Hamilton to Tauranga Spatial Study

Scenarios

SmartGrowth
Building our futures together

Future Proof
Te Tau Tītoki

Contents

What's happening

Image from NZTA Waka Kotahi

Future Proof, in partnership with SmartGrowth, is undertaking a high-level study that will identify the growth opportunities between Hamilton and Tauranga (called the Hamilton to Tauranga Corridor).

The Study will give us a clear understanding of the growth area's unique needs and potential and will ensure that future economic growth and the necessary transport, water and utilities (power and telecommunication) infrastructure decisions are coordinated and aligned.

This area is of particular importance due to the significant investment in transport that is taking place within the Corridor such as the Cambridge to Piarere Road and further investments in SH29 at Tauriko in the Bay of Plenty. These significant works will improve safety, connectivity and travel times - making it easy for people and goods to move between the two large high-growth urban centres, and therefore lifting economic productivity.

In total, it is assumed that there will be a time savings of 10.8 minutes for travel between Hamilton and Tauranga, which is a reduction of around 13% compared to the current travel time.

The investment in transport will stimulate future residential, commercial and industrial development opportunities and pressures along the Corridor.

The Hamilton to Tauranga Corridor Spatial Study aims to determine how this development can be managed in the best way possible – supporting economic outcomes, as well as protecting the environment and our communities.

About the Corridor

The Hamilton to Tauranga Corridor is the southern link of the 'Golden Triangle' economic area which contains over half of New Zealand's GDP and population.

- The Corridor's population increased from 254,320 in 1996 to 451,190 in 2024, a growth rate of 2.1% per annum.
- Most of the population growth (89%) within the Corridor has been focused on the seven largest urban areas, and most of that urban growth (85%) was in Hamilton and Tauranga.
- Cambridge has also grown strongly, almost doubling in size since 1996, accounting for 6% of Corridor population growth.
- The SmartGrowth Western Corridor has grown significantly, with its population increasing almost ten-fold since 1996, accounting for 5% of the total H2T Corridor population growth.

Location	1996	2011	2024	Growth p.a.
Hamilton	113,260	145,520	189,660	1.9%
Cambridge	12,190	16,020	22,400	2.2%
Morrinsville	6,140	7,220	9,680	1.6%
Matamata	6,120	7,030	9,540	1.6%
Tirau	800	750	930	0.5%
Putaaruru	4,380	4,070	4,580	0.2%
Tauranga	79,380	116,380	152,420	2.4%
SmartGrowth Western Corridor	1,160	1,990	10,090	8.0%
Other rural	31,150	40,830	51,890	1.8%
Total Corridor	**253,420**	**337,820**	**441,100**	**2.1%**

Image from NZTA Waka Kotahi

Key transport investments within the Corridor

Hamilton Southern Links – a planned network of state highways and urban arterial roads in the south of Hamilton and Waipā district.

Ruakura Eastern Transport Corridor – a strategic four-lane Corridor designed for freight and regional traffic, to and from the Ruakura Superhub.

Cambridge to Piarere improvements – a four-lane expressway from the southern end of the Waikato expressway to the recently completed Piarere roundabout.

