

TO ARDS 2050

Timaru District's Aspirational Plan

DRAFT





Thank you for shaping our future

When we said the Towards 2050 plan wasn't about me or you – but about US – our community answered the call.

Thanks to the input of nearly 300 people and organisations, we've created a bold, forward-thinking plan that reflects our shared hopes for the future.

We're grateful to everyone who took the time to contribute. Together, we've laid the foundations for a stronger, more vibrant district.

Nigel Davenport
CEO, Venture Timaru



Venture Timaru
DISTRICT - DEVELOPMENT AGENCY



Appendix

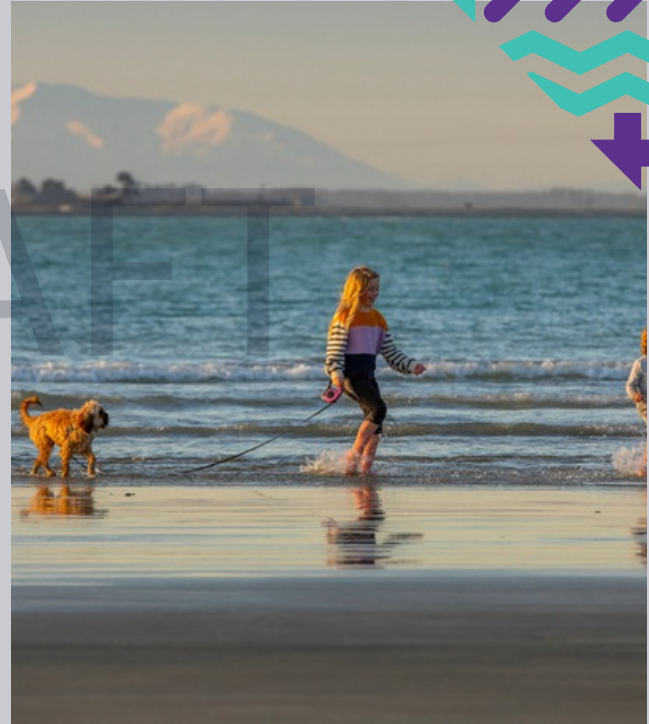
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The future starts here

We're excited to present Towards 2050, a shared vision for the future of the Timaru District, shaped by the voices of our community. More than 300 people from all walks of life – local residents, business owners, iwi, industry leaders, social agencies and elected members have given input to where we are now, and where we want to be in 25 years.

Timaru District is changing. Our population is getting older, fewer babies are being born, and we're becoming more ethnically diverse. We're facing challenges like keeping up with workforce demands and making sure our infrastructure is ready for the future.

These changes are opportunities to think differently, to grow together, and to lead the way as a district that's ready for what's next.



At the heart of our vision are,

People, Place, Prosperity

Through all the conversations we've had, one message came through loud and clear: the community wants a plan that puts people first. You told us you want long-term thinking, fair access to opportunities, and a future that's built to last.

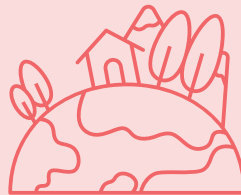
Towards 2050 is our response to that call. It's a practical, people-powered roadmap that brings together local government, businesses, education providers, social agencies and the wider community.

This is about building a future where everyone can thrive.

And it starts now, with all of us.



You've told us that people need to come first, and this plan reflects that.



We're planning to grow in a way that enhances our identity and protects what matters most.



You've told us our economy needs to evolve and that's what we're planning for.

The framework

Our planning framework is interconnected. Shared aspirations define the outcomes we are working toward, the pillars set the long-term direction, priorities guide focus and implementation, and five transformational plans (Five in Five) accelerate delivery and unlock tangible progress.



A shared plan needs shared action.

Achieving our aspirations for 2050 depends on collective effort. Our planning framework is designed so that everyone – businesses, community groups, organisations, investors and partners, can play a role in aligning everyday decisions and supporting long-term outcomes that deliver transformational change.

This page outlines how you can get involved, show alignment, and actively contribute.

Pathway	Who it's for	What you can do	How to show alignment & support	Outcome
Align Everyday Decisions (BAU)	Businesses, community groups, education providers, public agencies	Align strategies, policies, projects and daily decision-making with shared aspirations and pillars.	Complete the Aspirations & Pillars Alignment Checklist & submit it to Venture Timaru to receive endorsed recognition.	Consistent decision-making aligned to long-term outcomes and district direction
Support Transformational Delivery	Sector leaders, industry groups, delivery partners, government agencies	Participate in or lead actions within the Five in Five transformational plans across five-year terms	Register interest and commit to shared accountability and planning	Accelerated delivery of priority projects and visible progress
Invest and Partner	Investors, funders, philanthropic organisations, strategic partners	Co-invest, fund or partner to unlock priority projects and initiatives	Partner agreements, investment commitments, project participation	Scaled impact and delivery of transformational change
Champion the Plan	All stakeholders	Advocate, collaborate and promote alignment with the framework	Publicly endorse the plan and demonstrate alignment through actions	Community-wide momentum and confidence toward 2050

A future for ALL.

Thriving, connected & valued.

We envisage a future where everyone, no matter their age, background, or circumstance, has the opportunity to thrive. That means planning for lifelong learning, youth development, senior inclusion and strong cultural and social connections.

Wellbeing is at the centre of our thinking, from access to healthcare and education, to safety, pride and inclusion. Our plan creates a community where every person feels valued and supported.

We also recognise that people's needs are constantly evolving. That's why we're planning to use population data and service modelling to inform how we support communities. Transparent and inclusive use of data will help ensure no one is left behind.

People

You've told us that people need to come first, and this plan reflects that.



Quality of life

'Our goal is for more people to enjoy a good life in Timaru, feeling supported, healthy, and proud to live here.'

Workforce Diversity

'It's important that our workforce reflects the richness of our community and gives everyone a fair shot at success.'

Cultural Inclusion

'We're working toward a community where everyone feels they belong and are treated with dignity.'

Senior Participation

'We're aiming for older residents to stay active, involved and connected in meaningful ways.'

Youth Opportunity

'We want to see young people stepping confidently into their futures with access to real opportunities.'

People

We need to know we're moving in the right direction. Behind each **aspiration** below, sit data sets that will help track the success of our plan.

Quality of life

'Our goal is for more people to enjoy a good life in Timaru, feeling supported, healthy, and proud to live here.'

% of residents reporting life is 'good' or 'very good.'

Population trends

NPS Survey score - live
Census

Cultural Inclusion

'We're working toward a community where everyone feels they belong and are treated with dignity.'

% of residents who feel respected and included.

NPS Survey score - live

Youth Opportunity

'We want to see young people stepping confidently into their futures with access to real opportunities.'

Disengaged Youth NEET rate.

Infometrics

Workforce Diversity

'It's important that our workforce reflects the richness of our community and gives everyone a fair shot at success.'

Representation of diversity in leadership roles.

Infometrics

Senior Participation

'We're aiming for older residents to stay active, involved, and connected in meaningful ways.'

% of older adults involved in paid work, volunteering, or community activities.

Census

Community Safety

'We aspire to build communities where everyone feels safe, supported, and secure.'

% of older residents reporting they feel safe in their community.

NPS Survey score - live

Our legacy of opportunity.

Liveable, sustainable & connected for generations.

We imagine walkable, green neighbourhoods with homes that are affordable, diverse and built for how people live today and tomorrow. Infrastructure is a big part of that, from climate-resilient water systems and smarter transport options to improved digital access across the district.

At the heart of this is our commitment to sustainability, reducing emissions, protecting nature, and planning spaces where people and the environment flourish together.

We're also planning for smarter places. Integrated data systems and smart city technologies will help us manage traffic, water, energy and public services more efficiently while improving everyday life. Our planning framework will balance growth with environmental protection, using flexible, future-ready regulations to guide sustainable development.

Place

We're planning to grow in a way that enhances our identity and protect what matters most.



Home Ownership

'We'd like to see more residents with the security and pride that comes from owning their own home.'

Infrastructure Satisfaction

'Our goal is a well-serviced district where people can rely on strong infrastructure to live, work and connect.'

Affordable Housing

'We're striving for a future where housing is affordable, and no one has to sacrifice essentials just to get by.'

Resilient Infrastructure

'We want to see smart investments in infrastructure that stand the test of time and changing conditions.'

Low Emissions

'We're committed to lowering emissions as we move toward a cleaner, more climate-friendly community.'

Place

We need to know we're moving in the right direction. Behind each **aspiration** below, sit data sets that will help track the success of our plan.

Home Ownership

We'd like to see more residents with the security and pride that comes from owning their own home.'

