



Orākei Visitor Strategy

2015-2018

www.nztri.org

July 2014

Orākei Local Board

Executive Summary



The Orākei Visitor Strategy 2015-2018 provides a simple framework to assist community and business to grow the Orākei Ward economy through stronger engagement with the visitor industry. Fundamental to this plan is recognition of the economic importance of attracting visitors to Orakei to enhance the quality of life of those who live in our communities. We will focus on getting our residents out and about to see more of Orākei, to connect with each other, and to bring their visiting friends and relatives (VFR) with them.

A key feature of the Strategy is a network of themed trails that connect people to our beautiful natural environments and rich cultural heritage, making Orākei more of a walking, cycling, or even kayaking destination – good for the fun, health and well-being of our residents *and* our visitors. We will continue to deliver exceptional experiences with outstanding hospitality and service in our cafes, bars, restaurants and retail stores, and we will celebrate our successes. To provide better information for residents and visitors we will improve linkages online and offline, enhance our web presence, and communicate the stories of ‘our place’ with clear messages about the experiences we have to offer.

It is vital to give visitors a reason to ‘slow down’, stay longer and spend more money and we can do this by making the most of the distinctiveness of each of our local areas. To achieve this the Strategy involves business owners/operators, residents and community groups in understanding and defining local ‘sense of place’ and interpreting it for visitors.

The Strategy is informed by a programme of research conducted by the New Zealand Tourism Research Institute at the Auckland University of Technology (NZTRI) between January 2013 and May 2014 (a full outline of the three phases of the research programme together with reports can be found on <http://orakei.getlocal.org.nz>). The research highlights a need to integrate the natural environment, culture, heritage and stories of the people and places of Orākei into the visitor experience.

This Strategy is designed to support and dovetail with existing initiatives and planned developments of the Orākei Local Board in areas of economic and community development, place-making, and enhancements to Tamaki Drive and other local areas.

Acknowledgements

This Strategy was completed by Dr Carolyn Deuchar and Professor Simon Milne with support from Suzanne Histen, Eilidh Thorburn and Nathaniel Dobbin and the team at the New Zealand Tourism Research Institute at the Auckland University of Technology (www.nztri.org) based in Auckland, New Zealand. The work was initiated and funded by Orākei Local Board with support from ATEED and the St Heliers, Mission Bay, Remuera and Ellerslie Business Associations. We acknowledge the input of the Orākei Visitor Strategy Group who guided the research programme that was integral to the development of the Strategy, and the business owners/operators, residents and community groups who participated in the research activities that informed it.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	1
Acknowledgements	2
Introduction	4
Where are we now?	5
<i>Visitor spend and satisfaction</i>	6
Where do we want to be by 2018?	8
How will we get there?	9
<i>Four objectives for Orākei</i>	10
Objective 1: A public, private and community partnership	11
Objective 2: Network themed trails and activities	12
Objective 3: Deliver exceptional service and quality experiences	13
Objective 4: Use technology to enhance the visitor experience	14
How will we measure progress?	16

Introduction



With our beautiful natural environment, unique coastline, engaging recreational spaces, and vibrant hospitality and retail sectors, Orākei has achieved considerable success as a visitor destination. However we cannot rest on our laurels and must continue to look for opportunities to enhance the visitor experience and to increase local economic benefits.

This Strategy provides a framework to guide everyone who stands to benefit from the visitor economy in Orākei - our residents, community groups and businesses. Tourism really is everyone's business. There are businesses and facilities that are used by our local people that are heavily supported by visitors. Our visitors come from other parts of Auckland, New Zealand and overseas to our sporting, cultural, heritage, and natural attractions. They come for retail shopping, a short excursion or day trip, a holiday, leisure, events, business, conventions and exhibitions, education, and to visit friends and relatives. The 'new' dollars they bring into our economy help to create jobs that encourage people to stay in our communities and pay for infrastructure and services that everyone benefits from.

