

Scenario 4: Economic-led growth

At a glance

- This scenario assumes a high level of employment and business activity growth in the study area.
- To encourage and manage employment and business activity, a development corporation is established (as originally envisaged under the Urban Development Act 2020). The development corporation would have wide ranging powers including land acquisition, infrastructure provision, and business management, to facilitate large-scale development. This drives a higher demand for industrial / commercial land.
- Industrial / commercial development outpaces projected demand as opportunities have been created around the Airport and surrounding industrial precincts, creating a super-node for industry, research, and innovation with The University of Waikato and Iwi as partners.
- Residential land is still managed under council planning frameworks rather than the development corporation, but parts of SL1 are delayed and might not be delivered due to constructability challenges.
- Demand eventually follows infrastructure, with Peacocke and later Rukuhia and Ōhaupō picking up population.
- By 2040, infrastructure provision in the North Waipā-South Hamilton area will have outpaced population projections, with investment aimed at attracting both industry and residents to the area, but not necessarily outpacing actual demand.
- The Development Corporation stimulates demand and attracts private capital to invest in the area which lowers the cost of development and provides agglomeration benefits. Leading with infrastructure investment ensures it is in place first, avoiding lag infrastructure, and eventually provides the certainty and attraction to generate the demand to use that infrastructure. Much more so than simply releasing land (as per Scenario 3).
- By 2055, the Airport area has become a high-value industrial hub, though questions remain about whether early upfront investment has paid off.
- The centres approach to the Future Proof Strategy and the Regional Policy Statement is reshaped by a highly competitive market, with significant commercial activity at the Airport, introducing new dynamics across the established centres within the sub-region.



Scenario Elements – Key assumptions

Scenario elements	Key assumptions	
	By 2040	By 2055
 <p>Anticipated Regulatory Environment and Population Projections</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This scenario replicates in part the growth sequencing of Scenario 2 but includes a Development Corporation that drives development in and around the airport. It will require amendments to the Urban Development Act 2020 to enable this to occur and to align with the Resource Management reforms. This scenario assumes a high level of economic growth, with the establishment of a development corporation driving a higher demand for industrial/commercial land. A Development Corporation has been established as a subsidiary of the Airport's owner and operator, with iwi and private partners holding equity stakes. This new entity is responsible for master planning the area, coordinating land release, tenant curation on site, while coordinating infrastructure delivery using a range of models and funds to front-load investment. The nature of the industrial sector being attracted and the quality of the development means there is higher demand for business land, and this is complemented by population growth. 	
 <p>Residential / Industrial / Commercial development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> By 2040, infrastructure provision in the study area will have outpaced population projections, with investment aimed at attracting both industry and residents to the area. The southern edge of Hamilton has continued to evolve as a strategic location for both residential and business growth, and the establishment of a Development Corporation at the airport has further increased this interest. Despite SL1 fast-tracked areas, constructibility challenges have slowed down the delivery of the residential and industrial sites as per the initial concept plan. More development has occurred in the other fast track locations in the subregion which has also slowed the delivery of SL1. The area north of Collins Road is experiencing the same issue as SL1 due to construction constraints and is experiencing delays. Given the above, residential growth pressure shifts into Peacocke, which develops at medium density (35–45 dph) and at a faster pace, and incorporates mixed-use and retail offerings, centres aligned with public transport routes. The ripple effect is also felt in Rukuhia and Ōhaupō, where wastewater reticulation is planned and in progress and therefore both gradually urbanise. SL2 remains rural, with deferred zoning protecting it as a longer-term growth option. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SL1 development finally begins, following engineering solutions to peat soil challenges, at medium–high density (35–45 dph). Peacocke is fully built out with mixed-use transit-oriented centres. Rukuhia and Ōhaupō have matured into compact commuter settlements supported by wastewater reticulation and frequent bus service and BRT to Cambridge, Te Awamutu and Hamilton. SL2 remains partially rural, with upcoming development constrained by infrastructure sequencing and elite soil protections. The Development Corporation has consolidated its role as a special-purpose industrial delivery body with its aviation branch engaged in a collaborative consolidation study with Rotorua, Taupō, Whakatāne, and Tauranga airports to coordinate regional aviation services. A retail centre has been built as part of the Airport Master Plan, reinforcing the area as a multi-use hub. Mystery Creek has further cemented its role as the centre for showing agritech innovation, as well as being a national and international tourism and events destination and continues to host hundreds of events annually. Only part of the eastern side of the NIMT line has been included as part of the super industrial node developed under the development corporation. The eastern section become attractive to

