'bottoms up' democracy is more effective and sustainable than 'top down'. As well, the Covid Era has shown that reliance on technological practices such as digital surveys and submission portals has caused further disillusionment as numbers seem not to matter in the face of pre-planned decision-making,

We note the differences between consultation, engagement, and participation.

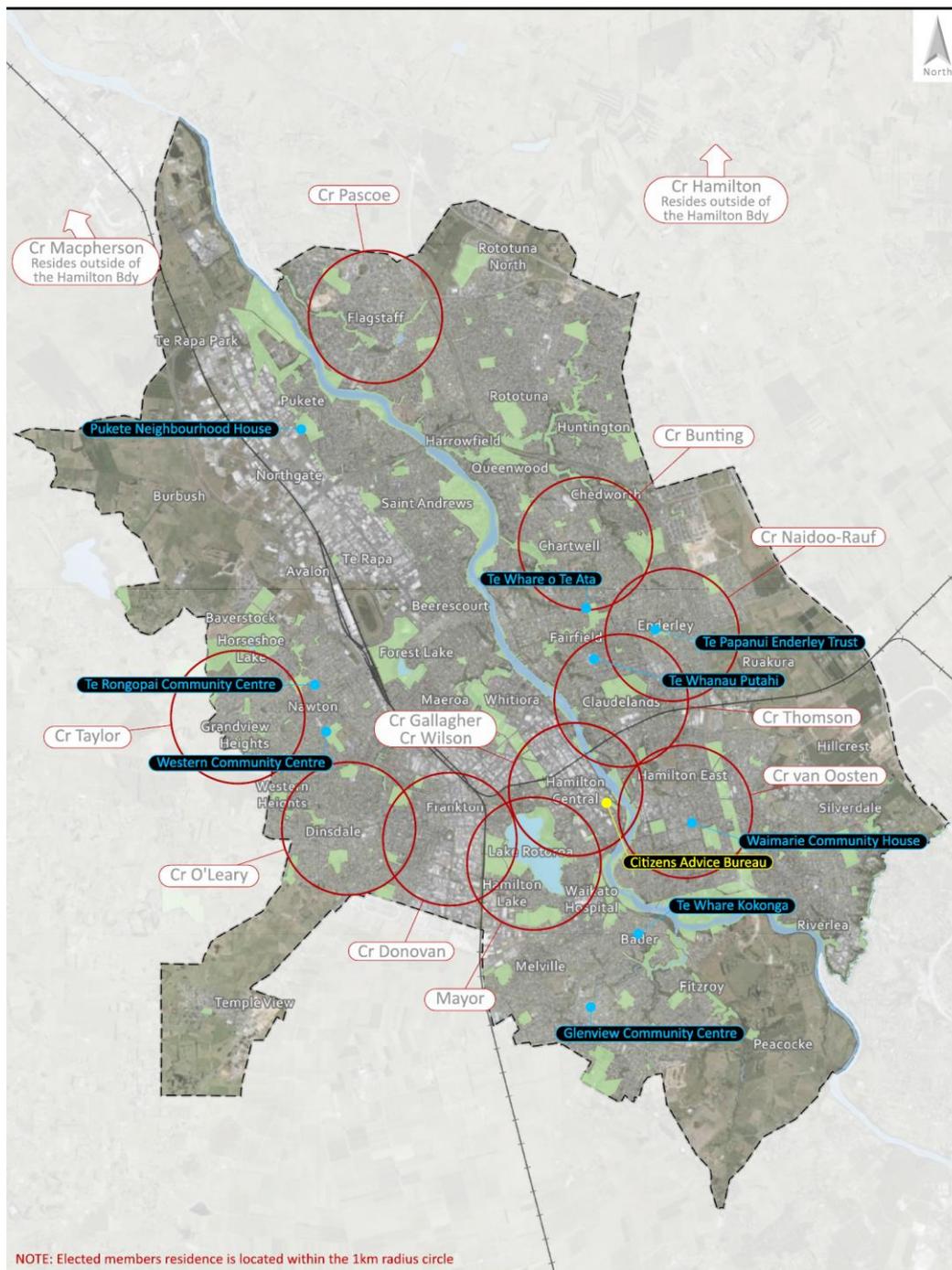
Background research undertaken by the Department of Internal Affairs in the lead up to the current Ministerial Review of Local Government for the Future, confirms the link between 'voter apathy' and the public impression of "little ability to affect outcomes'.

Consultation practices based on "pre-established council policies and positions" have created barriers "to more fluid, consistent participatory practices", and (in summary) participation is more effective when participants are perceived as 'ordinary citizens', reflective of the community rather than lobby groups.

Participatory models are "more effective when the council adopts a broader view of governance, and activity supports mechanisms which engage its diverse populations meaningfully in its decision making."

We understand that residency in the electorate is not a requirement for city council candidacy (although voter eligibility is), and Hamilton City Council has already reminded itself of the move to multi-wards in the 1980s in response to the 'River Road syndrome' (when almost all city councillors had such home addresses).

The 2021 situation (refer HCC map below) shows the city's Community Houses plus our elected councillors home sites. This illustrates well, we believe, the value and impact for the entire city in promoting wellbeing if the flax-roots clusters we recommend are recognised legally as Community Boards - giving official voice to the people, working with councillors.



NOTE: Elected members residence is located within the 1km radius circle

Hamilton Community House, Citizen Advice Bureau and Elected Member Residence Locations

18-00103

9. Conclusion.

We recommend Community Boards centred on the areas named below be established in Hamilton for the 2022 local government elections, with final boundaries to be adjusted after public consultation:

Stage One 2022:

- East Area 4 (Porritt, Fairfield, Enderley North & South, and Fairview Downs)
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Thank you for your consideration.

We would wish to appear in person at the proposed Hearings 13/14 October.

Signed

Holly Snape

CEO Community Waikato (on behalf of the collective submitters named, listed below)