To deliver memorable experiences for both residents and visitors we must first capture the hearts and minds of our residents with new and engaging ways to discover and enjoy 'our place' and then encourage others to do so. We must make the best use of our existing resources and become known for the warmth of our welcome, exceptional customer service and our innovative approach to delivering an excellent experience for visitors and locals alike.

The Strategy begins with a review of the current visitor offer and highlights from the NZTRI research programme that informs the framework. We then ask: Where do we want to be by 2018? And: 'How will we get there? The Strategy outlines four linked objectives and the actions designed to deliver growth in the visitor economy of Orākei. Finally, we outline an evaluation programme to measure the success of our endeavours.

Where are we now?

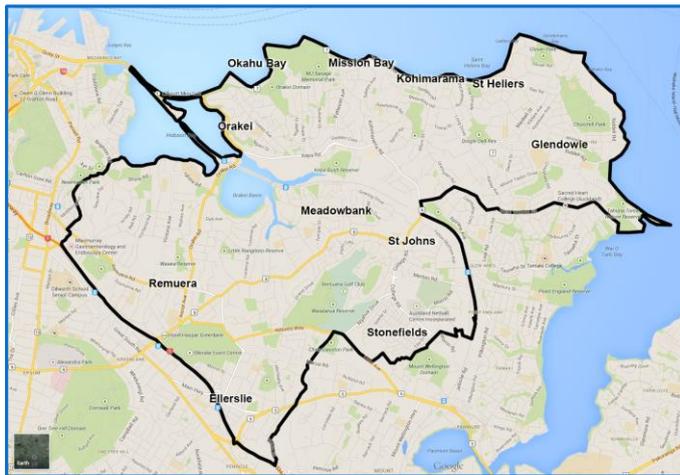


Orākei offers a series of distinct experiences for our residents and our visitors to enjoy. Tamaki Drive is a popular coastal road which follows the contours of the Waitematā Harbour along the seaside communities of Okahu Bay, Mission Bay, Kohimarama, and St Heliers. These local areas with their village feel, also offer spectacular views to and from the Hauraki Gulf. There are open spaces, beaches, and cliffs in this coastal setting. Orākei also has areas of important cultural history and significance and we recognise the special place of the iwi of our Ward, Ngāti Whatua o Orākei, and their relationship with the land and the sea.

We also offer the unique biodiversity and ecology found in our wetlands, parks, reserves, beaches and coastal environments and waterways. There are many playgrounds and sporting facilities, and a good network of footpaths, walkways and cycle ways. Outdoor activities include golf, walking and cycling, paddle boarding, kayaking, inline skating, bird watching, horse racing, swimming – or simply relaxing in the sun.

Orākei is one of the smallest of the 13 Auckland Council Wards in terms of geographic area and includes the villages and town centres of the Tamaki Drive precinct (Okahu Bay, Mission Bay, Kohimarama, and St Heliers), Stonefields, Glendowie, Orākei, St Johns, and Meadowbank (see Figure 1). There are few ‘traditional’ tourism businesses such as tours and attractions but our local areas have a rich history and pre and post-colonial heritage worth sharing. We have good quality restaurants, cafes, bars, shopping areas that attract significant expenditure by locals and visitors, as well as excellent sporting facilities, schools, cultural, heritage and community groups. Orakei is a relatively ‘compact’ destination in central Auckland and has excellent transport links to and from downtown.

Figure 1: Map of the Orākei Ward



The population of Orākei (2013 census) is approximately 80,000 with around 33% of our residents born overseas – the majority of whom come from the People’s Republic of China, and to a lesser extent the Pacific Islands. The median household income in Orākei is the highest across all 21 local boards, and considerably higher than the regional median.

A key focus of the New Zealand Tourism 2025 framework is attracting high value visitors from China and in ATEED’s Auckland Visitor Plan the goal is to get Aucklanders spending more of their leisure dollars in the Auckland region. While we aim to attract more visitors from other parts of New Zealand and overseas to Orākei, we will focus our efforts on ‘selling’ Orākei to local residents and other Aucklanders, given the VFR potential and opportunities to encourage spending in our businesses.

