Kaikōura 2075

A Community-Driven

Economic Development Strategy



" Regenerative, resilient, year-round future"

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This strategy sets out a long-term vision for Kaikōura to 2075, while focusing its practical implementation on a sequenced five-year action plan covering the period 2026–2031. The strategy is inherently visionary, while the attached Action Plan identifies priority actions, early investment signals, and delivery partners for the initial phase of implementation, with subsequent phases refreshed through Council planning and Long-Term Plan processes.

Kaikōura's next 50 years present both significant challenges and extraordinary opportunities. Shaped by its mountains-to-sea environment, rich marine ecosystems, strong cultural identity, and globally recognised tourism offering, the district is well positioned to lead in regenerative economic development while Kaikōura has the potential to become the world's best small town.

The Kaikōura Economic Development Strategy (Vision to 2075, with the attached Action Plan 2026–2031) brings together Te Rūnanga o Kaikōura Environmental Management Plan, the Destination Kaikōura's Destination Management Plan, the Kaikōura Spatial Plan, the Walking and Riding Strategy, the Long-Term Plan, and relevant national and regional frameworks into a single, long-term roadmap. It aligns with the Plan for Canterbury (2023–2025), developed through the Mayoral Forum, which focuses on three regional priorities: • sustainable environmental management (land, air, water, and ecosystems) • shared prosperity (economic strength, emerging sectors, workforce retention and development, transport network improvements, and a strategic approach to housing) • climate change mitigation and adaptation (emissions reduction, climate planning, infrastructure resilience, and community preparedness).

This Economic Development Strategy also supports the National Infrastructure Plan by aligning growth with infrastructure capacity, prioritising resilience, housing, health, transport and renewable energy investment, and promoting integrated spatial planning. Both documents recognise that long-term prosperity depends on well-maintained infrastructure, climate resilience, coordinated investment decisions, and building communities that are productive, connected and able to thrive across generations.

Economic development in Kaikōura is ultimately about enabling human flourishing. It is the process of improving the prosperity, productivity, resilience, and wellbeing of a community. In Kaikōura, this means creating quality jobs, supporting local businesses, enabling housing and infrastructure, improving community wellbeing, and protecting the environmental and cultural assets that underpin our long-term success. This strategy recognises that prosperity is not

measured solely by economic indicators, but by the extent to which people, whānau, and communities can live meaningful, connected, and healthy lives. By grounding our decisions in regenerative principles and long-term wellbeing, we commit to creating an environment where current and future generations can thrive.

In this strategy, regenerative means creating economic, social, cultural, and environmental outcomes that leave Kaikōura stronger over time. Rather than simply sustaining what exists today, we seek to improve the health of our ecosystems, communities, and economy for future generations.

Access to local healthcare and care services is recognised as critical enabling infrastructure for Kaikōura's long-term economic resilience. The availability of primary healthcare, aged care, and support services underpins workforce attraction and retention, enables residents to age in place, supports population stability, and reduces pressure on families and employers. While service delivery and funding sit primarily with Te Whatu Ora and providers, this strategy recognises healthcare as a foundational condition that must be enabled through aligned planning, housing, transport, and workforce pathways.

It builds directly on the community-centred foundations of *Reimagine Kaikōura*, recognising the interdependence between the economy, the environment and social wellbeing, and a shared commitment to diversification, higher-value and year-round economic activity, with Kaikōura's distinctive natural and cultural assets as the basis for long-term prosperity. This foundation is extended through a clear, long-term framework that moves beyond post-earthquake recovery toward sustained, regenerative development, broadening the focus from tourism to a more diverse "mountains-to-sea" economy, strengthening links to workforce, housing, infrastructure and energy resilience, and setting clearer priorities, sequencing and measures of success to guide economic decision-making.

This strategy aligns Kaikōura's local priorities with regional directions while remaining firmly grounded in community voice and local needs. It is anchored in partnership with mana whenua and depends on strong alignment across iwi, Council, community, government, business and international partners, and has been shaped through extensive local engagement, including approximately 100 face-to-face conversations with community stakeholders supported by survey feedback. Together, these inputs have been distilled into a coherent, future-focused vision for the district.

While tourism remains a critical economic strength, analysis undertaken for this strategy indicates that Kaikōura's long-term prosperity is increasingly constrained by housing availability, workforce attraction and retention, demographic aging,

infrastructure resilience, and limited economic diversity. These challenges are interconnected. Housing constraints make it harder to attract workers, workforce shortages constrain business growth and service provision, and a narrow economic base increases vulnerability to external shocks. The four strategic pillars in this strategy are therefore designed to address these underlying constraints by supporting a more diverse year-round economy, improving housing and community wellbeing, strengthening resilience, and enhancing the quality and liveability of place.

Community aspirations are clear. Kaikōura seeks to protect and enhance its environment as a core responsibility and source of pride, while strengthening a connected community where volunteering, marae, churches, schools and clubs are highly valued and accessible. Tourism is envisioned as quality-focused rather than volume-driven, leveraging natural assets while avoiding over-development and encouraging longer stays and higher-value visitation. The community also expressed a desire for more diversified employment options, and affordable and available housing. In essence, the community wants to become a district that is open year-round and has a range of employment options outside of tourism that allows youth to stay, families to grow, and communities to flourish. This must all be done while respecting and protecting nature.

The community also emphasised the importance of visible pathways for young people to remain in Kaikōura. Youth retention depends not only on jobs and housing, but on access to education pathways, creative and social "third spaces", safe and connected public places, and opportunities to build confidence, leadership, and belonging. These social and place-based investments are recognised as economic enablers, supporting long-term workforce development, innovation, and resilience.

Looking ahead, the district aims to invest in its people through stronger education pathways, local career opportunities, and initiatives that retain young people and build a skilled, future-ready workforce. Priorities also include secure and affordable housing for residents and workers, and a more enabling, practical regulatory culture that balances growth with affordability. This approach strengthens community cohesion while supporting sustainable growth, ensuring that local opportunities in employment and housing are in place to attract and retain people.

The community also highlighted the importance of enabling residents to age well in place. With more than a quarter of the population aged over 65, Kaikōura's economic development pathway must support accessible housing, local healthcare and care-sector employment, age-friendly public spaces, transport options, and community connection. Aging well is therefore both a social and economic

priority, contributing to workforce stability, local employment, reduced health costs, and stronger intergenerational communities.

Economic diversification is central to Kaikōura's long-term success. This strategy supports the development of year-round employment beyond seasonal hospitality, particularly in food processing, manufacturing, technology, agritech, research, conferences, outdoor recreation, and retreats. This will be supported by improvements in local amenities, health services, recreation facilities, and enhanced waterfront infrastructure.

A skilled and capable workforce is fundamental to all four strategic priorities. Housing, education, healthcare, business development, and economic diversification all depend on attracting, retaining and developing people. Workforce development is therefore treated as a cross-cutting theme across the entire strategy rather than a standalone programme area.