Scenario Elements – Key assumptions (continued)

Scenario elements	Key assumptions	
	By 2040	By 2055
<p>Residential / Industrial / Commercial development</p> <p>(continued)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Airport has exceeded passenger projections made in 2025, offering more international flights and becoming a critical international freight hub as well as an alternative to Auckland and Wellington airports, notably during weather disruptions. The establishment of a Development Corporation is underway between the airport, Waipā District Council, Hamilton City Council and Iwi, with a clear and endorsed masterplan that ring-fences land for aviation growth (e.g., runway extensions, taxiways, facilities, etc.) while sequencing other land for logistics, offices, and industrial uses and possibly a future retail centre. Aviation activities are on the rise, and non-aviation industries are growing at an even faster pace. This hub complements the rural economy of the rest of the Waipā District and the airport's freight operations, delivering innovation in sustainable farming. The site currently located north of the golf course and Mystery Creek has now been integrated into and forms part of the corporation hub. Wet industries are excluded to protect water resources and aviation safety. Industries are drawn to participate in this emerging industrial cluster, which offers convenient access to air, rail, and road infrastructure, enabling them to transport products and supplies more cost-effectively. Additionally, clustering occurs as similar industries tend to group together. Mystery Creek's size and amenities expand as an internationally renown hub for showcasing agritech innovation, as well as a national events and tourism, hospitality, and accommodation node. Its reputation as a prominent hub for recreation and events has been steadily growing. Sand mining operations on the NIMT line eastern area ended by 2038, with remediation beginning around 2040. The development corporation aims to gradually convert only part of the area (to limit the loss of productive land, avoid peat soils, and reduce impacts on the peat lake catchment) into light industrial and commercial uses. 	<p>agri-industries, with commercial and light industrial activities overlapping with the Airport's Western Precinct.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The site currently located north of the golf course and Mystery Creek, along with land south of SH21, has been developed into an agri-tech precinct. The precinct serves as an export-facing hub, with The University of Waikato playing a key role in agricultural research partnerships. The airport's commercial development is aligned with Mystery Creek to ensure complementary, rather than competing, growth. Together with Ruakura, the Airport forms part of a super-industrial node at a sub-regional level, attracting high-value technology and premium New Zealand food businesses rather than low-value, transient warehousing. The delivery of major infrastructure ahead of demand has drawn developers into the area. Ultimately, the goal is to unlock near-term commercial/industrial growth, coordinate infrastructure, and curate tenants around the airport and on the airfield. Industrial and residential development is contained within key development areas. Farming activities in the study area are maintained similarly to Scenario 2.


Scenario Elements – Key assumptions (continued)