Visitor spend and satisfaction



Research conducted by NZTRI in 2013 with visitors to Tamaki Drive, Remuera and Ellerslie revealed that while spend in both the retail, and the food and drink sectors is relatively strong people are not staying in our villages and town centres long enough for local businesses to make the most of the economic opportunities that present themselves. In Tamaki Drive, most people stay for up to half a day but do not connect with the retail areas in Mission Bay and St Heliers to any great extent. Expenditure per person along Tamaki Drive is only half of that in Ellerslie and Remuera, where visitors tend to stay less than two hours on average.

Visitors to all three local areas told us they enjoy the bars, restaurants and vibrant café culture, beautiful coastline, recreational spaces, and landscapes on offer in the Orakei Ward. The research showed that visitors are 'less satisfied' with the variety of retail shopping, the availability of good parking, heritage, cultural and visitor attractions, and the ability to get 'good value for money'. While visitors are generally happy with the quality of food in cafes, restaurants and bars, there is room for improvement in standards of customer service in hospitality and retail businesses.

Visitors told us that they would like a more enriching experience, with a broader variety of activities, augmented by stories of the history (and culture) associated with the land and the sea. Visitors also told us that better signage would help guide them around the area and let them know what there is to do and see and that better information online would help them connect to local experiences that together make up the Orakei visitor offering. Concerns expressed over parking availability and congestion lead us to focus on alternative forms of transportation, including walking and cycling bus and train travel.

To encourage more visitors to stay longer and spend more, Orakei needs to offer a more diverse range of 'things to do' than simply to 'eat and drink'. Better links to existing trails parks and walkways, cultural and heritage attractions, and information about local events are also needed. We must create a stronger and more coherent tourism identity in terms of information available for visitors and signage to support way-finding online and offline – especially along Tamaki Drive.

There is also a need to improve links to 'anchor' attractions (for example, Kelly Tarlton's, Ellerslie Racecourse – see <http://orakei.getlocal.org.nz> for a map of our tourism assets) and find ways to keep the distinctive friendly village atmosphere of our local areas. At the same time we need to find ways to develop and promote activities which will attract more visitors and keep them coming back.

Where do we want to be by 2018?

Orākei's visitor industry will play a major role in building a strong local economy, with thriving businesses and distinctive people-oriented local centres serving both resident and visitor needs.

Our aim is to achieve growth in the visitor economy in a way that balances community quality of life and environmental sustainability with visitor and local business needs.

We want to:

- Continue to intensify collaboration between public agencies, businesses, and our residents and communities to develop and manage the visitor economy in a cohesive manner.
- Focus on yield and increase the 'spend' per visitor, especially in Tamaki Drive.
- Raise satisfaction levels and enhance recreational experiences for visitors and residents by giving them a more diverse range of 'things to do'.
- Communicate our stories, and give better information (online and offline) about our recreational places, heritage and culture, and 'things to do' - and do this in an accessible way.
- Stimulate positive 'word of mouth' and peer reviews about visiting Orākei.
- Cultivate the art of 'welcoming visitors' to Orākei and improve service standards in hospitality and retail.

How will we get there?



We will work together to enhance the visitor *and* community experience of tourism. Business and community development are very closely tied together as neighbourhoods in urban areas around the world increasingly understand the value of mobilising locals to develop and promote destinations.

Residents and business owners/operators often possess the greatest assets for tourism of all: local knowledge, storytelling and a deep *sense of place*. Sense of place is about the distinctive sights, sounds, smells, tastes, stories and local knowledge of hidden gems and fun ‘things to do’ that are the unique and memorable qualities of a local area. These unique elements are important for both residents and visitors. Communicating effectively our distinctive sense of place is a critical factor in our ability as a destination to grow the visitor industry and is a key element in supporting economic growth across Orākei.