Together, these priorities reflect a shared commitment to the flourishing of our community and environment across generations: addressing housing and workforce pressures, reducing the impacts of seasonality, having energy and food sources that can provide for the district in the face of natural disasters or national constraints, strengthening decision-making, and ensuring the cost of living and doing business remains fair and sustainable. In support of these priorities, KDC will work as a trusted, enabling partner for the community and investors through streamlined processes, efficient service delivery, and a strong focus on customer experience.

At the end of this document, we present three scenarios outlining how Kaikōura could evolve following the implementation of this strategy. These include a managed growth (Scenario A), status-quo (Scenario B), and transformational growth (Scenario C), with the managed growth pathway outlined in the greatest detail. Together, these scenarios provide a structured way to understand the potential scale and pace of change, the implications for infrastructure, housing, employment, and the environment, and the trade-offs involved in different development pathways, ensuring decision-makers and the community are equipped to make informed, future-focused choices.

The strategy identifies four potential anchor projects that may support Kaikōura's long-term economic transition: the Kaikōura Research and Education Centre (KREC), Wakatu Quay, the South Bay Harbour Development, and the Airport. These are not delivery commitments. Whether, when, and how any anchor project progresses will depend on feasibility, funding availability, environmental considerations, partner commitment, and elected-member decisions over time.

What This Strategy Does Not Do

This strategy does not commit Council to delivering projects directly, does not replace statutory planning processes, and does not guarantee funding. Initiatives are contingent on feasibility, partner investment, regulatory approval, and community support. Council's role is to enable, coordinate, and de-risk development where it aligns with agreed outcomes.

For more information on this document's scope, refer to the supporting *Implementation and Implications Statement*.

BACKGROUND

Kaikōura has increasingly evolved into a visitor-focused economy, with tourism widely perceived as the primary driver of economic activity and future growth. The population growth and unoccupied dwelling statistics in Table 1 below paint a clear picture of housing development catering primarily to visitors, alongside slow local population growth. While COVID-19 may have contributed to weaker population growth between 2018 and 2023 due to the associated economic downturn, the population declined by 0.2% year-on-year in 2025, despite a broader recovery from the impacts of COVID-19 lockdowns and travel restrictions.

Visitor accommodation now accounts for roughly one-third of the housing stock, shaping both the local property market and the availability of long-term rental and ownership options for residents. While tourism has delivered significant benefits, it has also contributed to challenges around housing access, affordability, workforce stability, and seasonal economic fluctuations.

At the same time, Kaikōura's demographic profile is shifting. The district has an aging population yet does not currently have the range or volume of appropriate housing options, such as accessible, smaller, or supported living arrangements needed to enable older residents to age in place with dignity, security, and connection to community. Linked to this constraint, is that the population and supporting eco-system of services does not lend itself to attracting and retaining the required skill sets to employ elderly care staff.

This strategy recognises these realities and aims to chart a path toward a more balanced, regenerative future; one that maintains the benefits of tourism while broadening the economic base, improving liveability, and supporting a thriving permanent community.

For the purposes of this strategy, tourism refers to the activities and expenditure of domestic and international visitors travelling outside their usual environment, whether for holidays, recreation, business, events, education, or visiting friends and relatives. It includes both day visitors and those staying overnight.

Kaikōura's gentle climate, dramatic natural landscapes, rich marine environment, and unique biodiversity provide a foundation for a more diverse and resilient economy that extends beyond traditional tourism. The district is a highly desirable place to live, offering lifestyle advantages that many people seek. However, attracting and retaining permanent residents will require stronger year-round employment opportunities, modern infrastructure that is convenient and accessible to all, and housing options that support different stages of life.

These opportunities and challenges sit within the context of a small but steadily growing local economy. Recent economic data shows a district that has achieved moderate GDP and employment growth, supported by a diverse base of small businesses and a significant tourism workforce. The following snapshot summarises Kaikōura's current economic profile and provides the foundation for understanding where targeted intervention and strategic focus can have the greatest impact.

Table 1: Kaikōura District – Economic Development Indicators

Indicator	Latest Value (Kaikōura)	Year / Status	Source
GDP (total)	$239 million	2024	Infometrics REP
GDP growth	+2.1%	Year to March 2024	Infometrics REP
GDP per capita	$43,277	Latest available	MBIE Webrear
Employment – filled jobs	~ 2,050 jobs	2024	Infometrics REP
Employment growth	+1.8%	Year to March 2024	Infometrics REP
Productivity per filled job	$116,500	Year to March 2024	Infometrics REP
Number of businesses	~ 789 business units	2024	Stats NZ Business Demography
Highly skilled jobs (proportion)	~ 35–40% (NZ avg 38.5%: District level data is not available, so this is a NZ average proxy)	2024 (national proxy)	Infometrics / Stats NZ
Average household income	$83,500 (latest published: no later data is available)	2019	MBIE Webrear
Tourism jobs	~ 330 jobs (~16% of all employment directly; ~ 32.5% indirectly)	2024	Infometrics REP
Direct Tourism GDP	~ 35-40%	2024	Infometrics REP
Non- Direct Tourism GDP	~ 65-60%	2024	Infometrics REP
Population (Census)	4,215	2023	Stats NZ

Population growth	+7.7% since 2018 Census; roughly 21% population growth since 2000	2023	Stats NZ
Population growth (last 12 months)	-0.2%	2025	MBIE Webrear
Over 65 % of the population	26.8% National average (16.6%)	2023	Stats NZ
Dwelling Growth	+10% since 2018 Census	2023	Stats NZ
Dwelling Growth (last 12 months)	+0.3%	2024	Infometrics REP
Number of Dwellings	2319	2023	Kainga Ora Housing overview
Unoccupied dwellings	744 (32.1%) National average (10.5%)	2023	Kainga Ora Housing overview
Māori employment	Not available at district level	—	MBIE / Stats NZ
Pacific peoples employment	Not available at district level	—	MBIE / Stats NZ
Unemployment rate	~ 4.6% (Canterbury proxy as no district data is available)	June 2024	Stats NZ Labour Market
Crime rate	No official per-100k figure; low reported crime	2024	NZ Police Data

Notes:
Direct tourism roles are jobs in businesses whose primary purpose is to serve visitors and provide tourism experiences, and where employment levels closely track visitor demand. In Kaikōura, these roles include staff employed by accommodation providers (such as hotels, motels, holiday parks, and backpackers), tour and activity operators (including marine wildlife tours, eco-tour guides, and adventure operators), and visitor-focused food and beverage services, as well as tourism-specific transport such as charters and shuttles.

Indirect tourism jobs exist in non-tourism industries but are supported by tourism demand through supply chains or visitor presence. These jobs do not primarily serve visitors but rely on tourism-driven businesses or spending. Job share (16%) is much lower than GDP share (35–40%) which implies high tourism value-add.