Kaimai Ranges improvements

SmartGrowth Western Corridor – SH29 Tauriko West

Tauranga Central Corridor – City and Port Connections

SmartGrowth Northern Corridor - Takitimu North Link

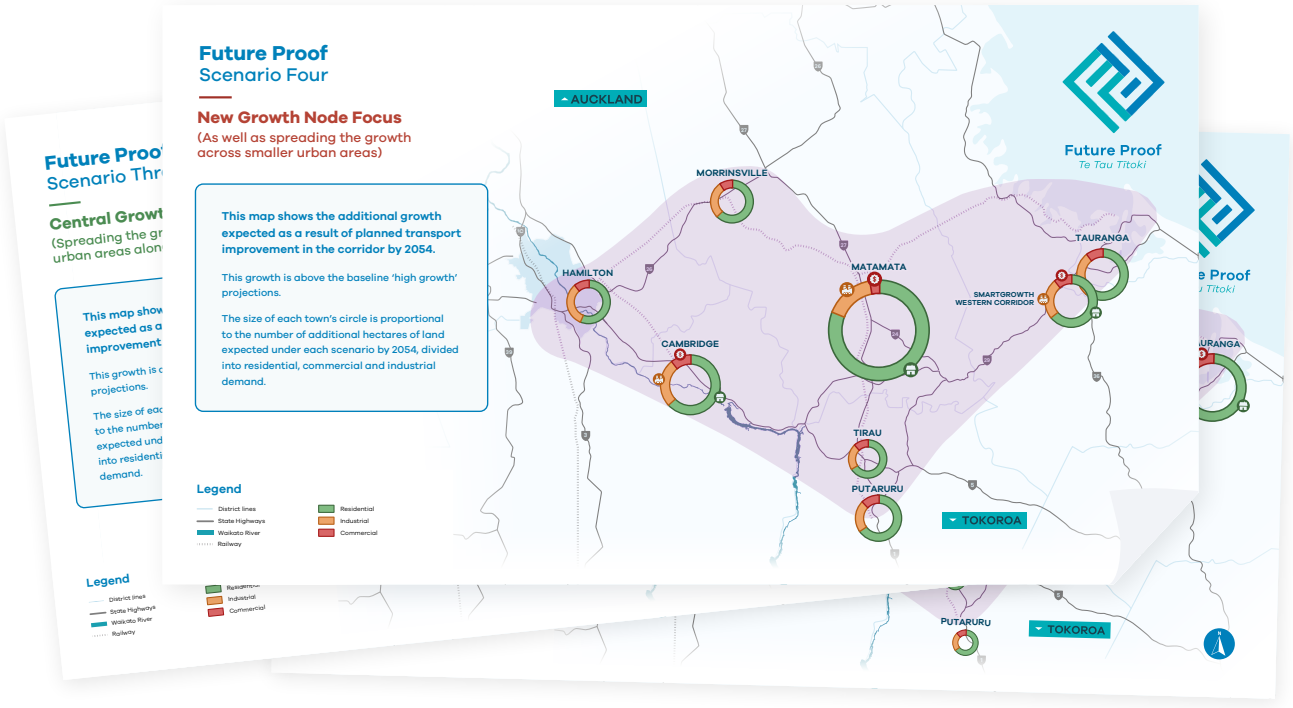
The investment in transport will result in more demand for growth along the Corridor. When it's easier to get around, it makes sense that more industrial and commercial development will take place, and often residential development is then needed to support it. The purpose of this Study is to inform planning about how and where this growth could occur – taking into account land availability and infrastructure and environmental constraints.

Hamilton to Tauranga Scenarios

We have identified four scenarios that outline different ways in which growth might occur through the Corridor.

The scenarios examine different projections for industrial, commercial, and residential land-use development. These projections have been informed by economic modelling which:

- firstly estimates the amount of potential additional growth arising from the planned transport improvements, and
- secondly distributes this additional growth in different ways under the different scenarios.



Key findings

Image from NZTA Waka Kotahi

The study undertaken confirms that:

- Growth arising in the Hamilton to Tauranga Corridor from planned transport improvements is expected to be relatively small in absolute terms, but for smaller communities in the central part of the Corridor the percentage increase and proportional impact could be greater. This is particularly the case under the Central Gravity and New Node scenarios.
- Implications for Matamata, and to a lesser degree Tirau and Putaaruru, could be considerable in terms of land use pressure, with significant potential increases in business and residential demand, alongside infrastructure constraints such as three waters servicing and environmental constraints such as highly productive land.
- Options for responding to any future demand, in excess of official projections, include seeking to accommodate the growth through addressing the constraints (e.g. infrastructure upgrades or environmental mitigation), or attempting to steer the growth to relatively unconstrained areas within the Corridor.
- The growth created by the transport investment is not projected to require the creation of new urban areas within the Corridor, and growing existing towns would be more consistent with the Future Proof Strategy and Councils' planning policies.

Scenario One: Baseline projection

This is our business-as-usual growth projection. It is based on the 'high growth' projections used in the Future Proof Strategy and the projections used in the SmartGrowth Strategy. Unlike the other three scenarios, it does not take into account any potential additional growth arising from the planned transport improvements.