Scenario elements	Key assumptions	
	By 2040	By 2055
Residential / Industrial / Commercial development (continued)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Industrial and residential sprawl is contained within key development areas. Farming activities in the study area are maintained similarly to Scenario 2. 	
 Infrastructure - Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Due to the slowdown in some development projects, the pressure on water allocation is not as severe. However, investigations into both small and large-scale community storage solutions are currently underway. The Southern Wastewater Treatment Plant has not yet been fully established, and development has continued with on-site wastewater solutions. The initial land use assumptions for its construction have already been exceeded, and additional funding has been allocated as necessary to upgrade the plant to meet the increasing residential and industrial demand. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Southern Wastewater Treatment Plant is operational at full modular capacity, servicing residential and industrial areas supported by staged funding from the development corporation revenues. Retrofitting of early mini-treatment plants is complete, with industries linked to central servicing. Bulk water storage in SL2 supports resilience in high-demand areas.
 Infrastructure - Transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Hamilton Southern Links is completed and operational. Rural roads along SH3 and SH21 are experiencing intensified traffic. A bus rapid transit (BRT) service now links the Airport to Hamilton CBD and the wider network. The service has been supplemented by an internal shuttle service, well used by the growing Airport and hub workforce. A highly competitive market could have implications for intensification and residential development in the CBD, with a possible knock-on effect to BRT. Freight volumes rise, with rail links to the Airport under investigation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hamilton Southern Links is complete in full, providing integrated freight and commuter corridors. BRT spine connects Hamilton, the Airport, Ōhaupō, and Te Awamutu, supporting compact residential nodes. For SH3, this provides the opportunity for bus priority. The revocation process should reflect this new road function. Revocation will enable more flexibility for local access to those affected sections of the existing State Highway. Active transport networks are continuous, aligned with blue-green infrastructure. As demand for air cargo and plans for an agri-tech hub near the airport are rising, a freight rail connection from the NIMT line to the airport is being investigated. A zero-emission public transport recharging depot and a park-and-ride facility are under construction in the vicinity of the Airport, further supporting its role as a transport node. Rail is extended to the Airport along with electrification of the NIMT between Pukekohe and Hamilton Airport. This is primarily for freight; however, the improved rail links have allowed for increased passenger rail between Hamilton and

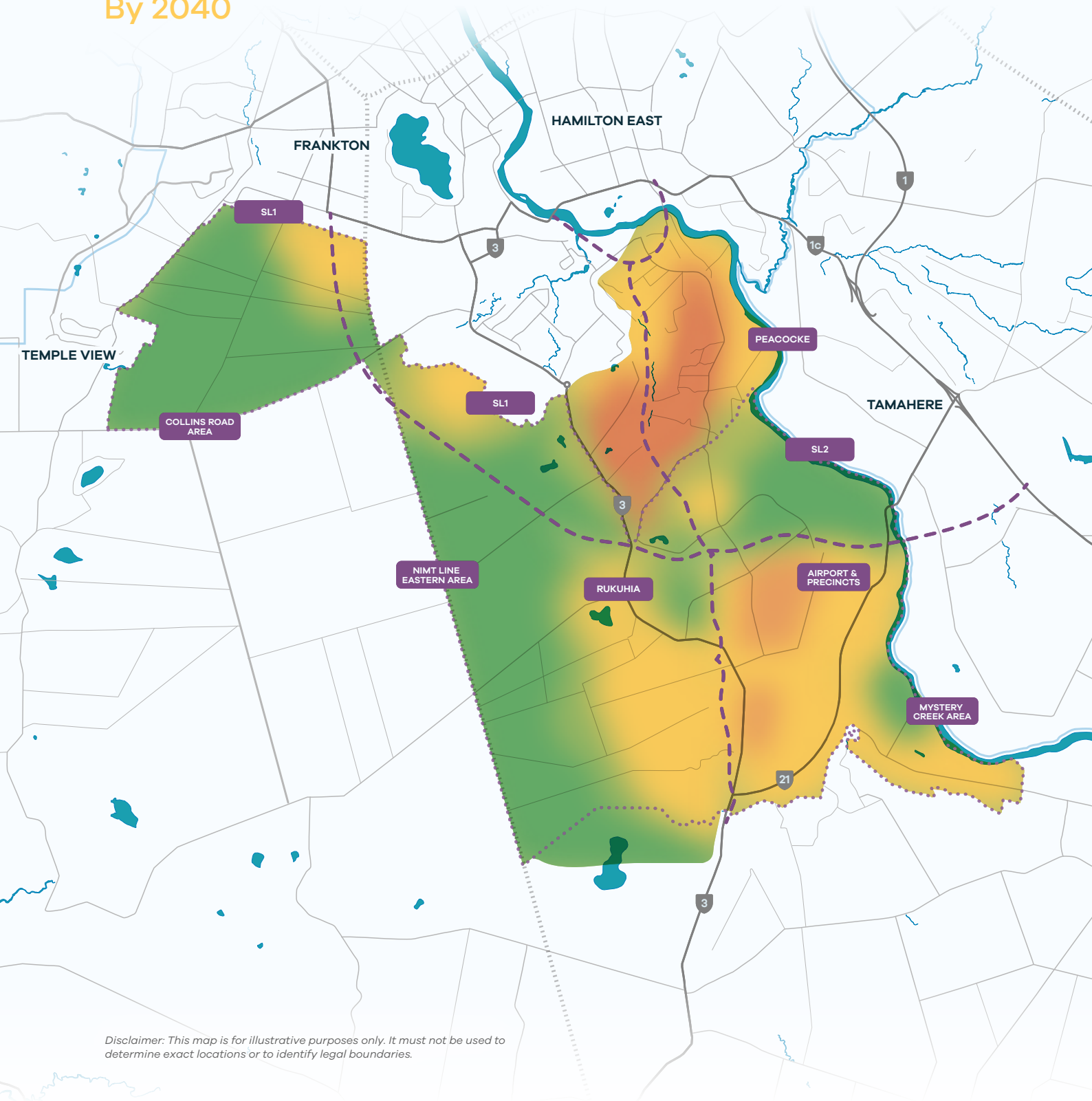
Scenario Elements – Key assumptions (continued)