Kaikōura's GDP per capita is estimated by MBIE using Infometrics regional modelling from Stats NZ and other national data sources and does not necessarily equal total GDP divided by Census population due to differences in data sources, population estimates, and reference years.



VISION & GUIDING PRINCIPLES

REGENERATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Building a thriving Kaikōura for generations

Regenerative development seeks to leave places better than we found them by restoring and enhancing environmental, social, cultural, and economic wellbeing over time.

In Kaikōura, our prosperity is rooted in the health of our natural systems and the strength of our community.



THE PRINCIPLES OF REGENERATIVE DEVELOPMENT

POSITIVE IMPACT
Creating net benefits for nature and people.

SYSTEMS THINKING
Recognising that environmental, social, cultural, and economic outcomes are interconnected.

PLACE-BASED & COMMUNITY-LED
Building on local ecology, culture, history, and indigenous knowledge.

LONG-TERM RESILIENCE
Strengthening the capacity of communities and ecosystems to adapt to future challenges and opportunities.

KAIKŌURA'S NATURAL ASSETS – THE FOUNDATION OF OUR PROSPERITY



Marine environment & Kaikōura Canyon
Supporting tourism, fisheries and biodiversity.



Biodiversity & seabird populations
Unique species and habitats to protect and enhance.



Conservation estate & outdoor recreation
Walking, cycling and wild places that support wellbeing and visitation.



International Dark Sky Sanctuary
A globally significant attraction for visitors and supporting scientific research.



Healthy ecosystems, strong economy
Environmental health drives economic opportunity and community wellbeing.

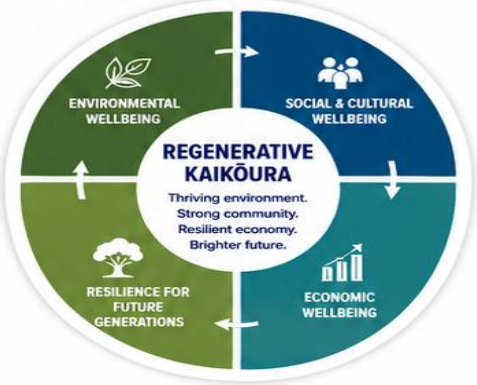
These are not constraints on development – they are our greatest assets.
By protecting and enhancing them, we create lasting value for current and future generations.

CONSERVATION AS AN INVESTMENT

Biodiversity restoration, predator control, habitat enhancement and ecosystem monitoring improve environmental health and deliver benefits across our community.

- EMPLOYMENT & SKILLS
- LOCAL KNOWLEDGE & CAPACITY
- RESEARCH & INNOVATION
- STRONGER REPUTATION
- BETTER OUTCOMES FOR NATURE & PEOPLE

Conservation creates jobs, builds skills, supports science and strengthens Kaikōura's reputation as a world-leading nature-based destination.



A CENTRE FOR RESEARCH, EDUCATION & INNOVATION

The convergence of the Seaward Kaikōura Ranges, coastline and Kaikōura Canyon creates an exceptional natural laboratory.

PLACE-BASED RESEARCH
Deepening our understanding of natural systems.

EVIDENCE-BASED MANAGEMENT
Informing better decisions for our resources.

EDUCATION & TRAINING
Building local skills and inspiring future leaders.

INVESTMENT & SKILLED JOBS
Attracting opportunities that strengthen our economy.

ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY
The Canyon underpins tourism and commercial & recreational fisheries.

CLEAN ENERGY. LOCAL ADVANTAGE.

High sunshine hours and a favourable climate create opportunities for rooftop and community-scale solar.

Benefits include:

- Energy resilience
- Emissions reduction
- Local jobs & investment
- Lower energy costs



MEASURING WHAT MATTERS

Success is measured by more than growth in visitor numbers or population.

We focus on improving:

- ✓ Ecosystem health
- ✓ Community wellbeing
- ✓ Productivity
- ✓ Value per resident and visitor

For a more diverse, resilient economy that delivers greater benefits with less pressure on our environment.



LOCAL FOOD. LOCAL PROSPERITY.

Our growers, food producers and community food initiatives:

- Support local employment
- Strengthen food resilience
- Reduce transport impacts
- Keep value in our community
- Reconnect people with the land

Good for our community.
Good for our environment.
Good for Kaikōura.



THRIVING COMMUNITIES

People are at the heart of regenerative development.

Access to housing, healthcare, education, energy, food, recreation and community facilities all contribute to a healthy, resilient district.

Strong communities create the foundation for long-term prosperity.



CONNECTED SYSTEMS. BETTER FUTURES.

By viewing environmental, social, cultural and economic outcomes as parts of a connected system, Kaikōura can build an economy that supports both human flourishing and ecological wellbeing.

A great place to live, work, visit and invest in – for generations to come.



REGENERATIVE KAIKŌURA – LEAVING A LEGACY OF THRIVING NATURE AND COMMUNITIES

Ngāi Tahu values · Kaitiakitanga (Guardianship) · Whanaungatanga (Connection) · Mauri (Life force) · Manaakitanga (Care & respect)

What follows is our strategic vision for the next 50 years, looking beyond 2075. It is grounded in the philosophy of regenerative development. While unexpected events will occur and new challenges will require adaptive, real-time responses, this strategy provides a stable foundation for decision-making. It ensures we continue moving forward with purpose, guided by a clear and community-driven vision.

At its heart, this strategy is designed to create the conditions for human flourishing in Kaikōura, ensuring that every person, whānau, and community has the opportunity to live well, participate fully, and thrive across generations.

Regenerative Development

Regenerative development is an approach that seeks to leave places better than they were found by actively restoring and enhancing environmental, social, cultural, and economic wellbeing over time. Rather than simply sustaining current conditions, it aims to improve the health and resilience of ecosystems and communities so that future generations are better positioned to thrive. The key principles of regenerative development are:

- *Positive impact*: creating net benefits for nature and people.
- *Systems thinking*: recognising that environmental, social, cultural, and economic outcomes are interconnected.
- *Place-based and community-led*: building on local ecology, culture, history, and indigenous knowledge.
- *Long-term resilience*: strengthening the capacity of communities and ecosystems to adapt to future challenges and opportunities.

In Kaikōura, regenerative development means recognising that our economy depends on the health of the natural systems that support it. The district's marine environment, biodiversity, seabird populations, conservation estate, International Dark Sky Sanctuary status, and extensive walking and cycling opportunities are not constraints on development; they are the assets that underpin our prosperity and quality of life. By protecting and enhancing these assets, Kaikōura can create lasting environmental, social, cultural, and economic value.

This approach also recognises conservation as an investment in the district's future. Activities such as biodiversity restoration, predator control, habitat enhancement, and ecosystem monitoring not only improve environmental health but also generate employment, build local skills and knowledge, support scientific research, and strengthen Kaikōura's reputation as a world-leading nature-based destination. Conservation therefore delivers benefits across multiple dimensions of community wellbeing.