- In total there is demand for over 93,500 dwellings, 996ha of industrial land, and 321ha of commercial land.
- Most of the long-term (30 year) growth is projected to be in Hamilton and Tauranga - together projected to accommodate 79% of residential demand and 72% of industrial/commercial demand.
- Cambridge and the SmartGrowth Western Corridor (in the Western Bay of Plenty) are the next largest areas, accommodating around 6% and 10% respectively.
- The other towns in the middle of the H2T Corridor are projected to accommodate 1-2% of growth each (Morrinsville, Matamata, Tīrau and Putaaruru).

The total growth projection for the Baseline

Location	Residential (Dwellings)	Industrial (Hectares)	Commercial (Hectares)
Hamilton	44,400	398	144
Cambridge	5,800	29	28
Morrinsville	1,800	32	7
Matamata	1,600	33	3
Tirau	500	5	1
Putaaruru	600	8	2
SmartGrowth Western Corridor	9,100	216	-
Tauranga	29,700	274	136
Total	**93,500**	**996**	**321**

Scenario Two: Metro growth focus (Either end of the Corridor)

This Scenario focuses the majority of this additional growth at either end of the Corridor, in the metro cities of Hamilton and Tauranga as well as the other urban areas close to the ends of the Corridor (Cambridge and SmartGrowth Western Corridor).

It considers the additional growth arising from transport improvements (over and above the Baseline projected growth).

Under this Scenario, there is additional demand beyond the Baseline Scenario for:

- **Hamilton**
  An additional 250 dwellings, 7.3ha of industrial, and 3.5ha of commercial land.
- **Tauranga**
  An additional 320 dwellings, 7.7ha of industrial, and 3.3ha of commercial land.
- **Cambridge**
  An additional 100 dwellings, 3.1ha of industrial, and 1.1ha of commercial land.
- **SmartGrowth Western Corridor**
  An additional 30 dwellings, 2.0ha of industrial and 0.9ha of commercial land.

Relatively small increases in demand for the towns in the centre of the Corridor - Matamata, Morrinsville, Tīrau, and Putaaruru.

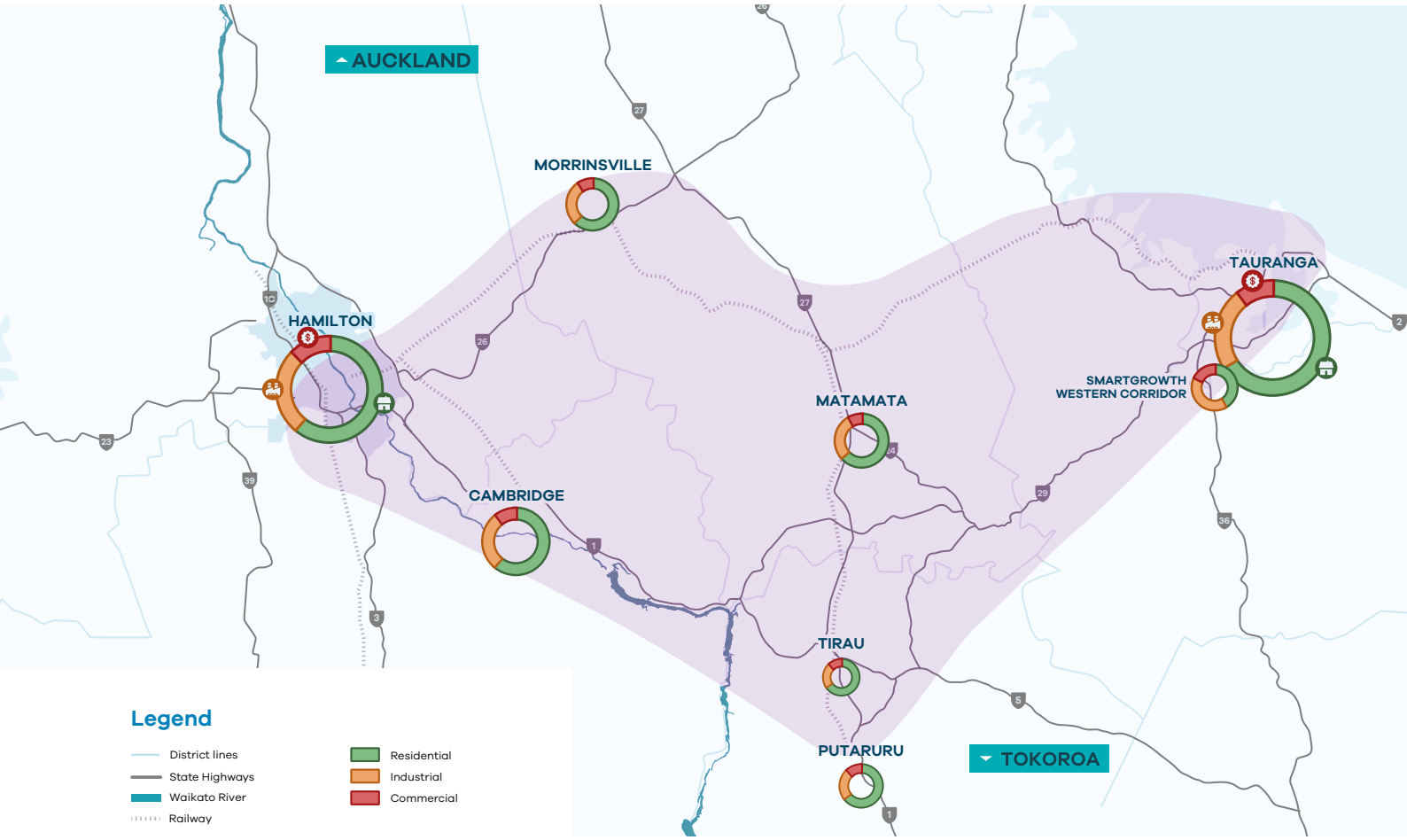
The total growth projection for this scenario