Scenario elements	Key assumptions	
	By 2040	By 2055
Infrastructure - Transport (continued)		<p>Auckland. By 2055, a link connecting to Hamilton Airport is being investigated.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The lack of advanced planning for bypasses and the lack of significant investment along the current route to cater for increased traffic have created pressure points on the roading network. Park and ride for the BRT is less feasible in this scenario as there is less available land and it is more costly. More likely to occur post 2055.
 Infrastructure - Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demand for student places will potentially soon exceed supply in the existing school network, requiring the planned primary schools in Peacocke and additional space at existing schools. There is also a higher demand in Rukuhia. Community facilities such as libraries and open spaces have also been delivered in accordance with the structure plan in Peacocke. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educational and recreational facilities across the growth areas have been met with staged investment.
 Environment / Heritage / Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Iwi aspirations are integrated through the development corporation governance structures and co-management of ecological corridors. Te Ao Maaori, cultural heritage and sites of significance are celebrated, with authentic partnership between mana whenua and council in both planning and day-to-day management. Built form, landscape, and water systems incorporate Maaori design principles and maatauranga Maaori, including reference to Tai Tumu Tai Pari Tai Ao and other relevant iwi management plans. Blue-green corridors expand in Peacocke and Mystery Creek, but some areas around the Airport face pressures despite the corporation's masterplan incorporating environmental safeguards into the industrial precinct planning. Potential impacts on biodiversity and long-tailed bat habitats are under threat. These require further investigation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Development Corporation's agreements enforce strong sustainability standards for industrial tenants. Development is able to quantify its contributions to achieving restoration of the River. Blue-green corridors and peat lake protections are embedded across both council- and corporation-led developments. Co-management with iwi ensures cultural heritage and ecological restoration are delivered alongside industrial growth.

Scenario Elements – Key assumptions (continued)

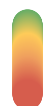
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	By 2040	By 2055
 <p>Planning and Staging</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The strategic boundary agreement had been proceeding, and SL1 has moved to HCC. SL2 is under pressure to be further developed, and SBA for the SL2 area needs to be accelerated. • Airport Business Zone has expanded to the riverbank. • Mystery Creek Events Zone has expanded to include more activities linked to its tourism activities. • A process would need to be established to determine the lead infrastructure and ensure coordination across different infrastructure types. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further boundary adjustments are now unnecessary as the Councils have been able to adopt a boundaryless approach to planning and infrastructure funding. This has been achieved through the alignment and/or merger of the two water entities and the joint control of the Development Corporation.