% of people living in homes they or their family own.

Census

Affordable Housing

We're striving for a future where housing is affordable, and no one has to sacrifice essentials just to get by.'

Rental Affordability

Infometrics

Low Emissions

We're committed to lowering emissions as we move toward a cleaner, more climate-friendly community.'

Industrial Emissions

Carbon Emissions

Infometrics

Infrastructure Satisfaction

Our goal is a well-served district where people can rely on strong infrastructure to live, work and connect.

% of residents and business operators satisfied with access to water, roads and digital connectivity.

NPS Survey Score - live

Resilient Infrastructure

We want to see smart investments in infrastructure that stand the test of time and changing conditions.'

% of key infrastructure projects delivered on time and designed for future conditions.

TDC, ECAN, Alpine Energy



Creating resilience. Embracing innovation.

Smart growth, bold innovation
& shared opportunity.

We envisage a future where Timaru District's economy is diverse, resilient and powered by innovation. That includes strengthening traditional sectors like food and fibre, while also growing industries such as advanced manufacturing, renewable energy, logistics, aerospace and biotech.

We want prosperity to be inclusive, where success means more people have access to opportunities, upskilling and meaningful work.

To enable this, we're considering how regulations can better support business growth, removing barriers while still ensuring social and environmental responsibility. We're also planning to use real-time data and forecasting to better understand industry trends, skills need, and future opportunities, helping us stay ahead of change and support a more adaptive, responsive economy.

Prosperity

You've told us our economy needs to evolve and that's what we're planning for.



Job Creation

'We're focused on creating more local jobs so more people can build a secure and rewarding future here.'

Emerging Sector

'Our focus is on seeing new industries take root and bring diverse, high-value jobs to the region.'

Business Activity

'Our aim is a dynamic local economy with new and growing businesses across future-focused industries.'

Workforce Skills & Innovation

'We're building a skilled, creative workforce ready to take on tomorrow's challenges and opportunities.'

Productivity

'We're working to boost the value created in every job, helping businesses grow and workers succeed.'

Equity of Opportunity

'It matters that income growth is fair and that success is shared across every part of our community.'

Prosperity

We need to know we're moving in the right direction. Behind each **aspiration** below, sit data sets that will help track the success of our plan.

Job Creation

'We're focused on creating more local jobs so more people can build a secure and rewarding future here.'

Annual employment growth.

Infometrics

Business Activity

'Our aim is a dynamic local economy with new and growing businesses across future-focused industries.'

Number of businesses (especially in tech, innovation, and logistics).

Infometrics

Productivity

'We're working to boost the value created in every job, helping businesses grow and workers succeed.'

GDP/output per filled job.

Infometrics

Emerging Sector

'Our focus is on seeing new industries take root and bring diverse, high-value jobs to the region.'

Growth in jobs and revenue in sectors like advanced manufacturing, aerospace, biotech and digital services.

Infometrics.

Workforce Skills & Innovation

'We're building a skilled, creative workforce ready to take on tomorrow's challenges and opportunities.'

Knowledge Intensive employment.

High Skilled Roles

Infometrics

Equity of Opportunity

'It matters that income growth is fair and that success is shared across every part of our community.'

Median income by demographic group.

Infometrics

Together for tomorrow.

Building our resilient future.

Rooted in community insight and driven by a shared ambition to make Timaru District a thriving, inclusive and future-ready district, the Towards 2050 priorities reflect what residents and stakeholders value most: sustainability, opportunity, live-ability and equity.

Implementing the plan will require cross-sector collaboration and visionary leadership.

By aligning investment, governance and community action, we can build a future where all residents, present and future, can live, work, and grow with confidence.

The Towards 2050 plan offers a roadmap for our growth over the next 25 years, ensuring resilience and adaptability amid demographic and economic changes.

'The Towards 2050 priorities reflect what residents and stakeholders value most: **sustainability, opportunity, live-ability, and equity.**'



Beyond the horizon.

Unlocking our future.

PILLAR: Diverse Economy

Goal: Build a resilient, diversified economy that adapts to global trends, reduces dependence on specific industries and mitigates the impact of population decline through enhanced productivity and automation.

PILLAR: Data-Driven Decision Making

Goal: Leverage data, analytics and technological innovation to inform decision-making, drive innovation, improve service delivery across the district and ensure Timaru's development is responsive, efficient and future-ready.

PILLAR: Infrastructure for sustainable growth

Goal: Ensure Timaru District's physical and digital infrastructure can support growth, enhance connectivity and improve quality of life.

Our plan is shaped by six transformation pillars

that drive long-term success, innovation, resilience, adaptability and inclusive growth, ensuring the district thrives and leads in an ever-changing world.

PILLAR: Regulatory Environment for Innovation & Growth

Goal: Foster a supportive, flexible regulatory environment that encourages innovation, entrepreneurship and sustainable development.

PILLAR: Workforce & Education for future

Goal: Build a skilled, adaptable workforce that meets the demands of the future economy, emphasizing lifelong learning, diversity and innovation.

PILLAR: Community Health & Wellbeing

Goal: Build a thriving, inclusive community that supports the health, wellbeing and social cohesion of all residents, ensuring equitable access to services, safety, and opportunities in both urban and rural areas.

Pillar 1.

Diverse Economy

‘Build a resilient, diversified economy that adapts to global trends, reduces dependence on specific industries and mitigates the impact of population decline through enhanced productivity and automation.’

Priority Recommendations

1. Targeted investment in sectors like food and fibre, logistics and technology, with a focus on automation to sustain productivity amid population decline.

2. Leverage Government funding support for innovation in both emerging and established sectors, particularly automation and technology-driven industries.

Key actions and priorities under each of our six pillars turn our vision into measurable progress. They provide focus, guide implementation, and ensure we stay aligned with our long-term goals. Together, they drive meaningful change and support a thriving, inclusive and resilient district.

Recommended Actions

Local Economic Partnerships: Foster strong district and regional economic partnerships to expand access to new markets and industries, with particular emphasis on creating opportunities for Timaru’s rural and urban communities to collaborate. Ensure that these partnerships include opportunities for leveraging the strengths of existing industries in tandem with new sectors. Collaboration on automation and technological integration across the district’s industries can help spread the benefits of innovation and improve productivity across the entire Timaru District

Risk Management in Existing Industries: Develop strategies to manage risks associated with over-reliance on high-performing industries, particularly agriculture. Focus on ensuring that key industries are adaptable to market fluctuations and global trends. Invest in enhancing the competitiveness of these industries through innovation and strategic partnerships with complementary sectors. Implement automation and productivity-enhancing solutions to help maintain output levels, despite a potentially shrinking workforce due to population decline.



Agriculture and Food Technology: Enhance the food and fibre sectors, including agritech and sustainable farming, by integrating automation, AI and drone technology to improve efficiency and sustainability. Position these sectors to benefit from complementary innovations, such as precision farming and logistics, while exploring new synergies with industries like renewable energy and biotechnology.

Economic Diversification: Encourage the growth alongside dairy, particularly in food and fibre, logistics, professional, scientific and technical services. While diversifying, ensure a balanced approach by maintaining the strength of high-performing industries, such as agriculture, and exploring adjacent sectors like food technology, logistics and environmental services to enhance overall economic resilience.

Business Innovation: Support businesses in adopting innovative technologies, including automation, digital solutions and AI, to enhance productivity and competitiveness. Create programmes that encourage startups and SMEs in emerging sectors. A focus on automating routine and labour-intensive processes to mitigate population decline and changing work-life preferences.

Tourism Development: Explore high-potential tourism that aligns to existing strengths and future industry and technological advances, including: Eco and adventure tourism linked to coastal and alpine environments. Agritourism and food trails rooted in Timaru's strength in food and fibre, combining technological advances and innovations. Consider medical tourism.

5 Year Priorities

- 1.** Invest in diversifying the economic base through the development of key sectors: agriculture (including value-added products), logistics, professional services, and technology (AI, automation)
- 2.** Launch initiatives to support automation adoption and innovation in agriculture.
- 3.** Support Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and tourism based initiatives. Introduce support programs (e.g., grants, incubators) aimed at nurturing SMEs and fostering entrepreneurial spirit in the community.
- 4.** Explore and progress opportunities in new to district industries eg-aerospace, screen, medical tourism.

The first 5 years lays the groundwork for Timaru District's future success, focusing on foundational infrastructure, workforce development, innovation, and people-centred planning.



The Next 25 years

1. Timaru District's economy will be diverse and resilient, with strong sustainable sectors in agriculture, logistics, high-tech industries and professional services.
2. Automation and innovation will drive productivity, compensating for population decline and creating a robust economy.
3. The region will be a hub for sustainable agriculture, agritech and advanced manufacturing.
4. Employment will be at high levels, with a focus on high-wage, high-skill sectors that provide a broad range of career opportunities across all demographics.