The total resulting growth (Baseline Growth plus additional) is shown in the following table:

Location	Residential (Dwellings)	Industrial (Hectares)	Commercial (Hectares)
Hamilton	44,655	405	147
Cambridge	5,901	32	29
Morrinsville	1,859	34	8
Matamata	1,671	35	4
Tirau	528	6	1
Putaaruru	641	9	2
SmartGrowth Western Corridor	9,131	218	1
Tauranga	30,020	282	139
Total	**94,407**	**1,022**	**331**

Scenario Two: Metro growth focus illustration

The following illustration shows where additional growth will be distributed. The larger the circle, the more growth required. Each 'circle of growth' is then categorised by type of growth required – residential, industrial and commercial, with the amount of each colour representing the land area in hectares required.



Benefits of this Scenario are less development pressure on the towns between Hamilton and Tauranga, with development more closely aligned to the Baseline than the Central Growth Focus scenarios.

Challenges of this Scenario are how best to provide for growth in the metro areas, where there are existing growth pressures and higher land prices, and a lost opportunity to spread growth out away from the metro areas.

Scenario Three: Central growth focus (Spreading the growth across urban areas along the Corridor)

This Scenario focuses more growth towards urban communities right along the Corridor, particularly those communities close to the metro cities of Hamilton and Tauranga (each end of the corridor).

The total growth projection for this scenario is very similar to the growth in Scenario Two, however the demand is distributed differently along the Corridor.

Under this Scenario, there is additional demand beyond the Baseline Scenario for:

- **Tauranga**
  An additional 292 dwellings, 3.1ha of industrial, and 1.5ha of commercial land.
- **Cambridge**
  An additional 600 dwellings, 6.5ha of industrial, and 2.8ha of commercial land.
- **SmartGrowth Western Corridor**
  An additional 330 dwellings, 4.6ha of industrial, and 2.1ha of commercial land.
- **Morrinsville**
  An additional 110 dwellings and 4.6ha of industrial/commercial land.
- **Matamata**
  An additional 220 dwellings and 4.7ha of industrial/commercial land.
- **Tīrau**
  An additional 60 dwellings and 2.1ha of industrial/commercial land.
- **Putaaruru**
  An additional 85 dwellings and 3.4ha of industrial/commercial land.

