

## The Future of Economic Development in Wairarapa - A Proposal

**February 2025**

Wairarapa's current economic development model is failing to deliver. The whole region suffers as a result.

For a long time, multiple organisations have been set up and operate in silos, duplicate efforts and compete for the same limited resources. This duplication confuses local businesses and the communities we serve, eroding trust among stakeholders, and stifling progress. We lose opportunities as potential investors (including central government) struggle to navigate the region's structure, and bypass Wairarapa altogether. We are not spending ratepayer or taxpayer funds efficiently or investing them for long term growth and increased opportunity.

SO:

Q. How do we work better together - rather than (at times) against each other?

Q. How do we get more out of what we are already investing in; and how do we amplify that investment to move forward as a region - faster?

Q. How do we create and communicate a sense of sovereignty for the region's people that, in turn, attracts inward investment of skills, capital and business?

### **Proposed Solution**

To answer these questions, the Boards of Destination Wairarapa and Business Wairarapa are aligned to support a change in how economic development is delivered in the Wairarapa.

In collaboration with the three District Councils, we would like to investigate the option of forming a Wairarapa Economic Development Agency.

This is not a new idea. In 2020 the Mayors at the time commissioned Martin Jenkins consultancy to explore options. Now, we have the right people in the right place - with the passion and commitment to make it happen for the region.

In addition, we have the Wairarapa Economic Development Strategy (which references within it the Wairarapa Destination Management Plan) as an initial unifying document that will help guide the work undertaken.

There are considerable financial and people resources already allocated in this area, but utilisation is fragmented, and outcomes are patchy. In addition, there are gaps that need to be addressed to ensure measurable, meaningful outcomes are delivered for the region long term.

It is not optimal to simply combine the resources of Destination Wairarapa, Business Wairarapa, and those allocated to WellingtonNZ to progress the priority areas of the WEDS to address the situation. There are resources allocated elsewhere that could be used as part of this unified approach.

By working in collaboration with the council executives we think we can create a model suitable for the needs of Wairarapa that is action oriented and not only answers the questions asked above, but more.

To do this, we request the three Wairarapa Councils to first support this work being undertaken, and secondly to agree in principle to execute what is proposed within the next financial year.

Chair, Destination Wairarapa

Roger Wigglesworth

Chair, Business Wairarapa

Marie Claire Andrews