The next 25 years focus on achieving tangible outcomes, creating a resilient, innovative and inclusive economy, supported by sustainable infrastructure and a strong social fabric.



Pillar 2.

Regulatory Environment

Priority Recommendations

1. Strengthen partnerships between local government, mana whenua, businesses and community groups to develop a shared vision and enable collaborative action.
2. Ensure that regulatory frameworks are flexible and adaptive to emerging technologies, industries and future challenges.

‘Foster a supportive, flexible regulatory environment that encourages innovation, entrepreneurship and sustainable development.’

Recommended Actions

Regulatory Simplification: Streamline local regulations to facilitate innovation and ease of doing business, to start and scale, particularly in innovative sectors like agritech and technology, while maintaining necessary environmental protections.

Government and Business Collaboration: Foster strong relationships between local government, central government and businesses, to create a supportive regulatory framework that drives growth while ensuring social and environmental responsibility.

Transparent Governance ‘no surprises’: Ensure transparent decision-making and active community engagement in shaping the future direction of Timaru District, allowing for collaborative policy development and communication.



Incentives for Innovation: Develop incentives for businesses to adopt cutting-edge technologies, with a particular focus on automation, AI and sustainable practices, ensuring Timaru District's industries are at the forefront of global trends.

Business Support Systems: Enhance local support systems for businesses, particularly startups and SMEs, through grants, incentives, and partnerships with research institutions and universities.

CBD Business Growth: Develop incentives and policies to attract new business and investment to Timaru's CBD, particularly in the areas of housing, innovation, tech and cultural services.

5 Year Priorities

1. Simplify business regulations to promote innovation and remove barriers for new industries.
2. Create financial and policy incentives for businesses adopting sustainable practices and automation technologies.
3. Enhance collaboration between local and central government, local businesses and academic institutions to foster innovation.

The first 5 years lays the groundwork for Timaru District's future success, focusing on foundational infrastructure, workforce development, innovation, and people-centred planning.



The Next 25 years

1. Timaru District will be known for a flexible regulatory environment that fosters entrepreneurship, especially in high-tech and sustainable industries.
2. Strong collaboration between government, businesses and academia will result in a dynamic and innovative economy.
3. The CBD will host a diverse range of businesses, particularly in technology, innovation and culture.

The next 25 years focus on achieving tangible outcomes, creating a resilient, innovative and inclusive economy, supported by sustainable infrastructure and a strong social fabric.



Pillar 3.

Data-Driven Decision Making

‘Leverage data, analytics and technological innovation to inform decision-making, drive innovation, improve service delivery across the district and ensure Timaru District’s development is responsive, efficient and future ready.’

Priority Recommendations

1. Build a centralised data platform to support decision-making in all aspects of community development.
2. Ensure data transparency and inclusivity, enabling all stakeholders to access and benefit from data-driven solutions.

Recommended Actions

Data Infrastructure: Develop a robust data infrastructure that allows businesses, iwi, local government and agencies to collect, analyse, and share data for improved decision-making. Focus on integrating data across sectors such as health, education, transport and business.

Population Modelling for Strategic Forecasting: Develop and apply dynamic population models to guide decisions across key areas, including:

- **Workforce & Education:** Forecast future skill shortages and inform local training pathways in sectors such as healthcare, education, and technology.
- **Housing & Infrastructure:** Anticipate future residential growth and housing needs, especially in response to aging populations and inward migration.
- **Health & Social Services:** Project demand for health services (GPs, aged care, mental health) and plan future capacity.
- **Economic Development:** Identify demographic shifts affecting workforce availability and consumer behaviour, guiding investment.
- **Urban & Rural Planning:** Support evidence-based spatial planning across the district, balancing growth and equity.



Data for Sustainability: Promote the use of data in sustainability efforts, including in agriculture, waste management and energy usage, ensuring decisions are informed by accurate, up-to-date information.

Smart City Initiatives: Implement data-driven solutions in urban planning, energy use, traffic management and public services. Use data analytics to optimize infrastructure and service delivery, while ensuring privacy and security.

Real-Time Data Utilisation: Implement real-time monitoring of traffic, energy consumption, and environmental metrics to improve the efficiency of infrastructure and services.

Research, Tech and Innovation Hubs: Establish data and innovation collectives/hub to foster the development of new technologies and create opportunities for collaboration between the public, private, and academic sectors.

Digital Literacy: Promote digital literacy programmes for all residents, with particular focus on underserved communities, to ensure that everyone can participate in the data-driven future.

Share data with local philanthropic organisations to inform funding decisions: Support research and data initiatives focused on future planning, infrastructure development and community needs, specifically for: supporting workforce and education gaps in critical sectors (e.g., healthcare, teaching), aligning with community needs, promoting equitable access to housing and healthcare services.

5 Year Priorities

- 1.** Build integrated data platforms that incorporate population and service demand modelling to support strategic planning across sectors.
- 2.** Ensure data transparency and inclusivity, enabling all stakeholders to access and benefit from data-driven solutions.
- 3.** Build a centralised funding platform to inform funders and private investment of projects aligned to Towards 2050.

The first 5 years lays the groundwork for Timaru District's future success, focusing on foundational infrastructure, workforce development, innovation, and people-centred planning.



The Next 25 years

1. Timaru District will be a leading smart city with integrated data-driven systems improving efficiency across transport, energy and services.
2. Data will guide sustainable practices in agriculture, waste management and energy consumption.
3. Population trends will be proactively managed, ensuring business, health, housing, workforce, and infrastructure systems are resilient and future-focused.
4. The district will have a thriving tech ecosystem, with strong innovation hubs that drive economic growth.
5. Philanthropic funding will be integrated and coordinated across sectors, amplifying the impact of the plan and fostering long-term community wellbeing.

The next 25 years focus on achieving tangible outcomes, creating a resilient, innovative and inclusive economy, supported by sustainable infrastructure and a strong social fabric.



Pillar 4.

Infrastructure for sustainable growth.

Priority Recommendations

1. Develop key infrastructure projects in alignment with the wider growth strategy, ensuring equitable access for all communities.
2. Focus on smart city infrastructure, integrating sustainability and resilience to future-proof Timaru District.

‘Ensure Timaru District’s physical and digital infrastructure can support growth, enhance connectivity and improve quality of life.’

Recommended Actions

Transport and Connectivity: Improve local transport infrastructure (road, rail, air), with an emphasis on enhancing district and regional links, sustainability and accessibility. Develop a comprehensive transport and logistics strategy to bolster regional economic integration.

Energy and Water Systems: Invest in energy capacity and sustainable water infrastructure to support growing industries and the community’s needs. Promote eco-friendly technologies to reduce the carbon footprint of infrastructure development.

Digital Infrastructure: Expand high-speed internet and digital services across the district to ensure all residents and businesses are connected in a globalised economy. Focus on closing the digital divide, particularly in rural and under-served areas.



Central Business District (CBD) Revitalization: Enhance the infrastructure within the CBD, creating a more vibrant and accessible space for businesses, residents and visitors, with a focus on sustainability, public spaces and increased business activity.

Urban Development with Sustainability: Implement green building standards and low-emission urban development in both residential and commercial properties to create liveable, energy-efficient communities.

Climate Resilience: Implement climate-adaptive measures in infrastructure design to ensure Timaru can respond to climate-related challenges, such as flooding, drought and other natural disasters.

Green Technologies Integration: Encourage industries to adopt sustainable practices, particularly in the food and fibre sectors, through eco-friendly technologies that reduce carbon footprints.

5 Year Priorities

- 1.** Prioritise projects that enhance transport networks and improve digital infrastructure (e.g., high-speed broadband access to Washdyke and Rural areas) to better support innovation, businesses and residents.
- 2.** Focus on improving access to energy and water systems that support growing businesses and ensure resilience to climate change.
- 3.** Prioritise sustainable infrastructure projects within the CBD that prioritise business growth and eco-friendly living.

The first 5 years lays the groundwork for Timaru District's future success, focusing on foundational infrastructure, workforce development, innovation, and people-centred planning.



The Next 25 years

1. Timaru District will have fully integrated smart infrastructure (smart roads, green energy solutions, smart homes and tech-enabled public services).
2. The district's energy, water and transport systems will be resilient to climate change and able to support increased population and economic growth.

The next 25 years focus on achieving tangible outcomes, creating a resilient, innovative and inclusive economy, supported by sustainable infrastructure and a strong social fabric.