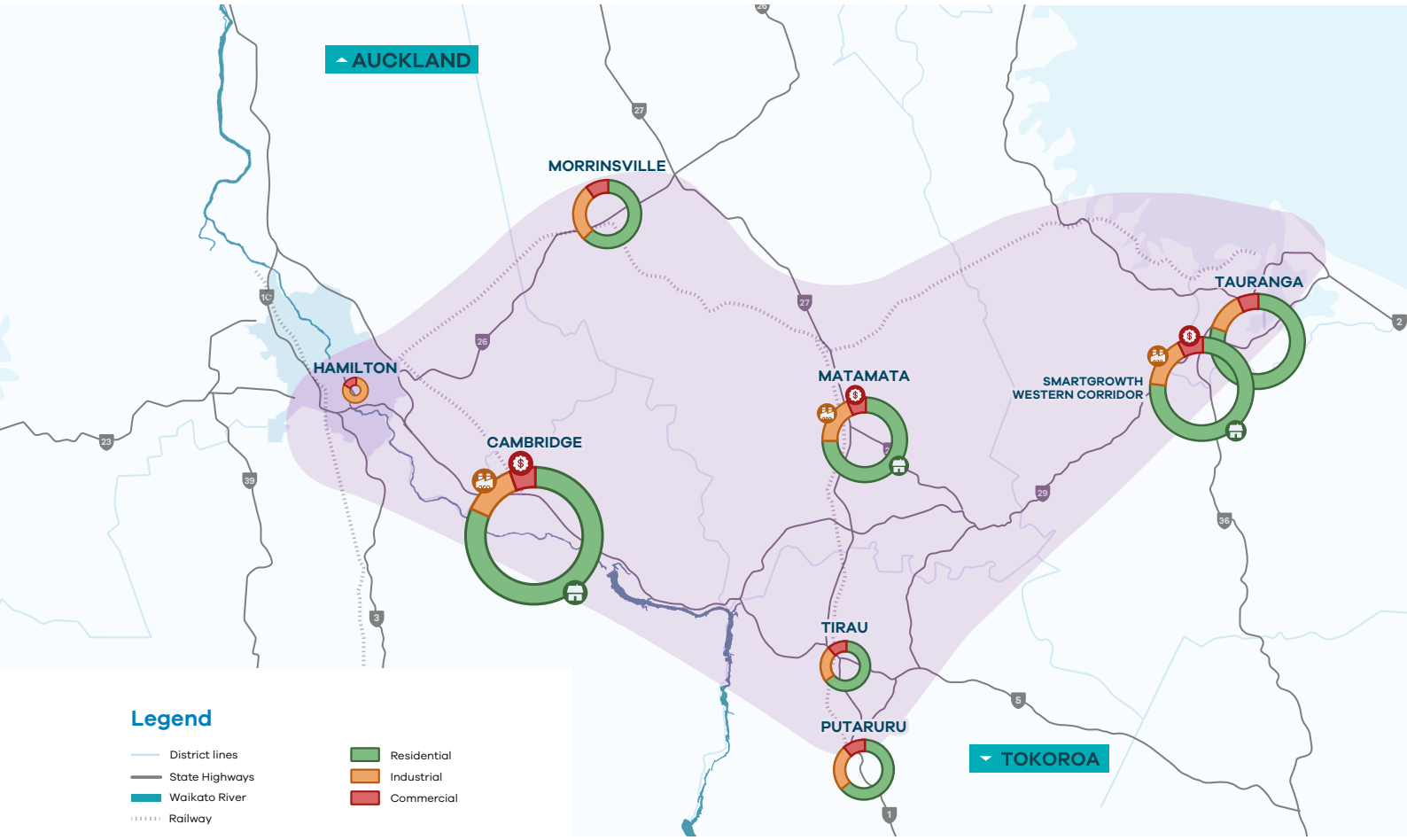
The total growth projection for this scenario

The total resulting growth (Baseline Growth plus additional) is shown in the following table:

Location	Residential (Dwellings)	Industrial (Hectares)	Commercial (Hectares)
Hamilton	43,709	399	144
Cambridge	6,422	36	31
Morrinsville	1,914	35	8
Matamata	1,824	37	5
Tirau	556	7	1
Putaaruru	682	11	3
SmartGrowth Western Corridor	9,433	221	2
Tauranga	29,992	277	138
Total	**94,531**	**1,022**	**331**

Scenario Three: Central growth focus illustration

The following illustration shows where additional growth will be distributed. The larger the circle, the more growth required. Each 'circle of growth' is then categorised by type of growth required – residential, industrial and commercial, with the amount of each colour representing the land area in hectares required.