Scenario Four: Economic-led growth By 2040



Legend

- District lines
- State Highways
- Waikato River
- Railway
- Hamilton Southern Links designation
- Study area boundary

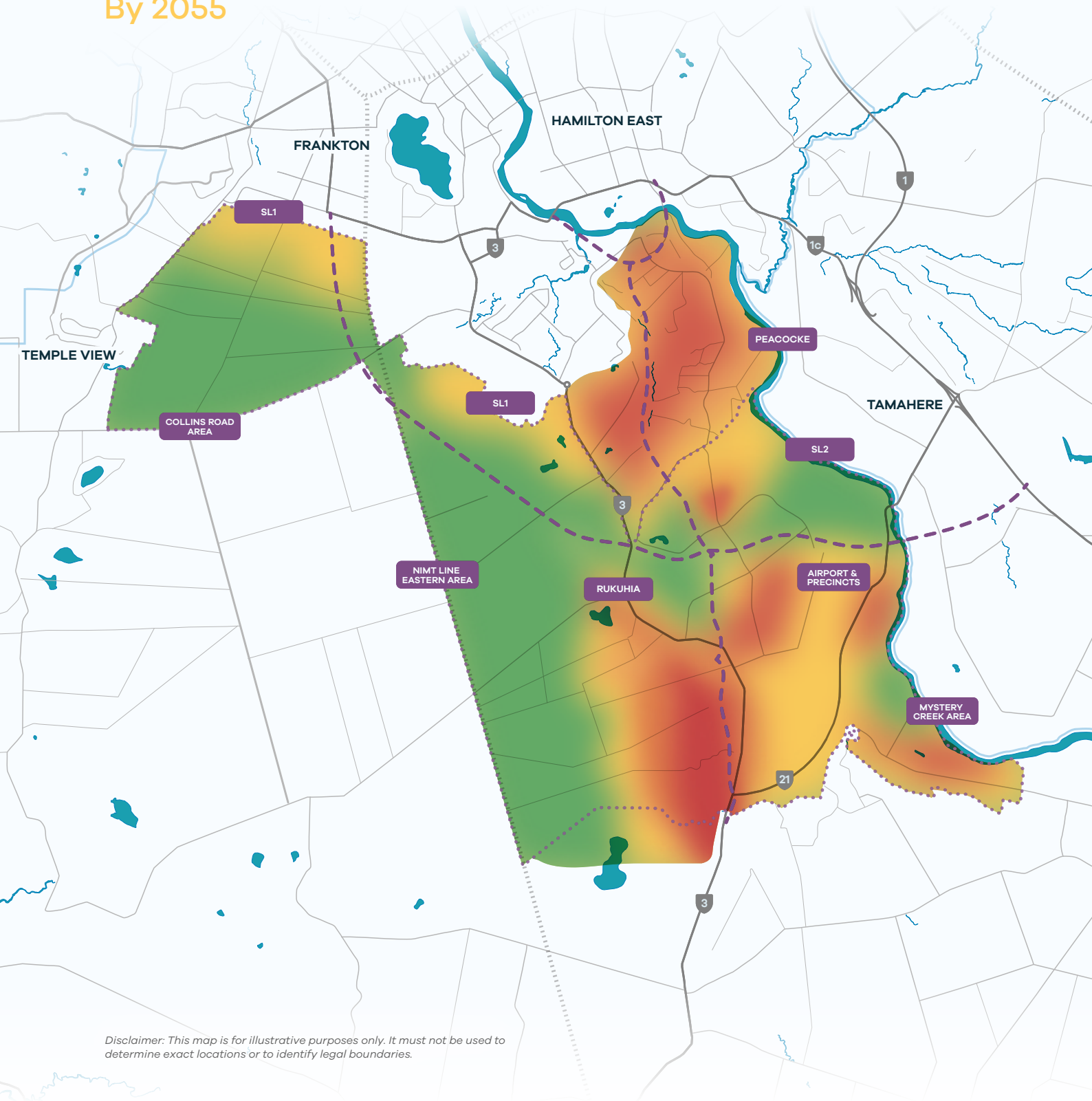


Lower or no development / activity*

Higher level of development / activity*

*Level of residential, industrial, or commercial development or activity compared to the 2025 baseline.