Pillar 5. Workforce & education for future

Priority Recommendations

1. Establish clear pathways for local youth and underrepresented groups into high-skill professions.
2. Invest in mentorship and professional development programmes for young workers, especially in new and emerging industries.

‘Build a skilled, adaptable workforce that meets the demands of the future economy, emphasizing lifelong learning, diversity, and innovation.’

Recommended Actions

Education-to-Workforce Pathways: Strengthen the connection between local education providers and businesses. Develop specialised training programmes for emerging industries, including automation, agritech, precision farming and AI.

Youth Engagement and Leadership: Support youth leadership programmes, internships, and community projects that engage young people in decision-making and workforce participation.

Lifelong Learning and Flexibility: Encourage a culture of continuous learning, offering training and development programmes for workers at all stages of their careers, including older generations.

Community Inclusivity: Ensure education programmes are accessible to all communities, especially culturally diverse populations, empowering them to participate fully in the economy.



Upskilling and Reskilling: Implement programmes to reskill workers for new industries, particularly in response to automation and technological shifts. Provide targeted training for under-represented groups and older generations.

Inclusive Leadership Development: Support diversity in leadership and governance by fostering opportunities for under-represented groups, ensuring fair access to leadership positions and career development.

Workforce Attraction and Retention: Develop strategies to attract and retain skilled workers, particularly young professionals and migrants. Focus on creating a talent-friendly environment with affordable housing, career development opportunities and lifestyle incentives.

5 Year Priorities

- 1. Develop Education to Workforce Pathways**
– focus on strengthening partnerships between education providers and local businesses to build programmes that align with the needs of emerging industries like precision farming, AI, automation, logistics, professional services, teaching and health sectors.
- 2. Upskill local youth and workers,**
particularly in tech and skilled trades, to ensure a workforce that can meet future demands
- 3. Begin targeted campaigns to attract**
skilled professionals and young talent from outside the region, particularly in growing sectors like tech, agritech and logistics.
- 4. Support policies that make Timaru an**
attractive place for skilled immigrants, ensuring pathways for talent from diverse cultural backgrounds.

The first 5 years lays the groundwork for Timaru District's future success, focusing on foundational infrastructure, workforce development, innovation, and people-centred planning.



The Next 25 years

1. There will be strong education-to-workforce pipelines, with emphasis on lifelong learning and continuous upskilling in response to emerging technologies.
2. The workforce will be highly skilled, adaptable and diverse, with strong representation of women, ethnic minorities, and under-represented groups in leadership and decision-making roles.
3. Timaru District will be known for its leadership in automation, agritech and innovation, especially in areas like AI, robotics, and sustainable farming solutions.
4. The district will attract top talent in these sectors, with a robust startup ecosystem and strong partnerships between industry, academia and government.

The next 25 years focus on achieving tangible outcomes, creating a resilient, innovative and inclusive economy, supported by sustainable infrastructure and a strong social fabric.



Community health & wellbeing

Priority Recommendations

- 1.** Develop an action plan for housing that includes innovative homeownership models and affordable rental options, ensuring all housing is connected to vital services. Ensure housing caters to different income levels and life stages, enhancing community inclusion.
- 2.** Establish a community-wide, cross-sector collaboration framework to improve service delivery, reduce duplication, and maximize resources for impactful social change.
- 3.** Establish a district wide philanthropic and community investment strategy that aligns giving with key priorities across the plan, including infrastructure, workforce, innovation and social outcomes.

‘Building a thriving, inclusive community that supports the health, wellbeing, and social cohesion of all residents, ensuring equitable access to services, safety, and opportunities in both urban and rural areas.’

Recommended Actions

Health and Wellbeing: Invest in health infrastructure, focusing on physical and mental health services and expand access to healthcare for all, particularly under-represented groups. Promote active lifestyles and wellness programmes.

Affordable Housing and Wealth Creation: Address housing affordability by exploring innovative homeownership models, including shared equity, co-housing and other alternatives. Develop a comprehensive action plan for housing development to support diverse, affordable housing options and promote wealth creation through homeownership. Ensure rental markets are affordable, with reasonable rent prices as a key economic measure.

Social-Sector Collaboration: Promote a unified approach to service delivery by fostering collaboration across sectors. Develop a community-wide plan led by the social sector to reduce service overlap, enhance efficiency, and drive high-impact social change.



Safety and Emergency Services: Ensure access to emergency services for all residents, ensuring timely response, effective communication, and equitable coverage in both urban and rural areas.

Social Networks and Cross-sector Collaboration: Strengthen community networks and foster collaboration across sectors to share knowledge and drive collective action, supporting community resilience and cohesion.

Cultural Integration and Inclusion: Celebrate cultural diversity and provide opportunities for residents to connect and engage. Promote inclusivity, ensuring equitable access to health, wellbeing and community life, while fostering respect for the New Zealand way of life and all cultural backgrounds.

5 Year Priorities

- 1.** Begin implementing affordable housing strategies and new models for homeownership.
- 2.** Work on creating mixed-use residential areas that support vibrant communities close to the CBD.
- 3.** Ensure that healthcare facilities and services meet the needs of an aging population and growing cultural diversity.
- 4.** Start implementing mental health support services, community engagement programs, and healthcare initiatives that enhance general wellbeing.
- 5.** Foster community engagement through cultural awareness initiatives and programs that promote inclusion of diverse communities in social, economic, and civic life.

The first 5 years lays the groundwork for Timaru District's future success, focusing on foundational infrastructure, workforce development, innovation, and people-centred planning.

- 6.** Develop a community-wide plan led by the social sector to reduce service overlap, enhance efficiency, and drive high-impact social change.
- 7.** Establish a district wide philanthropic and community investment strategy that aligns giving with key priorities across the plan, including infrastructure, workforce, innovation, and social outcomes.
- 8.** Create a portal to support grassroots initiatives, attract matched funding, and increase visibility and coordination of community-led efforts.

The Next 25 years

The next 25 years focus on achieving tangible outcomes, creating a resilient, innovative and inclusive economy, supported by sustainable infrastructure and a strong social fabric.

- 1.** Timaru will have a healthy, inclusive population with robust healthcare services that are responsive to all needs.
- 2.** Housing will be diverse, affordable, and integrated with community services, supporting wealth creation.
- 3.** The region will be known for its social cohesion, with strong community networks and a focus on inclusivity.
- 4.** Residents will experience a high quality of life, with a focus on health, education, social wellbeing, and work-life balance.
- 5.** A focus on social cohesion and inclusivity will result in strong, resilient communities where all residents, regardless of background, feel connected and supported.

- 6.** Environmental sustainability will be fully integrated into daily life, with widespread adoption of green practices, renewable energy, and sustainable transport.
- 7.** A strong culture of local giving and philanthropic partnership will accelerate the delivery of strategic initiatives across infrastructure, education, economy, and social wellbeing.
- 8.** Community foundations will be key partners in shaping and resourcing the region's long-term future, empowering communities to lead and contribute.



Employment & Business Dynamics

Where we are now

Timaru District's economy has shown resilience and adaptability over recent years. Between 2020 and 2025, the number of filled jobs increased by 3.49%, reaching a peak in 2023 before stabilising in 2025 at 27,221 jobs. This reflects a strong post-pandemic recovery and a stable employment base heading into the future.

Over the same period, the number of businesses in the district grew by 5%, rising from 5,589 to 5,940. This growth was driven mainly by an increase in self-employment, with more people starting sole-operator businesses. At the same time, the number of small and medium-sized employers declined slightly, along with a small reduction in large employers. This shift highlights an important opportunity for Timaru to support business growth and attract more medium and large employers, which play a key role in providing stable jobs, higher productivity, clearer career pathways and broader benefits for the local economy.

Timaru is well positioned to capture this opportunity. The district has established industrial land and infrastructure, alongside strong food and fibre producers and manufacturing capability, particularly within the industrial hub. These assets create a strong foundation to attract larger-scale, value-added businesses in processing, manufacturing, logistics and technology-enabled industries that can build on existing strengths.

Productivity performance reinforces this opportunity. Between 2020 and 2025, overall productivity in Timaru increased by 3.1%, narrowing the gap with the national average. Timaru's Agriculture, Manufacturing and Construction sectors all outperform national productivity benchmarks, providing a strong economic foundation.

Agriculture is the most significant contributor to improved productivity at \$204,940 per worker, well above the national average of \$155,216. Manufacturing productivity is also higher than the national level at \$154,872 per worker, compared with \$135,323 nationally, while Construction productivity reaches \$108,933, exceeding the national average of \$98,911.

Importantly, this strong sectoral performance is underpinned by a highly diversified local economy, which enhances resilience to external shocks.