Benefits of this Scenario are that there is a distribution of economic opportunities (jobs and housing) to the smaller towns across the Corridor, potentially easing some of the growth pressures on the larger metro areas.

Challenges of this Scenario are how to provide sufficient infrastructure for that growth given constraints in some smaller towns, and challenges around expansion of existing towns into rural areas with productive soils.

Scenario Four: New growth node (As well as spreading the growth across smaller urban areas)

This Scenario is based on Scenario Three: Central Growth Focus, and then adds in a significant amount of industrial growth at a new and undefined central location - loosely based on the Sleepyhead / Ohinewai concept north of Huntly. This Scenario also includes some additional growth required to support that new industrial area (including housing for its workers, commercial space for the new workforce to shop in, etc.).

It considers the additional growth arising from transport improvements (over and above the Baseline projected growth).

Under this Scenario, there is additional demand beyond the Baseline Scenario for:

- **Matamata**
  An additional 960 dwellings and 10.8ha of industrial/commercial land.
- **Morrinsville**
  An additional 140 dwellings and 5.4ha of industrial/commercial land.
- **Putaaruru**
  An additional 170 dwellings and 5.8ha of industrial/commercial land.
- **Tīrau**
  An additional 110 dwellings and 3.8ha of industrial/commercial land.
- **Cambridge**
  An additional 270 dwellings and 11.1ha of industrial/commercial land.
- **SmartGrowth Western Corridor**
  An additional 220 dwellings and 8.0ha of industrial/commercial land.
- **Tauranga**
  An additional 200 dwellings and 8.4ha of industrial/commercial land.

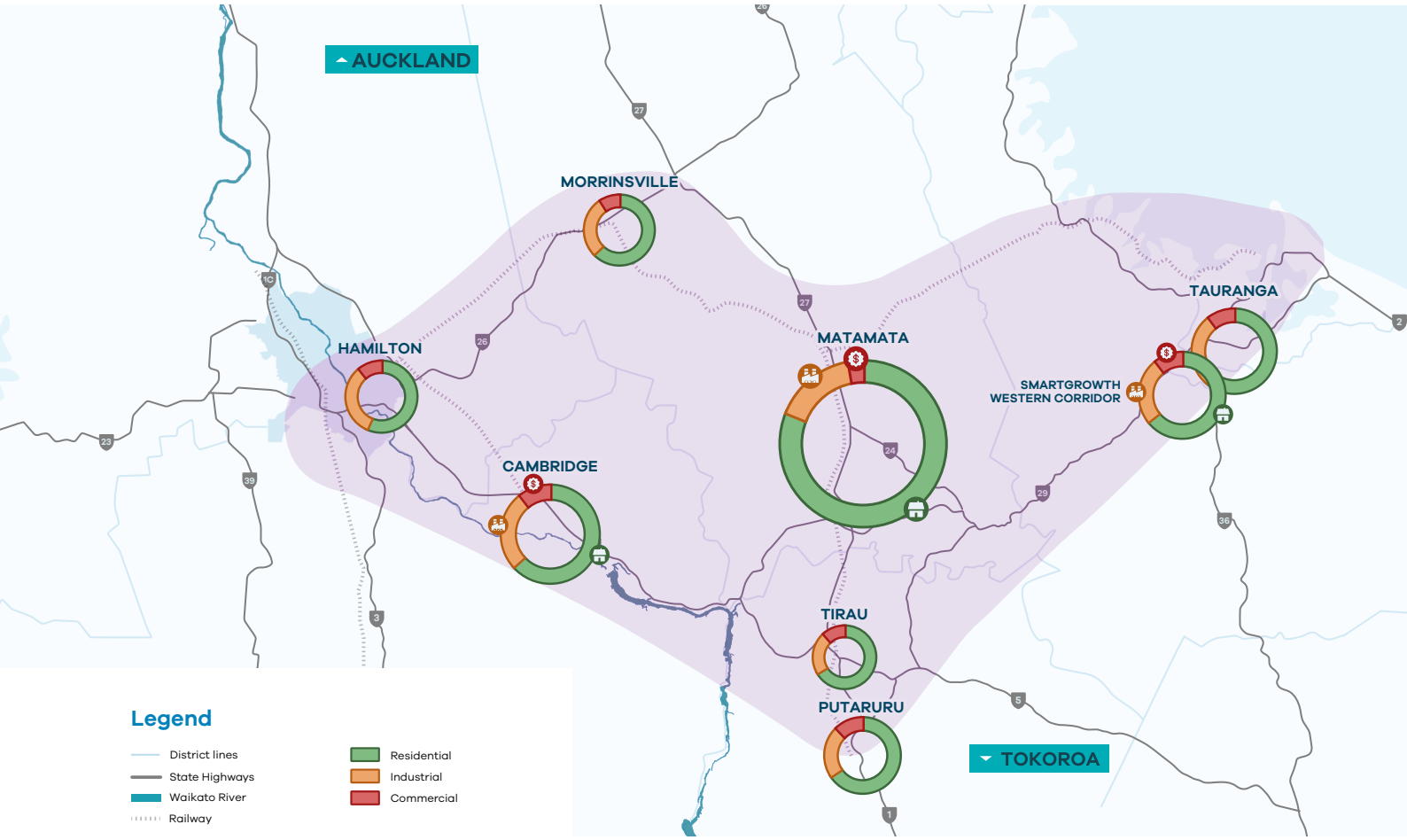
The total growth projection for this scenario