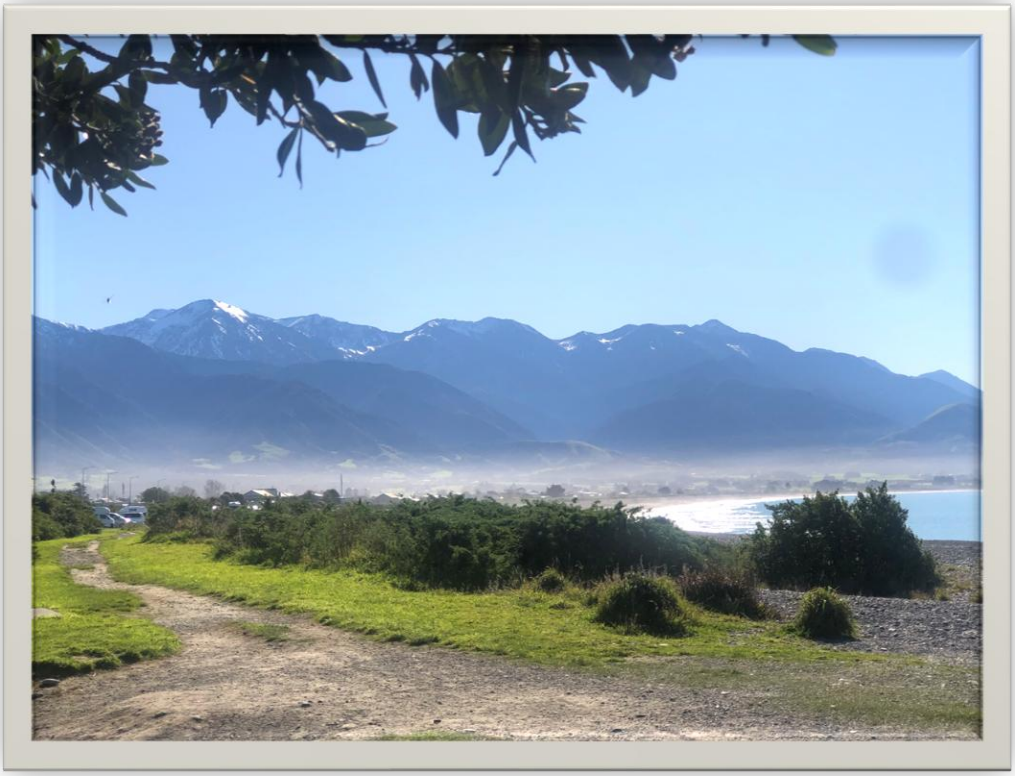
Kaikōura is also uniquely positioned as a centre for research, education, and innovation. The convergence of the Seaward Kaikōura Ranges, coastline, and Kaikōura Canyon creates an exceptional concentration of geological, marine, and terrestrial environments within a relatively small area. This provides opportunities for place-based research that contributes to a deeper understanding of natural systems, supports evidence-based resource management, attracts investment and skilled employment, and strengthens the resilience of both ecosystems and communities. The Kaikōura Canyon itself underpins much of the district's tourism offering and commercial and recreational fisheries, demonstrating the close relationship between environmental health and economic opportunity.

In addition to its globally significant natural environment, Kaikōura's high sunshine hours and favourable climate create opportunities for distributed renewable energy generation, particularly rooftop and community-scale solar. This natural advantage supports energy resilience, emissions reduction, and local economic development while aligning with the district's regenerative aspirations.

Under a regenerative model, economic success is measured not only by growth in visitor numbers or population, but by improvements in ecosystem health, community wellbeing, productivity, and the value generated per resident and visitor. The objective is to create a more diverse and resilient economy that delivers greater benefits while reducing pressure on the natural environment.

The district's local network of growers, food producers, and community food initiatives is an important part of Kaikōura's regenerative economy. These enterprises support local employment, strengthen food resilience, reduce transport-related environmental impacts, and keep economic value circulating within the community. By encouraging local production and consumption, they help reconnect people with the land and reinforce the relationship between environmental stewardship, community wellbeing, and economic prosperity.

Regenerative development extends beyond conservation and environmental restoration. It recognises that thriving communities are essential to long-term prosperity. Access to housing, healthcare, education, energy, food, recreation, and community facilities all contribute to a healthy and resilient district. By viewing these outcomes as parts of a connected system, rather than separate issues, Kaikōura can build an economy that supports both human flourishing and ecological wellbeing, ensuring the district remains a great place to live, work, visit, and invest in for generations to come.



Māori Principles

Ki Uta Ki Tai (from the mountains to the sea) recognises that Kaikōura's environment functions as one interconnected system, where the health of the whenua, awa, coast, moana, and communities are inseparable. This strategy adopts a Ki Uta Ki Tai approach to economic development, ensuring that economic decisions are considered in terms of their impacts across the entire mountain-to-sea environment. Under this framework, environmental health is not viewed as a constraint on development, but as the productive asset that underpins long-term prosperity, resilience, and wellbeing. By protecting and enhancing the natural systems that sustain Kaikōura, we create the conditions for enduring economic opportunity, thriving communities, and intergenerational prosperity.

Moreover, the following principles provide the cultural and values-based foundation that guides how Kaikōura pursues regenerative development, economic prosperity, and community wellbeing.

- **Kaitiakitanga**: guardianship of natural systems
- **Manaakitanga**: community wellbeing and hospitality
- **Whanaungatanga**: social connection