Regions with economic activity concentrated in a small number of industries are more vulnerable to adverse impacts such as climatic variability or commodity price fluctuations. The normalised Herfindahl–Hirschman (HH) Index highlights Timaru District’s relative strength in this regard.

With an HH Index of 245 in 2025, Timaru’s economy is significantly more diversified than the national average, which sits at 489 across New Zealand’s 66 territorial authorities. This low level of concentration indicates that economic activity in Timaru is spread across a broad range of industries, reducing risk and providing a stable platform for sustained growth.

While productivity in knowledge-intensive sectors such as IT, digital services and finance remains well below national levels, Timaru’s combination of high-performing core industries and strong economic diversity presents a compelling opportunity. By growing knowledge intensive and highly skilled workforce, alongside integrating automation, digital technologies and higher-value services into its existing industrial and primary sectors, Timaru can lift productivity further, support larger and more sophisticated employers, and continue building a robust, diverse and future-ready regional economy.

Timaru District GDP has **grown 6% since 2020**
(3.9b in 2020 to 4.19b in 2025)
NZ GDP grew by 8% in the same period

Timaru District’s HH Index of 245 in 2025 shows our **local economy is more diversified than the national economy**
(HH Index of 489.)

The number of filled jobs in the Timaru District has grown by 3.49% between 2020 and 2025, reaching a **peak of 27,288 jobs in 2023 and declining to 27,221 in 2025**

The number of businesses in the Timaru District has **grown** from 5589 in 2020 to 5,940 in 2024 (+5.9%), driven by an increase in **self employment (450)**

SWOT Analysis

Determining a way forward

Timaru District can overcome current weaknesses and threats while leveraging its strategic location, strong industrial base, and quality of life. The outcome will be a vibrant, resilient, and future-ready district capable of attracting investment, retaining talent, and creating long-term prosperity.



STRENGTHS

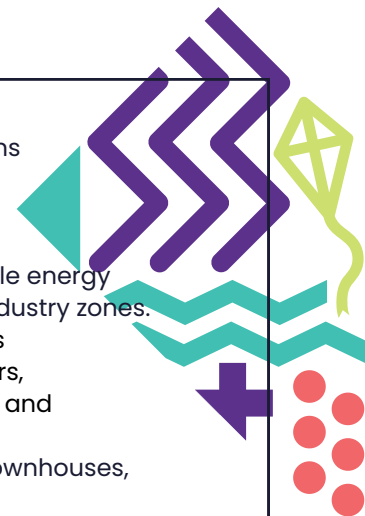
- **Strategic central location:** Within 2.5 hours of 80% of the South Island population, ideal for regional logistics.
- **Strong transport and export infrastructure:** Includes a well-performing, 50% council (CCO) owned port 50% Port of Tauranga, SH1 access, and established freight connectivity.
- **Low unemployment rate:** Signifies economic stability and high workforce engagement.
- **Affordable home ownership:** Competitive advantage relative to larger centres.
- **Diverse and resilient economy:** Agriculture and manufacturing (27% of GDP), supported by engineering, logistics, and food production are key drivers.
- **Advanced engineering capability:** Local firms support major national operators with innovative and reliable services.
- **Thriving Washdyke Industrial Area:** A collaborative cluster with strong inter-business relationships.
- **Quality of life:** Access to natural environment, minimal commute times, family friendly
- **Proven track record of community philanthropy and investment:** Longstanding culture of giving and civic leadership, demonstrated through major legacy assets such as the Aigantighe Art Gallery, delivered and sustained through community generosity and public stewardship.
- **Demonstrated ability to deliver complex, partnership-funded projects:** Successful collaboration between Council, iwi, stakeholders, industry and community groups on major infrastructure and recreational assets including Opuha Dam, CPlay, CBay), and Fraser Park.

WEAKNESSES

- **Lower proportion of highly skilled workers** compared to major cities, limiting access to specialist and advanced – future focus technical talent.
- **Housing stock mismatch:** Recruitment is increasingly difficult due to insufficient availability of suitable homes including modern rentals, executive housing, and starter homes.
- **Lack of a modern hotel or large-scale accommodation:** Limits the ability to host conferences and business events and reduces appeal for domestic and international corporate travelers.
- **Ageing CBD and infrastructure:** Requires significant investment in buildings, footpaths and public spaces.
- **CBD decline in occupancy & vibrancy:** Built around small retailing businesses, the CBD has not kept pace with modern centres.
- **Not perceived as a tourism destination:** Few iconic attractions and limited experiences (with the exception of cruise)
- **Youth outmigration:** Reduces future workforce capacity and high-skill availability.
- **Small labour market:** Population size limits labour diversity, even with low unemployment.
- **Limited cultural and entertainment offerings:** Less appealing for younger professionals and students.
- **Community resistance to large-scale development:** Slows transformative change and investment.
- **Public narrative tied to declining retail:** Overemphasis on CBD vacancies overshadows broader economic strengths.

OPPORTUNITIES

- **Advanced manufacturing, food innovation, and agri-tech growth:** Strong foundations to expand into high-value, technology-enabled industries.
- **Become the South Island's mid-point logistics hub:** Capitalise on central location, port ownership, industrial land, and freight connectivity.
- **Energy leadership:** Locally owned energy infrastructure creates potential for renewable energy districts, microgrids, battery energy storage systems, data centres and low-carbon industry zones.
- **Leverage Timaru's proven partnership and co-investment model:** Scale the district's demonstrated ability to deliver complex, multi-party projects (Council, iwi, stakeholders, community and private sector) to unlock central government funding, private capital, and transformational infrastructure delivery.
- **Housing development and diversification:** Expand supply of contemporary rentals, townhouses, apartments, and higher-end homes to support workforce attraction.
- **Hotel or mixed-use accommodation development:** Enables conference hosting and supports corporate travel and enhances appeal to international guests and investors as well as strengthens commercial event capability.
- **Age-friendly district:** Significant opportunity in health services, senior housing, mobility solutions and wellbeing innovations.
- **Remote worker and skilled migrant attraction:** High lifestyle value and affordability give Timaru a competitive edge.
- **Education and training expansion:** Satellite tertiary programmes, industry-led training hubs, and micro-credential partnerships to close the skills gap.
- **Niche tourism and experience economy:** Agri-tourism, heritage trails, food and beverage experiences, and industrial tourism.
- **Expansion of industrial areas:** Opportunity to attract businesses unable to scale elsewhere due to high land costs.



THREATS

- **Population stagnation or decline:** reduces future labour supply and weakens long-term demand for services.
- **Over-reliance on large producers:** Susceptible to global markets and decisions made by multinational operators.
- **Rising business costs:** High commercial rates, energy availability & costs, and compliance pressures may drive investment toward larger centers.
- **Housing shortages in the “right” segments:** Limits workforce growth, constrains business expansion, and weakens talent attraction despite high interest.
- **Accommodation deficit:** Prevents Timaru from competing for regional/national conferences, limits government, corporate and industry visits and undercuts ability to support international delegations, investors or major events.
- **Regulatory and planning changes:** May reduce flexibility for development or increase costs.
- **Climate change impacts:** Threats to port operations, agriculture, coastline, and water infrastructure.
- **Competition from Christchurch and Dunedin:** Larger cities attract skilled workers, students, events, inward investment, and tourism.
- **Infrastructure investment lag:** Without renewal, outdated infrastructure could restrain growth and reduce liveability.
- **Lack of a unified long-term plan:** Increases risk of fragmented decision-making and lost opportunity.

Five in Five

Transformation in Action

5 key initiatives in 5 years will lead delivery of our plan, supported by individual action plans that turn long-term aspirations into measurable progress over the next five years, ensuring our transformation pillars deliver lasting outcomes for people, place and prosperity.

Five in Five is where our shared aspirations move from vision to delivery. While our six transformation pillars provide the enduring foundations that guide everyday decision-making and business-as-usual activity, it is these five transformational initiatives that put action in motion and accelerate change.

Over the next five years, each initiative will build momentum through focused planning, investment and delivery, creating tangible, visible progress for our people, place and prosperity. These initiatives are designed to unlock long-term outcomes, with their full potential realised over the decades ahead as we work towards 2050.



**Together, the pillars, priorities
and transformational initiatives
are interdependent, each
strengthening the other.**

The pillars set the direction,
the priorities guide our focus, and
Five in Five drives delivery.
By acting now, we lay strong
foundations, build confidence
and capability and ensure
meaningful progress
towards the future you've
told us you want.



1. Washdyke Industrial Hub

Objective: Transform Washdyke Industrial Hub into a visible, investment-ready location, attracting medium and large employers aligned with the district's vision, while supporting sector-specific clusters and laying the groundwork for long-term infrastructure and innovation growth.