The total resulting growth (Baseline Growth plus additional) is shown in the following table:

Location	Residential (Dwellings)	Industrial (Hectares)	Commercial (Hectares)
Hamilton	44,524	403	145
Cambridge	6,075	37	31
Morrinsville	1938	36	9
Matamata	2560	42	6
New Node	-	70	-
Tirau	613	8	2
Putaaruru	766	12	4
SmartGrowth Western Corridor	9,316	222	2
Tauranga	29,897	280	138
Total	**95,691**	**1,109**	**337**

Scenario Four: New growth node illustration

The following illustration shows where additional growth will be distributed. The larger the circle, the more growth required. Each 'circle of growth' is then categorised by type of growth required – residential, industrial and commercial, with the amount of each colour representing the land area in hectares required.



Constraints

'No Go' and 'Go Carefully' areas have been considered in relation to how the growth arising under the four scenarios needs to be managed.

No Go areas typically have significant risks or potential impacts associated with land use. No Go areas include areas like public conservation land, peat soils, wetlands, the Waikato River, marae, heritage sites, significant natural areas and floodable areas.

Go Carefully areas include highly productive land, bat roosting and commuting areas, and areas of moderate slope and erosion risk.

To view the 'No Go' and 'Go Carefully' maps, visit the Future Proof website: **futureproof.org.nz**

Options

Image from NZTA Waka Kotahi

Throughout each of the scenarios, we have a variety of options for the way we manage and accommodate increasing demand. These include:

1. Deliberately steering growth to less constrained locations (such as brownfield intensification sites, or specific greenfield areas).
2. Focusing less on steering growth, and more on mitigating constraints (such as flood protection mitigation) to minimise or avoid adverse effects wherever the development occurs.
3. Changing policy to enable development in locations otherwise constrained by existing policy*.

A combination of options is possible, e.g. steer growth as much as possible (option 1) but be prepared to minimise / avoid effects elsewhere (option 2).

**Induced demand is not projected to require the creation of new urban areas within the Corridor. Growing existing towns would be more consistent with the Future Proof Strategy and Councils' planning policies.*

What's next

Image from NZTA Waka Kotahi

Now we have established the Scenarios that show the different potential levels of growth, and how it could be distributed, we want to know what you think.

You can have your say at **futureproof.org.nz** and at **smartgrowthbop.org.nz** from 20 October to 17 November 2026.

Your feedback will be used to help the Future Proof Implementation Committee and the SmartGrowth Leadership Group agree on a preferred option that will be incorporated into our Future Proof Strategy and our SmartGrowth Strategy. Full consultation on the Future Proof Strategy will take place in 2026 before it is adopted by Future Proof and its partners.

More information

This is a summary of information only. Want to know more? The detailed report and supporting information can be found on **futureproof.org.nz** and **smartgrowthbop.org.nz**

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Te Tau Tītoki

futureproof.org.nz