Four objectives for Orākei

Four linked objectives focus on getting local residents and Aucklanders out and about to see more of Orākei, to connect with each other and to bring their visiting friends and relatives (VFR) with them (Figure 2).

Strong community and neighbourhood involvement will encourage partnerships and stewardship to allow our visitor industry to develop in a sustainable manner. This requires public, private and community to work together to deliver a well-planned and managed destination.

To give people a reason to 'slow down', stay longer and spend more money we will enhance the visitor experience by making the most of the distinctiveness of each of our local areas. To do this **Objective 1** involves business owners/operators, residents and community groups in activities to: identify themes for new experiences, understand and define local *sense of place* and to begin to interpret this for visitors. It is vital that we retain the momentum and links with the Visitor Strategy Group and other 'locals' that formed as part of the Strategy development process.

A network of themed trails (**Objective 2**) will aim to slow the visitor down and connect people to our beautiful natural environments and rich cultural heritage. We aim to make Orākei more of a walking, cycling, or even kayaking destination with experiences enhanced by local storytelling. **Objective 3** focuses on delivering outstanding hospitality and service in our cafes, bars, restaurants and retail stores, with an Awards programme to celebrate our successes. To provide better visitor information we will improve linkages online and offline and leverage from technology (**Objective 4**) in innovative ways to enhance our web presence, and communicate the stories of 'our place' with clear messages about the experiences we have to offer.

This Visitor Strategy focuses on setting achievable goals with realistic outcomes. These four objectives are designed to be cost-effective strategic options that make the most of what we have already by building on local knowledge through engagement with a broad variety of local stakeholders. The Strategy is not reliant on the availability of large sums of money, and the action items for each Objective can be implemented on an incremental basis.

Figure 2: Four linked objectives



Objective 1: A public, private and community partnership



- 1.1 Provide opportunities for locals (residents and businesses) to celebrate what we have in 'our own backyard' and to become more familiar with our people and places. Build on existing events and activities that involve locals (business and community) by adding a dimension associated with the visitor economy. Run a simple campaign entitled *In Our Own Backyard* to understand and define what's special about our place, share stories, and learn more about our neighbourhoods. Use this information to develop themes for new niche experiences based on what locals would love to share with visitors.
- 1.2 Engage local residents in developing *In Our Own Backyard* promotional material for businesses so that they can become local ambassadors for visitors, providing first-hand knowledge on where to go and what to do, and increase awareness among residents of the visitor offer.
- 1.3 Engage ethnic groups and co-create experiences suited to visiting family and friends e.g. develop an *In Our Own Backyard* brochure in the Chinese language for students from overseas, and families with visitors from China who are often at home while family members work.
- 1.4 Ensure the visitor economy is considered in all aspects of Local Board planning and in communications to businesses and residents about local initiatives. Focus press and public relations activities on the *In Our Own Backyard* initiative.