Why is this transformational?

Growing and activating Timaru's industrial hub is a core lever for transforming the district's economy. Timaru already has key ingredients in place: available industrial land, established food and fibre producers, strong manufacturing and engineering capability, and strategic transport connections. Together, these provide a strong foundation to attract medium and large, innovation-led businesses that can lift productivity, create stable employment, and diversify the economic base.

Larger employers play a critical role in regional economies. They generate higher productivity, invest in skills and technology, support career pathways, and create flow-on benefits for local suppliers, service providers and SMEs.

By positioning the industrial hub for value-added production, advanced manufacturing, logistics, agri-tech and aerospace-aligned industries, Timaru can build scale from existing strengths while reducing reliance on workforce growth alone.

Innovation is central to this opportunity. By focusing on automation, digital integration and advanced engineering, the industrial hub can support businesses to operate at higher productivity levels, respond to global market demands, and remain competitive despite population and labour constraints. This approach strengthens both new investment and the existing backbone industries that service producers and manufacturers across the district.

Washdyke Industrial Hub – 5 Year Plan (detailed)

	Key Actions	Accountabilities	Expected outcomes
Year 1 (Tenant Attraction, Planning & Sector Cluster Launch)	Launch active marketing to medium and large employers aligned with district vision (food & fibre, manufacturing, logistics, engineering, aerospace-aligned)	Venture Timaru: Continue leading coordination of sector-specific clusters, tenant attraction, investor engagement, marketing	First tenants engaged or confirmed
	Engage with potential anchor tenants and pipeline investors	Timaru District Holdings:	Clear staged development plan underway
	Begin master planning for staged development and land readiness	Timaru District Council: Land availability, zoning, community engagement	Early investment pipeline established
	Conduct preliminary assessments of utilities, transport, and digital capacity	Alpine Energy: Initial consultation on power infrastructure and capacity	Sector-specific clusters operational, strengthening collaboration, early innovation, and skills development
	Commence sector-specific clusters (food & fibre, advanced manufacturing, engineering/aerospace, logistics) to strengthen collaboration, skills development, and supply chain alignment	Existing Washdyke businesses: Provide input on clusters, operational insights, and anchor opportunities	Community/stakeholder engagement initiated
Year 2 (Infrastructure Assessment & Visioning)	Complete detailed infrastructure assessment (utilities, transport, digital, energy)	Alpine Energy: Input on electricity upgrades, energy solutions	Infrastructure plan ready for staged investment
	Develop long-term infrastructure upgrade plan (implementation likely beyond Year 5)	Timaru District Council: Lead infrastructure assessment and long-term planning	Strategic partnerships strengthened
	Strengthen partnerships with government, regional agencies, and investors	Existing businesses: Validate infrastructure priorities and operational impacts	Tenant engagement continues and expands
	Continue tenant recruitment using existing land and capacity	Venture Timaru: Ongoing tenant recruitment and investor facilitation, support cluster growth.	Washdyke positioned as a credible growth location

Year 3 (Tenant Onboarding & Pilot Projects)	Secure first medium and large tenants on existing serviced land	Venture Timaru: Coordinate tenant onboarding, innovation support, cluster facilitation	Tenants operational
	Begin small-scale upgrades where feasible in collaboration with tenants	Existing businesses: Act as partners and mentors for pilot collaborations	Early economic and employment impact visible
		Timaru District Council: Facilitate approvals, infrastructure support	
Year 4 (Scaling & Demonstration)	Attract additional tenants leveraging early successes	Venture Timaru: Lead investor engagement, tenant attraction, cluster coordination	Park gains recognition as a hub for medium and large employers
	Showcase demonstration projects in automation, agri-tech, advanced manufacturing	Existing businesses: Share success stories and participate in demonstration projects	Productivity-enhancing projects visible
	Prepare for next-stage infrastructure works beyond Year 5	Timaru District Council: Prepare future infrastructure funding and approvals	Demand assessment informs next-stage upgrades
		Alpine Energy: Ongoing technical support for projects	
Year 5 (Consolidation & Future Planning)	Continue tenant attraction	Timaru District Council: Lead long-term infrastructure planning and funding strategies	Park demonstrates credible activity and growth
	Review uptake and refine marketing strategy	Venture Timaru: Maintain tenant pipeline, report outcomes, and coordinate clusters	Clear plan for staged infrastructure upgrades post-Year 5
	Begin preparatory work for full infrastructure upgrades beyond Year 5	Existing businesses: Participate in planning for next-phase upgrades	Pipeline for new tenants maintained
	Highlight economic outcomes to attract further investment	Community & investors: Provide input and support for expansion	

2. Innovation & Advanced Manufacturing Collective

Why is this transformational?

An Innovation and Advanced Manufacturing Collective is transformational because it enables Timaru District to move from economic resilience to productivity-led growth while creating a competitive edge for business attraction. Growth has been driven largely by self-employment rather than medium and large firms. The collective addresses this by helping businesses adopt new technologies, collaborate and scale, making the Timaru District a more compelling location for value-added, innovation-led enterprises, including those investing in sectors such as advanced manufacturing, aerospace and emerging technology.

The collective lifts productivity and value creation by providing access to automation, digital systems, AI, data and advanced engineering capability.

Objective: Establish an Innovation & Advanced Manufacturing Collective in Timaru that drives productivity, technology adoption, and knowledge-intensive industry growth by coordinating collaboration between existing innovation-led firms in advanced manufacturing, agri-tech, aerospace-aligned engineering, automation and robotics, and biotech.

This helps businesses in food and fibre, manufacturing, logistics, aerospace and emerging sectors move up the value chain, supporting competitiveness, accelerating technology adoption and reducing investment risk for medium and large enterprises.

At the same time, collaboration with Ara and other education partners makes innovation visible to young people, providing practical experience, industry connections and clear pathways into skilled employment. This strengthens youth retention, builds the local talent pipeline, and reinforces long-term innovation capacity and economic resilience for the district.

Innovation & Advanced Manufacturing Collective Options

In considering how to achieve this, a set of innovation delivery options has been developed for consideration, recognising that different approaches offer distinct strengths and opportunities.

For each approach, a clear and achievable five-year pathway has been identified to show how it could be implemented and scaled.

Option 1: Centralised Innovation & Advanced Manufacturing Collective Space in Washdyke

One option involves the development of a centralised Innovation & Advanced Manufacturing space, potentially located near the Washdyke Industrial Hub. This model focuses on co-locating businesses, researchers, education providers, and investors in a single, visible facility.

Key strengths of this approach include the ability to build critical mass, provide shared infrastructure, foster collaboration and applied research, and signal Timaru Districts commitment to innovation-led growth. The five-year pathway outlines staged implementation, from visioning and stakeholder engagement to facility development, anchor tenant onboarding, and hub activation.

Option 2: Networked Satellite Innovation Collective

An alternative option is a networked model of satellite innovation hubs, embedded within existing innovation-active businesses across the district. Collaboration would be coordinated through structured programs, shared projects, and planned knowledge exchange rather than a single facility.

This approach provides advantages in speed of activation, lower capital requirements, embedding innovation directly in operational environments, and enabling participation across a broader range of sectors and business sizes. A five-year pathway demonstrates how the network could develop progressively, scale collaborative projects, and build measurable innovation outcomes.

Option 3: Hybrid of Option 1 & 2

A hybrid model combining elements of both approaches is also feasible. This could involve starting with a networked satellite approach to build momentum and de-risk investment, with the potential to develop a centralised hub as demand and investment capacity grow. This pathway offers flexibility and responsiveness, while maintaining a clear, long-term innovation ambition.