- **Kotahitanga**: unified leadership

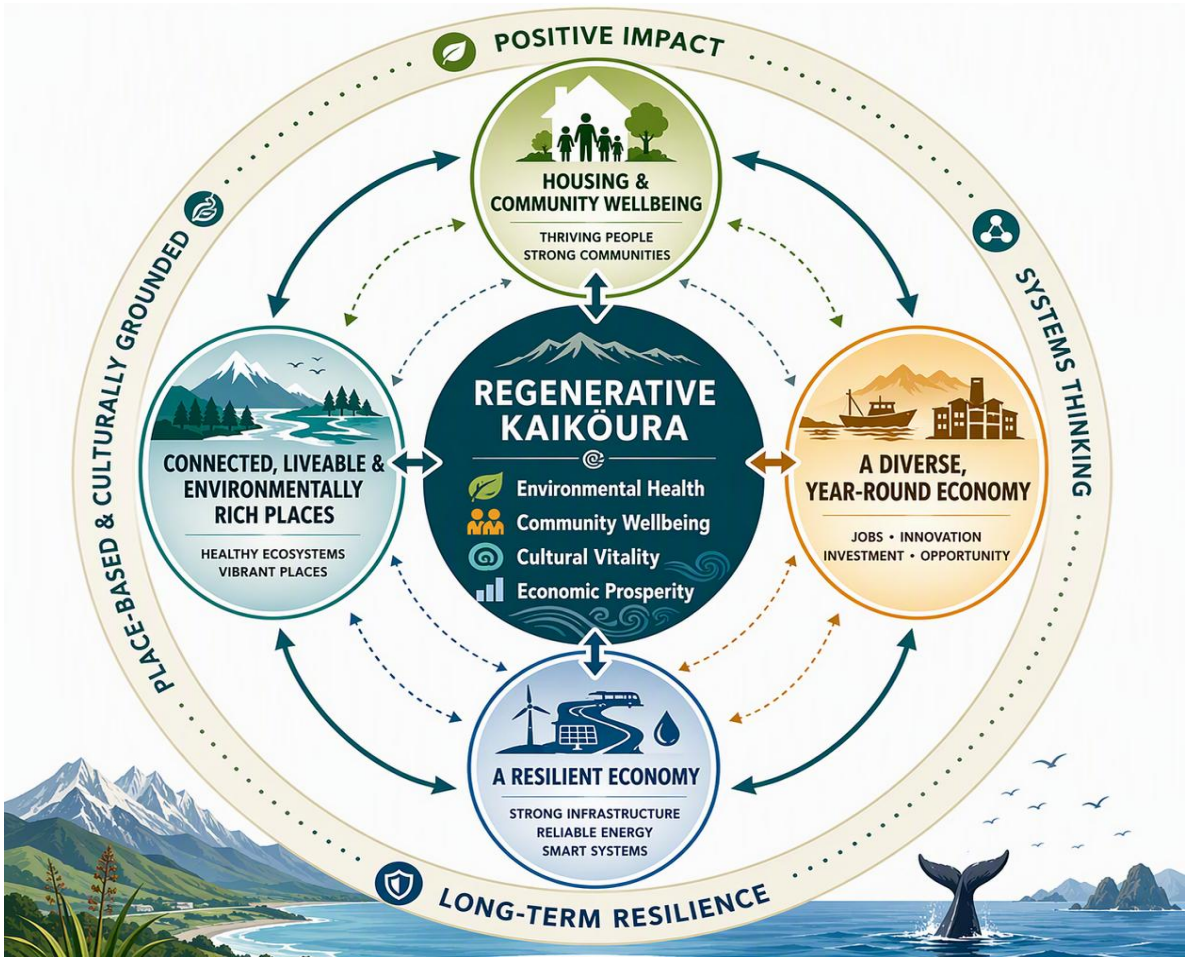
Kaikōura's brand narrative

This narrative is intended to inform external communications, investment attraction, and visitor positioning. It does not replace the strategic priorities and should not be treated as a delivery framework.

The brand narrative will centre on the following themes:

- **Regeneration** — place-based, grounded in our natural environment, with a focus on positive outcomes for people and nature.
- **Adventure** — marine wildlife, mountains, trails, surf, sky.
- **Māori Culture** — whakapapa, pūrākau, tikanga.
- **Research & Innovation** — marine science, conservation, climate adaptation.
- **Connected Communities** — active transport, digital capability, village-scale living.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES



Pillar 1: Housing and Community Wellbeing

Ensuring Kaikōura has affordable, resilient, diverse, and accessible homes (including papakāinga and age-appropriate housing), so that residents can live well, age in place, and remain connected to their community while maximising 'enjoyment' and utility from the environment and district services. This pillar aligns with our regenerative definition's focus on net-positive outcomes for our people, and systems thinking as it acknowledges that for our economy to thrive, we need an affordable and diverse housing market. Education, training and lifelong learning are also critical economic enablers. Strong education pathways support workforce development, help young people remain in the district, improve productivity, and increase the community's capacity to adapt to future economic opportunities. If we do not have suitable housing for workers across the tourism, healthcare, education, remote, and research sectors, we cannot attract and retain the staff needed to grow the economy.

In practice, achieving housing and community wellbeing will require coordinated action and outcomes across housing supply, planning, infrastructure, healthcare, and community development, including the following potential actions and outcomes:

- Enabling access to appropriate health and care services alongside housing, recognising that aging well is inseparable from healthcare availability, workforce sustainability, and economic participation.
- Compact, connected, climate-adaptive settlements with town-centre intensification.
- Papakāinga and Māori-led housing pathways.
- Intergenerational models such as terraces, co-housing, and senior living (granny flats and minor units).
- Worker accommodation solutions aligned to industry cycles, supported by a clear consenting pathway and more enabling rules.
- Infrastructure sequencing aligned to planned growth areas.

Pillar 2: A Diverse, Year-Round Economy

Supporting a resilient local economy that reduces reliance on seasonal tourism, grows year-round employment, strengthens the Māori economy, and encourages environmentally responsible industries. This includes enabling remote, digital, and knowledge-based work that allows people to live locally while working nationally or globally. Kaikōura's lifestyle, environmental quality, and connectivity create opportunities for distributed professional services, research collaboration, creative industries, and small-scale innovation. Supporting this pathway relies on digital capability, networks, and light-touch enabling infrastructure rather than large-scale capital investment.

Technology is recognised as an enabler across Kaikōura's economy, including tourism, primary industries, conservation, education, energy, health, logistics, and research. The strategy supports the adoption of digital tools, data capability, applied innovation, and technology-enabled business models that improve productivity, resilience, environmental outcomes, and access to higher-value employment. It supports the adoption of emerging technologies that improve productivity, service delivery and economic outcomes, subject to appropriate governance and security controls.

Economic diversification in Kaikōura includes supporting existing and emerging sectors that strengthen year-round resilience, local supply chains, and the district's productive economy, including farming, fisheries, food production, and value-added processing. While production and investment decisions remain primarily the responsibility of businesses and landowners, Council will seek opportunities to support collaboration, innovation, skills development, and value-added economic activity where these are environmentally sustainable, culturally appropriate,

commercially viable, and aligned with community aspirations and environmental protection. Council's role is to enable these opportunities through planning alignment, education, and partnership. The strategy does not seek to deliver food security outcomes directly; rather, it supports the conditions for a diverse, resilient, and locally connected economy.

In practice, achieving a more diverse and resilient year-round economy will require coordinated action across business development, workforce capability, research and innovation, Māori enterprise, investment attraction, and technology adoption. Potential actions and outcomes include:

- Support for value-added primary production opportunities identified through market demand, investor interest and community support.
- Digital skills training and business capability uplift to support higher value, year-round employment.
- Seek to leverage external initiatives, such as the Mayoral Taskforce for Jobs, where they align with local workforce and youth employment objectives.
- Kaikōura Research and Education Centre (KREC): a locally anchored research, education, and applied innovation institution focused on marine, terrestrial, climate, and natural systems science, integrated with training, technology partnerships, entrepreneurship, and knowledge transfer.
- Development of flexible coworking, innovation, and collaboration spaces that support remote workers, entrepreneurs, researchers, creative industries, and technology-enabled businesses, including opportunities for shared facilities linked to the Kaikōura Research and Education Centre ecosystem.
- Regenerative tourism and eco-adventure (astro-tourism, wellness, trails, education tourism).
- Hunting and fishing (branding as a premium destination for ethical hunting and fishing).
- Renewable energy and green-technology industries. (In the context of Kaikōura, green-technology refers to small-scale, high-value, low-impact technologies and services focused on renewable energy, energy resilience, marine and climate systems, and emissions reduction. This includes design, testing, data, software, research, consultancy, and niche product development, rather than large-scale manufacturing or heavy industry.)
- Capture of secondary industry service provision e.g. aerospace design or product manufacture
- Sport, events, and conference destination development — leveraging Wakatu Quay and the South Bay / Pōhōwera coastal recreation precinct to position Kaikōura as a national and niche international destination for outdoor recreation festivals, conferences, weddings and retreats.
- Māori-led enterprises and cultural experience tourism.
- Sustainable fisheries and marine products.