Scenario Four: Economic-led growth By 2055



Legend

- District lines
- State Highways
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What does the “By 2055” scenario imply in terms of our outcome statements?



Employment and Job Opportunities

By 2055, the Airport precinct and Ruakura together function as a super-industrial hub for the subregion, leveraging each other’s strengths. The development corporation has curated a portfolio of high-value, globally competitive sectors — advanced logistics, clean tech manufacturing, agri-tech processing, and export-oriented food innovation. Waikato University research partnerships and mana whenua enterprises anchor the innovation ecosystem, making the precinct a key national driver of employment. Thousands of jobs are created across aviation and non-aviation industries, with strong training pipelines established in collaboration with tertiary institutions.



A Great Place to Live

Residential growth has been slower and more controlled, shaped by council-led staging through the regional spatial plan and long-term plans. Compact, medium-density neighbourhoods have flourished in Peacocke, Rukuhia, and Ōhaupō, with high-quality green infrastructure and active transport networks integrated from the outset. Communities are well-served by local schools and shared facilities, though housing affordability pressures remain due to demand around the industrial employment centres. SL1, after decades of delay, has only begun development towards the late 2050s, ensuring that elite soils remain largely intact until constructability solutions were secure.



Easy to Get Around

By 2055, Southern Links is fully operational, providing efficient freight and commuter access to the airport, Hamilton and the southern part of the Waipā district. A Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) spine links Hamilton, the airport, and Te Awamutu, complemented by feeder services. Freight rail connections to the airport are also under investigation. Walking and cycling corridors run through all new residential areas, linking into the Te Awa River Trail and Future Proof’s blue-green network. However, high freight volumes still dominate SH3 and local corridors, creating tension with liveability in nearby settlements and, at times, creating further community severance.



Supporting Iwi Aspirations

Mana whenua influence is embedded in governance through the Development Corporation and directly in land development opportunities. Papakaainga are integrated within growth cells, and iwi-led eco-tourism and cultural hubs at Mystery Creek and along the Waikato River are thriving. Co-governance arrangements extend across environmental management, river health monitoring, and reserve design. The return of whānau to rural and peri-urban villages has strengthened cultural identity, while iwi enterprises in agri-tech, logistics, and training programmes ensure Māori are active partners and beneficiaries of growth.



Caring for the Environment and the Waikato River

Environmental management has been elevated as a binding constraint. The Development Corporation requires all industries to meet stringent discharge standards, with wet industries excluded from the precinct to protect water supply and river health. The Southern Wastewater Treatment Plant provides highly treated, modular servicing for industrial and residential users, reducing reliance on trucked wastewater. The blue-green network is fully realised, with restored gullies, riparian corridors, and peatland buffers linking across the study area. Continuous monitoring under Te Ture Whaimana o Te Awa o Waikato ensures that the river's health is the primary test for new growth and there is an ability to quantify the positive contribution of development to the restoration of the River.



Level of Strategic Infrastructure Alignment

This scenario demonstrates strong alignment with the central government's framework by encouraging industrial and economic growth and leveraging infrastructure investment. It also aligns with the Future Proof Strategy objectives of compact urban form and coordinated investment. The development corporation model provides certainty and reduces fragmented delivery in industrial land, ensuring national infrastructure priorities (airport, freight, innovation hubs) are supported. Residential growth remains under council control, meaning the balance between local needs and regional strategies is retained.



Feasibility and Constructability

Feasibility challenges continue to centre on SL1's peat soils which delayed development until at least 2055. Elsewhere, the development corporation has been able to leverage pooled capital, central government investment, and private partnerships to deliver industrial land efficiently. The separation of industrial (corporation-led) and residential (council-led) development has reduced risks of over-investment.