Advanced Manufacturing & Innovation Collective – 5 Year Plan (detailed)

	Key Actions	Accountabilities	Expected outcomes
Year 1 (Visioning, Stakeholder Engagement & Investor Identification)	Define hub's scope, sectors, and innovation focus (advanced manufacturing, agri-tech, aerospace-aligned engineering, logistics, digital solutions)	Venture Timaru: Lead investor engagement, coordinate business participation, develop prospectus	Clear vision and scope defined
	Engage existing businesses, Timaru District Council, government agencies, philanthropic partners, and Ara Institute for buy-in and alignment	Timaru District Council: Strategic alignment, land/facility support, facilitate government contacts	Initial investor and partner buy-in
	Identify potential anchor tenants and research partnerships (local universities, polytechnics, R&D providers)	Existing Businesses: Contribute expertise, define pilot projects, identify co-investment opportunities	Prospectus and funding strategy drafted
	Begin drafting investment prospectus and funding strategy	Ara Institute: Advise on curriculum, workforce development, potential co-investment, and program delivery	Ara partnership established for workforce and innovation programs
		Government & Philanthropy: Engage early for grant/funding opportunities	Community and stakeholder buy-in
Year 2 (Facility Planning & Pilot Innovation Projects)	Identify potential hub location and site requirements (proximity to Washdyke Industrial Park and transport infrastructure)	TDHL: Provide site options	Hub location and facility concept confirmed
	Begin detailed facility design and service requirements (labs, co-working, maker spaces, R&D capabilities)	Timaru District Council: Approvals, and land/facility support	First pilot projects underway
	Launch small-scale pilot projects with local businesses and SMEs to demonstrate hub value	Venture Timaru: Coordinate pilot projects, investor engagement, funding applications, cluster facilitation	Workforce programs and curriculum development underway
	Develop workforce and training programs with Ara aligned to hub sectors	Ara Institute: Lead design of training programs, coordinate applied research, support pilot projects	Funding pipeline for hub operations and development established
	Continue engagement with investors and government for funding support	Government & Philanthropy: Consider grant and co-funding opportunities	

Year 3 (Facility Development & Anchor Tenant Onboarding)	Begin construction/fit-out of hub facility (modular or staged)	Timaru District Council: Approvals, construction logistics, monitor progress	Hub facility under development
	Secure anchor tenants or R&D partners aligned with district strengths	Venture Timaru: Lead tenant recruitment, investor relations, SME engagement, cluster coordination	Anchor tenants confirmed
	Scale up pilot innovation projects with SMEs and larger firms	Existing Businesses: Commit to anchor participation, co-invest in facilities and R&D	Pilot projects scaling
	Launch first training programs with Ara for technology adoption, digital skills, and advanced manufacturing	Ara Institute: Deliver training programs, R&D collaboration, mentorship	First cohort of hub-aligned workforce trained
		Government & Philanthropy: Provide funding or grants for construction, equipment, and programs	Visible momentum in innovation ecosystem
Year 4 (Hub Activation & Knowledge Transfer)	Open hub facility for tenants and collaborative projects	Venture Timaru: Coordinate hub operations, programs, events, investor relations	Hub fully operational with anchor tenants and SME participants
	Run programs supporting technology adoption, automation, AI integration, and knowledge-intensive skills development with Ara	Existing Businesses: Participate in programs, mentoring, and R&D collaborations	Workforce programs integrated and knowledge transfer underway
	Host demonstration projects, workshops, and innovation events	Ara Institute: Lead delivery of workforce programs, applied research, and student involvement	Innovation and productivity projects visible and measurable
	Continue investment rounds to expand capabilities	Timaru District Council: Support operational approvals, promote regional innovation	
		Government & Philanthropy: Continue funding support for programs and equipment	
Year 5 (Consolidation, Investment Attraction & Long-Term Positioning)	Consolidate, expand tenants and SME participation, plan next-stage expansion, grow Ara programs		

Advanced Manufacturing & Innovation Satellite Collective – 5 Year Plan (detailed)

	Key Actions	Accountabilities	Expected outcomes
Year 1 (Ecosystem Mapping, Governance & Program Design)	Identify and confirm initial satellite hubs (e.g. SPS, engineering and aerospace firms, Barkers R&D facility)	Venture Timaru: Lead ecosystem mapping, coordination, governance setup, and investor narrative	Confirmed network of satellite hubs
	Map innovation capabilities, equipment, R&D strengths, and priority challenges across participating firms	Timaru District Council: Strategic alignment, facilitation, promotion of the model	Clear governance and operating model
	Establish a light governance and coordination structure (Innovation Network Steering Group)	Participating Businesses: Define innovation focus areas, host satellite activity, commit to collaboration	Defined collaborative innovation programs
	Design 3–4 flagship collaborative innovation programs (e.g. automation in food processing, robotics for land & airborne applications, biotech-enabled productivity, advanced	Ara Institute: Co-design programs, applied research pathways, and workforce alignment	Strong shared narrative positioning Timaru as a distributed innovation ecosystem
	Develop a shared value proposition and investor narrative for the network model	Government & Philanthropy: Engage early for grant/funding opportunities	Early funder and partner buy-in
	Align Ara’s applied research, student placement, and workforce development offerings to the satellite hubs	Timaru District Council: Provide site options, approvals, and land/facility support	Community and stakeholder buy in.
Year 2 (Pilot Programs & Knowledge-Sharing Activation)	Launch pilot collaborative projects across satellite hubs (multi-firm, multi-discipline)	Venture Timaru: Coordinate pilots, manage programs, track outcomes, support funding applications	First collaborative innovation pilots underway
	Establish structured knowledge-sharing mechanisms (technical workshops, site-based demonstrations, shared data where appropriate)	Participating Businesses: Lead pilots, provide facilities and expertise, co-invest in projects	Tangible productivity and technology adoption outcomes
	Embed Ara students and staff within satellite hubs for applied learning and research	Ara Institute: Deliver applied research, placements, and micro-credentials	Strong engagement from students and emerging talent
	Develop shared innovation infrastructure where needed (e.g. data platforms, testing protocols, IP frameworks)	Timaru District Council: Support coordination, regional promotion, and policy alignment	Evidence base to support further investment and scaling
	Continue investor engagement, highlighting low-capital, high-impact outcomes	Government & Philanthropy: Provide co-funding for pilot programs	

Year 3 (Scaling Collaboration & Attracting External Partners)	Scale successful pilot projects across additional firms and sectors	Venture Timaru: Lead partner attraction, network scaling, brand development	Expanded innovation network with external partners
	Attract external research partners, technology providers, and investors into the network	Participating Businesses: Expand collaboration, host new partners, invest in scaling projects	Increased investment flowing into Timaru-based firms
	Formalise Barkers' R&D collaboration platform for growers, technology partners, and investors	Ara Institute: Expand applied research and specialist training programs	Measurable productivity and value-add gains in food & fibre, manufacturing, and technology sectors
	Expand automation, robotics, biotech, and aerospace-aligned projects with cross-sector applications	Timaru District Council: Promote Timaru as an innovation destination, support inward investment	Strengthened national profile as an innovation-led regional economy
	Develop Timaru-branded innovation programs to attract national and international interest	Government & Philanthropy: Support scaling through targeted funding and innovation programs	
Year 4 (Network Maturity & Commercialisation)	Support commercialisation of jointly developed technologies and processes	Venture Timaru: Coordinate commercialisation support, investor engagement, network operations	Commercial products, services, and process innovations emerging from the network
	Enable spin-outs, joint ventures, and new market entry for participating firms	Participating Businesses: Lead commercial outcomes, mentoring, and reinvestment	New high-value roles and firms established in Timaru
	Deepen skills pathways through Ara (advanced credentials, specialist training)	Ara Institute: Deliver advanced skills, research commercialisation support	Strong reputation for collaborative, industry-led innovation
	Host high-profile innovation showcases and investor engagement events	Timaru District Council: Promote success stories and regional impact	
	Reinforce knowledge transfer and IP management frameworks	Government & Philanthropy: Support commercialisation and export growth initiatives	

Year 5 (Consolidation, Investment Attraction & Long-Term Positioning)	Consolidate the satellite hub network into a permanent innovation platform	Venture Timaru: Strategic leadership, evaluation, long-term positioning, Embed in economic strategy and investment attraction	A resilient, scalable innovation ecosystem embedded in local industry
	Attract larger-scale investment and anchor projects aligned with network strengths	Participating Businesses: Commit to ongoing collaboration and reinvestment	Sustained productivity growth and high-value job creation
	Evaluate the case for a future physical hub or hybrid model if demand emerges	Ara Institute: Long-term workforce and innovation partner	Strong investor confidence in Timaru as an innovation-led enterprise destination
	Embed the model into Timaru's long-term economic development strategy	Government & Philanthropy: Support long-term platform sustainability	Optional pathway to a future physical hub informed by proven demand
	Position Timaru nationally as a leader in distributed, industry-led innovation		

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3. Ara Educational Hub

Why is this transformational?

Positioning Ara as a Centre of Excellence is a key lever for transforming Timaru District's workforce, productivity, and long-term economic resilience. Ara already plays a central role in the district's education ecosystem, attracting more local school leavers than any other tertiary provider in 2024. In 2025, Ara was one of only two polytechnics nationally deemed viable by the Ministry, reinforcing its strategic importance and credibility as a long-term partner in workforce development.

Timaru's economy is strong, with growth in agriculture, food and fibre, seafood, utilities, and manufacturing, but challenges remain – skilled workforce participation is below national levels, while low-skilled employment remains comparatively high.