- A vibrant farmers' market to support the local food network.
- Facilitation of an annual productive economy meeting via Enterprise Kaikōura bringing together primary producers, fisheries, food businesses, hospitality operators, Māori enterprises, educators, and community groups.

Pillar 3: A Resilient Economy

Transitioning Kaikōura to a renewable-powered district through community microgrids, sustainable infrastructure, and local food production systems that are integrated with land use patterns, protect natural ecosystems, and strengthen climate resilience.

A resilient economy is one that is prepared for the future: capable of adapting and thriving in the face of environmental change, economic disruption, and global uncertainty. This pillar reflects the regenerative principle of building long-term resilience, supporting our community to respond to climate change, evolving energy demands, and emerging challenges. Economic resilience is also strengthened through a diversity of industries, adaptable skills, strong local leadership, and business continuity capability. These factors help reduce vulnerability to economic shocks and support faster recovery following disruptions

Resilient infrastructure underpins this vision by enabling reliable, enduring, and adaptive systems that continue to deliver positive outcomes for the community over time. In doing so, it embodies another key aspect of a regenerative economy: creating the conditions for sustained environmental, social, and economic wellbeing

In practice, achieving a resilient economy will require coordination across energy, infrastructure, transport, food systems, and climate adaptation, with the potential actions and outcomes including:

- Generating energy locally: community-scale solar or other 'green' energy.
- Managing, storing, and optimising that energy for reliability and resilience: microgrids, backup systems, and demand-side optimisation.
- Reducing emissions from existing buildings and local industries: solar on public buildings; heat-pump and insulation incentives; decarbonisation for marine and fisheries sectors.
- Planning settings that enable and encourage renewable energy investment and uptake.
- Engaging with Te Rūnanga o Kaikōura at the concept stage of significant or strategic energy projects, where appropriate.

- South Bay Harbour Development: An integrated marine precinct combining marina infrastructure, fisheries activity, recreation, and emergency response functions.
- Expansion of EV charging network, integrated visitor transport options, and heavy-vehicle diversion planning.
- A thriving local food network that provides protection in the case of supply chain disruptions.

Pillar 4: Connected, Liveable, and Environmentally Rich Places

Create a safe, walkable, bikeable, and well-connected settlement pattern that improves daily life, while protecting biodiversity, restoring ecosystems, and enhancing the cultural visibility and identity of the district. This pillar brings together our regenerative focus of improving the health of our community through the advancement of active transport, restoration of our natural environment, and systems thinking in acknowledging that by creating an environment that is suitable and pleasant for young and old, we create the opportunity for a greater and more diverse population base.

In practice, achieving connected, liveable, and environmentally rich places will require coordinated action across transport, urban design, biodiversity, recreation, community development, and environmental stewardship, with the potential actions and outcomes including:

- District-wide cycling/walking spine linking South Bay, Hapuku, Mangamaunu, Goose Bay; safe routes for tamariki.
- Town-centre traffic calming and improvement of spaces for people walking and spending time outdoors.
- Biodiversity restoration and ecosystem enhancement embedded into settlement planning.
- Sustainable and supportive education system from entry level day care to school leavers supporting parents and learners to maximise potential and ‘add back’ to the community.
- Age-friendly town design, including accessible footpaths, seating, shade, safe crossings, and proximity-based access to services for older residents.
- Youth-friendly and multi-use “third spaces”, including creative, social, and informal gathering places that support youth connection, wellbeing, and pathway development.
- Long-term airport proposition and enhanced marine/rail connectivity.

Four Pillars, One Regenerative Economy

Together, these four pillars give practical effect to Kaikōura’s vision of a regenerative economy. They are not intended to operate in isolation; each pillar supports and reinforces the others. Success in one pillar creates benefits across the

others. For example, increased housing supply supports workforce attraction, workforce growth supports business development, economic growth helps fund infrastructure and services, and environmental enhancement strengthens Kaikōura's attractiveness as both a place to live and a destination to visit.

Collectively, these pillars reflect the core principles of regenerative development: creating positive outcomes for people and nature, recognising the interconnectedness of environmental, social, cultural, and economic systems, building on Kaikōura's unique place and identity, and strengthening long-term resilience. By advancing all four pillars together, Kaikōura can create a future in which environmental health, community wellbeing, cultural vitality, and economic prosperity continuously reinforce one another, leaving the district in a stronger position for future generations than it is today.

CONSTRAINTS & RISKS

- Housing shortages, limited job diversity, talent retention issues.
- Aging population, childcare/tertiary gaps, constrained funding.
- Families leaving for target school opportunities or aged care facilities.
- District Plan bottlenecks; SH1 traffic/parking safety issues.
- Natural hazard exposure (seismic, inundation) and climate impacts.
- Stakeholder fatigue/resistance; limited capacity for new initiatives.
- Council and Government funding constraints.
- Local Government changes, including mergers with other Councils and changing central government direction.
- Workforce capacity and capability.
- Ineffective communication to stakeholders and timeline planning.

Economic development requires balancing a number of competing objectives and recognising that not all desired outcomes can be maximised simultaneously. For example, attracting more visitors and investment can support local businesses and employment but may place additional pressure on housing affordability and availability. New development opportunities can strengthen the economy and expand local services, but they must be balanced against the protection of Kaikōura's unique natural environment and landscape values. Similarly, investment in infrastructure can enable growth and improve resilience, yet must remain affordable for ratepayers. Decisions about future growth also need to consider the community's desire to retain Kaikōura's distinctive character and sense of place, while responding to changing population and economic needs. In addition, climate adaptation measures may be necessary to reduce long-term risks, but can create uncertainty for landowners, investors, and communities.

Future decisions should explicitly acknowledge these trade-offs and seek solutions that maximise long-term community wellbeing, resilience, and intergenerational prosperity.