Objective 2: Network themed trails and activities



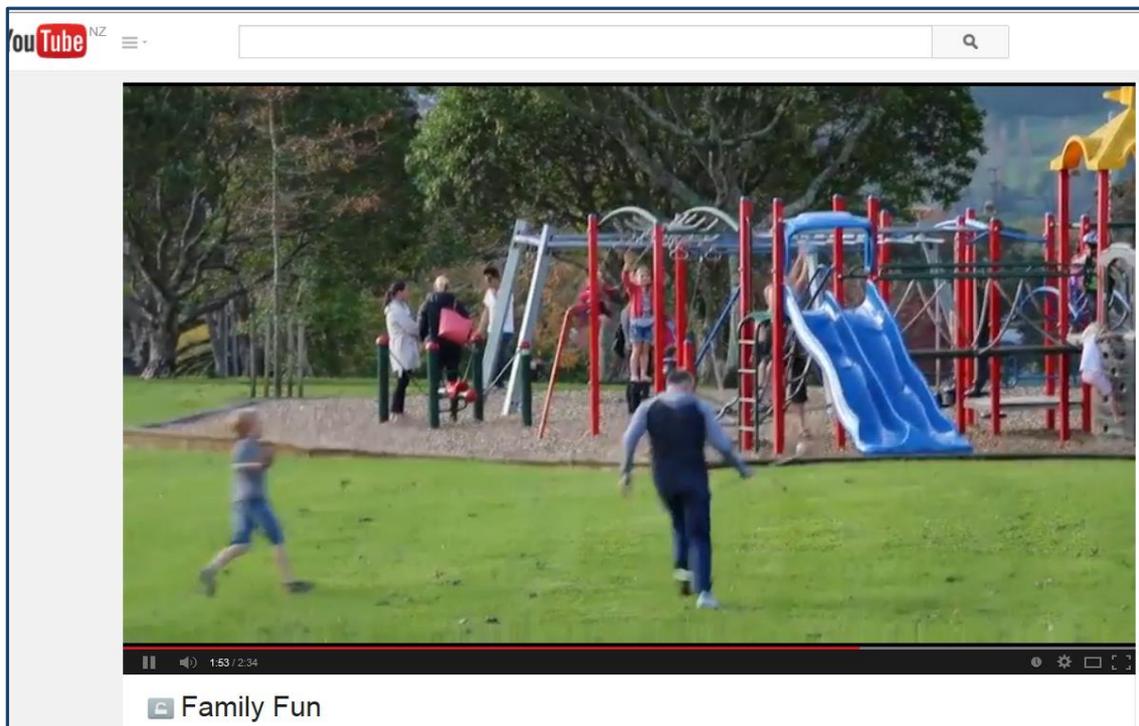
- 2.1 Develop an ‘Orākei trails network’ based on themed experiences. These will take in neighbourhoods, parks and open spaces; beaches, coast, and waterways; urban villages, town centres and hospitality and shopping areas; sport and cultural venues. From the ‘*In Our Own Backyard*’ campaign gather ideas for themed experiences – especially those that feature our natural and cultural heritage. The strategy commences with the themed trails identified through the research that underpins this strategy.
- 2.2 Further develop and implement the three pre-concept notes for Tamaki Drive (Protecting our place), Remuera (Urban story-telling trail) and Ellerslie (In Top Form). Continue to create pre-concept notes for other themed trails identified in the research and additional ideas generated by the ‘*In Our Own Backyard*’ campaign.
- 2.3 Grow the visitor experience throughout the Orākei Ward: we will build on the research activities that underpin the Strategy and conduct similar work in other local areas of the Orākei Ward e.g. Stonefields, Glendowie, Orākei, St Johns, and Meadowbank. The strategy will draw on activities and outcomes in Tamaki Drive, Remuera and Ellerslie as ‘cases’ to support this work. It is vital to work with local businesses and community to develop ideas for local events and activities associated with the themed trails.
- 2.4 Create a common ‘tourism’ identity and improve signage along and around Tamaki Drive precinct (see Phase 1 research Local Tourism Audit findings for specific recommendations). More signage is needed for cultural and heritage attractions, and playgrounds, water sports and activities. To create a coherent tourism identity, signage should have a similar colour palette/layout but be ‘recognisable’ for each local area (e.g. Okahu Bay, Mission Bay, Kohimarama, and St Heliers).

Objective 3: Deliver exceptional service and quality experiences



- 4.1 Develop a local mentoring scheme of key tourism and hospitality operators who are willing to 'mentor' business association managers and retailers to enhance service skills and knowledge of the local visitor industry.
- 4.2 Create a programme of Awards for those who offer outstanding customer service. Create and design these Awards to provide added value and improve the visitor experience through product knowledge and better service. The Orākei Hospitality Award will acknowledge outstanding customer service by a hospitality business (food & beverage, accommodation). The Orākei Retail Award will acknowledge outstanding customer service given by a local retailer. Businesses can be nominated by patrons to receive an Award and an online voting system implemented via social media linked to a local website or portal. The Orākei Mentoring Award will reward significant contributions to the development of tourism in terms of mentoring retailers, tourism and hospitality business/owners operators.
- 4.3 Create a reward or system of recognition for local residents who volunteer their time for the *In Our Own Backyard* activities. In the longer term this could lead to community-based sustainable tourism awards for groups that effectively manage, develop or plan tourism in their locality.