INVESTMENT LOGIC & BUSINESS CASES

Delivery of the four strategic pillars will require a coordinated investment approach that draws on multiple funding pathways. Kaikōura District Council will work alongside central government, rūnanga, private investors, and sector partners to progress projects through clearly defined stages: from early discovery and feasibility through to business cases, funding agreements, delivery, and benefits realisation. Many initiatives within this strategy align strongly with national priorities such as housing supply, climate transition, regional productivity, Māori economic development, renewable energy, and walking and cycling. This alignment positions Kaikōura to access Crown funding programmes, targeted grants, and, where appropriate, government-backed loan schemes. Rūnanga investment, community enterprise models, and private-sector capital will also play a central role, particularly in renewable energy, tourism diversification, land development, and research-led industries.

A transparent and disciplined investment process will ensure that resources are directed to the highest-impact opportunities. Each major initiative will be assessed using a simple logic model: identifying the problem, proposed intervention, expected benefits, measures of success, and appropriate delivery timeframe, supported by decision gates that ensure projects are only advanced when evidence, funding commitments, and risk considerations are sound. Progress will be tracked through publicly accessible reporting, enabling the community, partners, and investors to see where each project sits in the pipeline and how investments are translating into long-term social, environmental, cultural, and economic outcomes for Kaikōura.

MONITORING & KPI FRAMEWORK

The monitoring framework is designed to assess whether the implementation activities identified in the Programme Roadmap section are contributing to the long-term economic, social, environmental, and resilience outcomes sought by this strategy. Strategic Outcomes and Indicators describe the changes the strategy is seeking to achieve, while the Programme Roadmap section identifies the major actions, investments, and enabling initiatives intended to support those outcomes. Together, they provide a framework for monitoring progress, informing decision-making, and adapting delivery over time.

Baseline Development (2026–2027)

Note: some indicators will be tracked annually using regional proxies or rolling averages where district-level data is not available every year

Strategic Outcomes and Indicators

The Strategic Outcomes and Indicators describe the long-term changes this strategy seeks to support across Kaikōura. They provide a basis for monitoring whether the actions identified in the Programme Roadmap are contributing to improved economic, social, environmental, and community wellbeing outcomes over time. Together, they help track progress toward the Strategy Vision and inform future decision-making, investment, and prioritisation.

Housing and Community Wellbeing

- Increase housing availability and diversity.
- Reduce the proportion of unoccupied dwellings.
- Improve youth retention trends.
    - Number of local apprenticeships and traineeships.
    - Number of school leavers employed locally.
    - Net migration of residents aged 18-35.

A Diverse, Year-Round Economy

- Reduce reliance on tourism.
- Increase non-tourism skilled employment.
- Improve income levels and economic productivity.
- Increase research, innovation, and knowledge-based activity.
    - Number of active research partnerships.
    - Number of knowledge-intensive jobs.
    - External research funding attracted.

Resilient Economy

- Increase renewable energy uptake.
- Strengthen the diversity of year-round industries.

Connected and Liveable Places

- Increase active transport use.
- Achieve biodiversity net gain.

Governance and Delivery

The governance framework is responsible for monitoring progress against the Strategic Outcome and Indicators and overseeing delivery of the Programme Roadmap.

- Strategy Owner: Chief Executive
- Operational Sponsor: Senior Manager Corporate Services
- Delivery Leads: Relevant Council managers and partner agencies per action
- Council Oversight: Annual progress reporting through Long-Term Plan and Annual Plan processes.
- Working Groups: Time-bound, outcome-focused, disestablished once objectives achieved.
- Destination Kaikōura retains leadership of destination management and marketing. Enterprise Kaikōura (or any successor business-led entity) focuses on business development, investment attraction, and economic diversification. Council enables coordination between these functions and avoids duplication.
- Kaikōura will seek strategic alignment with regional growth sectors, including the bioeconomy, tourism technology, marine science, clean energy, and applied environmental innovation, positioning the district as a complementary testbed, field campus, or specialist satellite location where appropriate.
- Regulatory and delivery responsibilities for biodiversity protection, marine and freshwater management, conservation, predator control, lighting standards, and environmental enforcement sit with established statutory and community led frameworks, including regional councils, central government agencies, and recognised governance bodies. The role of Kaikōura District Council is to enable alignment, advocate for outcomes consistent with this strategy, and reflect environmental limits through land use planning and spatial decision making.

Programme Roadmap

This section identifies the major initiatives, investment priorities, and enabling actions expected to contribute to the long-term outcomes sought by this strategy. It provides an indicative roadmap for how implementation may occur over time, recognising that project timing, funding, feasibility, partner commitment, and future Council decisions will influence delivery. Together with the Strategic Outcomes and Indicators, this section creates a clear line of sight between the actions being undertaken and the outcomes being monitored.

Note: see the supporting 5-year action plan for a detailed foundational roadmap for the initial phase of implementation.

2026–2035

• **Housing:** intensification, papakāinga development, affordable housing partnerships and a large-scale retrofit programme (enabled by District Plan changes): enable development of 300–500 new dwellings, including at least 100 affordable units, an elderly housing complex, and a papakāinga project; explore planning, partnership and incentive mechanisms that encourage greater utilisation of existing housing stock for permanent occupancy.
• **Transport:** deliver the district cycle spine, Whale Trail and key active transport connections; create a more walkable town centre; improve SH1 connectivity and safety; strengthen rail, bus and visitor transport hubs; investigate and protect corridors for a future heavy-vehicle bypass and airport relocation; and complete planning amendments required to support long-term transport infrastructure.
• **Energy:** locally supported solar rollout through education, collaboration and planning initiatives. Enable installation of solar on 30% of suitable rooftops through grants (if available), streamlined consenting and education programmes; and investigate community-scale generation and energy resilience opportunities.
• **Industry:** diversify the economy through tourism, marine research, education and knowledge-intensive activities; establish the research and education centre (physical site established, with at least three research partnerships and 10 new specialist jobs); implement the Wakatu Quay development; and enable development of a strategically located industrial precinct at SH1/Inland Kaikōura Road to support local business growth, freight efficiency and long-term employment opportunities.
• **Business and investment attraction**: establish and grow Enterprise Kaikōura as the district's economic development platform; implement the Why Kaikōura promotion and attraction campaign; and deliver ongoing business engagement, networking and capability-building initiatives.

• **Environment:** establish a district-wide Blue-Green Network connecting mountains, rivers, wetlands and the coast; restore priority wetland and indigenous habitat areas; improve ecological connectivity, biodiversity and waterway health; and complete and implement the Coastal Adaptation Plan.
• **Youth and workforce development**: strengthen local education, training, recreation, and employment pathways that support youth retention, skills development, and workforce participation.

2035–2050

• **Housing:** mixed-use development delivered in the town centre, intergenerational living models and 60% of the housing stock retrofitted for energy efficiency.
• **Transport:** full district cycling and riding network completed; EV public transport services implemented; heavy-vehicle bypass decisions made and, if justified, construction commenced; rail, bus and visitor transport integration strengthened; and construct or formally commence the long-term airport project, if viable.
• **Energy:** expanded solar and potential waste-to-energy implementation; continued investment in local generation capacity; district-wide demand management for EV and freight charging optimisation.
• **Industry:** emerging green-technology exports; a mature creative sector; nationally recognised marine research and education capability; and global research partnerships supporting a more diversified, year-round economy.
• **Environment:** substantially complete the district-wide Blue-Green Network, expand marine and coastal protection initiatives, strengthen indigenous biodiversity and ecological connectivity, and maintain resilient mountain-to-sea ecosystems.

2050–2075

• **Housing:** implement managed retreat plans in identified high-risk coastal areas; maintain affordable housing stock at or above 20% of total dwellings.
• **Transport:** operate zero-emissions district logistics systems; cycle-freight networks; emerging low-emission transport technologies; and mature marine/rail integration.
• **Energy:** operate mature renewable energy systems and microgrids serving critical infrastructure and supporting a low-emissions district.
• **Industry:** support ongoing economic diversification across multiple sectors to maintain a resilient local economy.
• **Environment:** sustain and enhance the district-wide Blue-Green Network, maintaining healthy and connected mountain-to-sea ecosystems, indigenous biodiversity, habitat values, and climate resilience.

PROJECTED 2075 OUTCOMES

To support long-term decision-making and avoid reliance on a single forecast, this strategy is informed by three scenario-based growth pathways for Kaikōura through to 2075. These scenarios — *Status quo Growth*, *Managed Growth*, and *Transformational Growth* — are not predictions, but structured planning tools that test how different levels of policy delivery, infrastructure investment, and external economic conditions could shape the district's future. They provide a practical basis for land-use planning, infrastructure sequencing, housing supply, and workforce development over a 50-year horizon.

The scenarios were developed using Kaikōura's current economic and demographic baseline as the starting point, and then applying different assumptions about population growth, industry diversification, housing supply, employment participation, productivity uplift, and the timing of anchor investments such as a marine and climate research centre and improved regional connectivity. Key parameters considered included: achievable annual population growth rates, changes in labour-force participation, shifts in the tourism share of employment, expected productivity uplift from higher-value industries, and realistic dwelling delivery capacity. All GDP figures are expressed in constant (real) 2024 New Zealand dollars to allow consistent comparison over time.

The strategy is broadly aligned to the Managed Growth scenario, which is considered the most realistic and balanced pathway for achieving Kaikōura's long-term economic, environmental and community outcomes while retaining the district's character and environmental values.

Scenario A — Managed Growth

Assumes: full delivery of strategy, one or more anchor project operating, and housing enabled.

Indicator	Current	Estimated 2075	Midpoint	Key Assumptions
Population	4,215	7,500 – 9,000	8,200	1.1% avg annual growth due to jobs & housing enablement (front-loaded)
GDP per Capita (real 2024 NZD)	$43,277	$85,000 – $105,000	$95,000	Growth in research, green tech, marine science, food processing; reduced seasonality; more skilled workforce
Total GDP (real 2024 NZD)	$239m	$638m – $945m	$780m	Midpoint population × midpoint GDP per capita

Indicator	Current	Estimated 2075	Midpoint	Key Assumptions
Total Jobs	2,050	3,800 – 4,500	4,150	Slightly higher employment participation with diversification
Tourism Jobs	330	380 – 500	440	Tourism share falls to 10–12% of total jobs; economy diversifies
Non-Tourism Jobs	1,720	~3,700	3,700	Total jobs minus tourism jobs
Number of Dwellings	2,319	3,900 – 4,400	4,150	Smaller households; more age-friendly & worker housing; visitor dwellings partly converted; avg household 2.4; 15% buffer for vacancy/visitor dwellings
Number of Businesses	789	1,200 – 1,500	1,350	Economic diversification; business park scaling; improved business-to-job ratio

Scenario B — Status-quo

Assumes: slow housing delivery, partial diversification, tourism still dominant

Indicator	2075 Estimate
Population	**5,500 – 6,200** (mid: 5,800)
GDP per capita	**$65,000 – $75,000** (mid: $70,000)
Total GDP	**~$405 million**
Total jobs	**2,600 – 3,000** (mid: 2,800)
Tourism jobs	**520 – 650** (mid: 585)
Non-tourism jobs	**~2,200**
Dwellings	**3,000 – 3,300** (mid: 3,150)
Businesses	**900 – 1,050** (mid: 975)

Scenario C — Transformational Growth

Assumes: multiple anchor projects operating (including KREC, the South Bay Harbour Development, Wakatu Quay, and an expanded airport); strong net in-migration; growth in knowledge-intensive exports, green-technology services, marine science, research and education; and significant productivity gains from economic diversification.

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Indicator	2075 Estimate
Population	**10,000 – 12,000** (mid: 11,000)
GDP per capita	**$105,000 – $125,000** (mid: $115,000)
Total GDP	**~$1.27 billion**
Total jobs	**5,200 – 6,200** (mid: 5,700)
Tourism jobs	**450 – 600** (mid: 525)
Non-tourism jobs	**~5,175**
Dwellings	**4,800 – 5,500** (mid: 5,150)
Businesses	**1,600 – 2,000** (mid: 1,800)

Table 2: Scenario-Action Alignment

The following chart ties together the strategy, action plan, and KPIs, illustrating how key actions translate into outcomes under the three growth scenarios. They provide a summary of potential impacts on housing, infrastructure, energy, and industry, highlighting the differences, trade-offs, and assumptions behind low, managed, and transformational growth pathways.

Action Area	Status-quo	Managed Growth	Transformational Growth	Key Assumptions
Housing Delivery	~3,000 dwellings by 2075	~4,150 dwellings	~5,150 dwellings	Based on population growth projections, migration, and housing supply capacity; assumes managed planning and resource availability for growth.
Anchor Projects	None implemented	One or more anchor projects are operational.	Potential anchor projects (KREC, South Bay Harbour Development, Wakatu Quay and Airport safeguarding), progressed subject to feasibility, funding, governance, and environmental impacts.	Assumes investment, regulatory approvals, and workforce capacity; low growth delays or limits infrastructure.

Action Area	Status-quo	Managed Growth	Transformational Growth	Key Assumptions
Energy Targets	50% renewable by 2040	60% renewable by 2040 with local generation	80% renewable by 2040 supported by distributed generation, storage and microgrids	Assumes national and regional energy policies, technology uptake, and funding availability.
Industry Diversification	Tourism dominant	Balanced economy	Knowledge-intensive exports, green-technology services, marine science, research and education, and applied environmental innovation.	Assumes policy incentives, skills development, and investment in new sectors; low growth limits diversification.
Environmental Outcomes	Incremental restoration	Functioning Blue-Green Network and improved ecosystem health	Fully integrated mountain-to-sea ecological network supporting biodiversity, climate resilience, research and recreation	Sustained investment in restoration and adaptation; strong partnerships with mana whenua, community groups and agencies; effective land-use planning; continued biodiversity, freshwater and coastal management programmes; and increasing community support for environmental stewardship.

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