Objective 4: Use technology to enhance the visitor experience



- 3.1 Leverage from the use of technology to build local sense of place and enhance the visitor experience. Create an informative resource accessible to all types of travellers and inform residents and visitors of available points of interest throughout the Orakei Ward. This will start with simple, cost-effective mapping techniques associated with the themed trails. Create a hard copy map (brochure) of the *Orakei Trails Network* and extend on the Google maps of the themed trails created in Phase 3 research.
- 3.2 Continue to enhance the online visibility and broaden the ‘web presence’ of Orākei through the development of locally generated content (see <http://orakei.getlocal.org.nz> Phase 3). By drawing on these examples, continue to involve local residents and experts in creating videos, podcasts, images, and text to tell stories associated with the history (and culture) of the land and the sea as well as tips on local experiences, and add this content to trail maps for each local area.
- 3.3 Create an online information resource providing information and an online identity for Orākei with community-generated pages with content from businesses, residents and community groups. Involving our residents in building this resource will result in ongoing self-sustaining content generation over time.
- 3.4 Use social media to promote positive word of mouth and encourage local advocacy for visitors to come to Orākei. Conduct advanced training in social media for business association managers. Create a YouTube channel for Orākei and promote all areas of the Ward.

- 3.5 Use smart phone application media and advanced mapping techniques to stimulate activities for the Tamaki Drive *Protecting Our Place* theme. Investigate the use of a system to house maps, videos and podcasts made by local residents, and highlight points of interest for visitors. The Tamaki Drive visitor strategy group want to create more videos to enhance the online 'visibility' of Tamaki Drive as a visitor destination. The App would provide information and guides/trails associated with the theme and include general descriptions of the trail, detailed tracks and walks with GPS, highlighting several points of interest which would include photographs and optional video and audio. This will later be rolled out in other areas in Orakei.



In striving for these objectives, we will deliver the following:

- Improved levels of business and local community networking and cooperation.
- Stronger community engagement with the visitor industry.
- A network of themed trails that enhance both the visitor and resident experience of Orakei including six new trails by October 2015 and further trail developments in ensuing years.
- Longer visitor stays and a 5% increase in average visitor spend each year during the period of the Strategy.
- Improved levels of visitor satisfaction with customer service in hospitality and retail, and with the experience of natural, cultural and heritage attractions.
- A greater range of locally specific information for residents and visitors, both online and in on-site signage.
- A greater resident awareness of local experiences, and tourism more generally, so that we can all be better informed hosts to visiting friends and relatives.
- A stronger sense of place for residents and visitors, and an opportunity to tell and share our stories about 'Our Own Back Yard' and portray ourselves to the outside world.

How will we measure progress?

The research programme that informed the development of this Strategy provides a set of useful 'barometers' to monitor progress. After a period of time to allow for dissemination and uptake of various aspects of this strategy, we will build on earlier surveys (Visitor and Business) to evaluate the impacts of this Strategy and how they can be fine-tuned.

Evaluation of the strategy will include a) qualitative/quantitative research to evaluate networking and collaborative activity b) a local tourism audit including the evolving web presence of Orākei as a destination, as well as an on-site evaluation of the visitor experience and c) the use of a survey to understand visitor spend and satisfaction levels.

For further information please contact:

The New Zealand Tourism Research Institute
Auckland University of Technology (AUT)
Private Bag 92006
AUCKLAND 1142
New Zealand

Principal contacts:

Dr Carolyn Deuchar
Senior Research Fellow, NZTRI
carolyn.deuchar@aut.ac.nz
M: 021 1665 878

Professor Simon Milne
Director, NZTRI
simon.milne@aut.ac.nz