The community has highlighted retaining and attracting young people with skills and knowledge as a priority for the district's future.

Becoming a Centre of Excellence gives Ara the opportunity

Objective: Establish Ara as a nationally recognised Centre of Excellence, with Nursing and Engineering as signature pillars, delivering industry-aligned education, innovation capability, and financially sustainable workforce development that underpins Timaru District's economic growth and resilience.

to lead this transformation. By focusing on areas of existing strength, particularly Nursing and Engineering, Ara can build nationally recognised programmes that set the standard for applied learning, innovation, and workforce readiness. This involves exploring innovative delivery models, expanding pathways to meet demand, and creating clear, future-focused career opportunities.

Ara could be the core connector in Timaru's skills and innovation ecosystem. By linking education, industry, innovation hubs, and community initiatives, ensuring that learning, applied projects, and workforce development are aligned and mutually reinforcing.

Flexible learning options, earn-and-learn models, and short courses will support lifelong participation, helping working professionals and older workers remain engaged while providing youth with future-ready skills and experiences.

Through this approach, Ara strengthens its leadership role, demonstrates measurable impact on the district's workforce and economy, and becomes a central engine of Timaru's growth, driving transformation in skills, innovation, and economic resilience.

Ara Centre of Excellence – 5 Year Plan (detailed)

Year 1 (Foundation, Alignment & Asset Optimisation)	Define Centre of Excellence scope with Nursing and Engineering as signature pillars;	Ara: Lead CoE definition, programme mapping, asset audit, industry engagement.	Clear CoE positioning established; evidence-based demand analysis completed
	Undertake national and regional labour market analysis;	Industry & Health Partners: Define workforce demand and placement capacity.	Nursing acceleration options identified
	Establish industry advisory groups for all priority sectors; assess Nursing capacity and identify options to accelerate intake; align Engineering curriculum with Innovation Hub and Washdyke Industrial Park growth plans;	Venture Timaru: Labour market intelligence, sector alignment.	Nursing acceleration options identified
	Audit excess campus space for potential innovation and training use; engage ISB/TEC to align CoE intent with regional strategy and funding pathways.	ISB/TEC: Early strategic alignment.	Excess space opportunities mapped for ROI and innovation use
Year 2 (Programme Design, Pilots & Early Revenue)	Design and pilot accelerated Nursing delivery models and flexible intakes	Ara: Programme design, pilots, space activation, funding proposals.	Nursing and Engineering pilot cohorts underway
	Launch enhanced Engineering programmes with applied projects linked to Innovation Hub and Industrial Park	Industry & Health Partners: Placements, applied projects, co-investment.	Applied learning embedded across sectors
	Introduce applied learning and earn-and-learn pathways across all priority sectors; pilot short courses and micro-credentials for working professionals and older workers	Venture Timaru: Promotion, partnership facilitation.	First non-Ministry revenue streams generated
	Begin repurposing campus space for industry collaboration; initiate philanthropic, community, and industry funding partnerships		Community and industry funding partnerships initiated
	Begin marketing Timaru as a destination for applied learning.		

Year 3 (Facility Development & Anchor Tenant Onboarding)	Scale Nursing intake and expand clinical placement partnerships.	Ara: Programme scaling, innovation integration, space management.	Nursing and Engineering scaled and visible nationally
	Grow Engineering enrolments and deepen applied innovation projects	Industry & Health Partners: Host projects and placements.	Applied innovation projects delivering measurable outcomes
	Integrate CoE activity with Innovation Hub and Industrial Park	Venture Timaru: Integration with economic development and innovation ecosystem.	Ara campus functioning as an active innovation and skills hub
	Expand use of repurposed space for innovation, training, and collaboration		Improved youth retention and skills progression.
	Launch cross-sector applied innovation projects		
	Attract learners from outside the district.		
Year 4 (Specialisation, Talent Attraction & Sustainability)	Develop advanced and specialist streams in Nursing and Engineering	Ara: Specialised delivery, lifelong learning, financial optimisation.	Timaru recognised as a national hub for Nursing and Engineering leadership
	Deepen applied capability in Food & Fibre, Seafood & Aquaculture, Advanced Manufacturing, and Utilities	Industry & Health Partners: Co-develop advanced pathways and projects.	Strong workforce capability across priority sectors
	Expand lifelong learning and reskilling programmes for mid-career and older workers	Venture Timaru: Talent attraction and promotion.	Diversified and growing non-Ministry revenue streams.
	Attract learners nationally and internationally		
	Review and optimise financial performance of diversified revenue streams.		

Year 5 (Consolidation & Future Planning)	Review CoE outcomes across workforce, innovation, and financial sustainability	Ara: Performance review, long-term strategy	
	Secure long-term partnerships with health providers, industry, philanthropy, and community trusts	Industry, Health & Philanthropic Partners: Long-term commitments.	
	Refine CoE focus areas in response to emerging industry and technology trends	Venture Timaru & Timaru District Council: Strategic integration and advocacy.	
	Embed Ara CoE as a permanent pillar of Timaru's economic development and innovation strategy		
	Plan next-stage expansion beyond Year 5.		

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4. Hotel

Why is this transformational?

Developing a modern hotel or mixed-use accommodation offering is a critical enabler for accelerating economic transformation in the district. While Timaru has strong industrial, logistics and export foundations, the absence of contemporary, large-scale accommodation continues to constrain its ability to host conferences, attract investors, support corporate travel, and compete for regional and national events. Addressing this gap is about unlocking demand that already exists.

Importantly, interest in developing a hotel in Timaru is not new. Over time, local and external investors have demonstrated clear willingness and readiness to invest, reflecting confidence in the district's fundamentals and long-term potential. What has been missing is alignment – a shared framework that brings together market demand, site readiness, planning clarity, infrastructure coordination and collective commitment. Without this alignment, individual efforts have struggled to translate into delivery.

Objective: Enable the development of a modern hotel or mixed-use accommodation offering that strengthens business attraction, supports conferences and events, enhances investor confidence, and acts as a catalyst for CBD renewal and broader economic growth.

This lever is transformational because it shifts the approach from isolated projects to coordinated action. By creating a common understanding of the opportunity, aligning public and private roles, and providing clarity around pathways to delivery, the district can move from “known opportunity” to “investment underway.” It recognises and affirms the proactive stance of local investors, while establishing a clearer, faster route to progress through shared ownership and collaboration.

High-quality accommodation underpins visitor and business attraction, facilitates industry and government engagement, supports inward investment, and enhances the district's capacity to host professional services, events, and conferences. For a district positioning itself as a hub for logistics, manufacturing, food innovation, and energy, while aligning with future-focused industries such as aerospace, agritech, and advanced manufacturing, the ability to host delegations, training programmes, industry forums, and conferences is essential.

A well-located hotel or hotel-led mixed-use development can also act as a catalyst for wider regeneration. It supports CBD revitalisation, improves perceptions of the district, strengthens the experience economy, and enhances Timaru's appeal to skilled workers, remote professionals, and investors.

Hotel - 5 Year Plan (detailed)

	Key Actions	Accountabilities	Expected outcomes
Year 1 (Feasibility, Market Testing & Site Identification)	Confirm demand profile (corporate, government, conferences, events, tourism) using existing data and targeted market testing	Venture Timaru: Market testing, investor/operator engagement, opportunity framing	Clear evidence-based case for development
	Identify preferred locations (CBD, port-adjacent, mixed-use precincts)	Timaru District Council: Planning, zoning guidance, site identification, community engagement	Shortlisted sites identified
	Engage with hotel operators, developers, and investors	Property owners/developers: Early feasibility input	Initial operator/developer interest confirmed
	Assess planning, zoning, and consenting pathways		Reduced uncertainty and increased community understanding
	Socialise opportunity with community and stakeholders to build understanding and support		
Year 2 (Investment Structuring & Partner Attraction)	Develop an investment prospectus outlining demand, sites, development options, and returns	Venture Timaru: Lead investment prospectus, operator engagement, facilitation	Credible investment proposition in market
	Explore delivery models (private-led, public-private partnership, anchor tenant support, mixed-use integration)	Timaru District Council: Enable planning certainty, assess enabling infrastructure	Preferred development and delivery model identified
	Resolve planning or infrastructure barriers where feasible	Private sector partners: Commercial structuring	Planning risk reduced
	Continue operator negotiations		

Year 3 (Facility Development & Anchor Tenant Onboarding)	Secure preferred developer/operator	Developer/operator: Lead design and feasibility	Investment commitment secured
	Finalise site acquisition or agreements	Timaru District Council: Consenting support, infrastructure coordination	Design reflects business, conference and community needs
	Commence concept design and detailed feasibility	Venture Timaru: Ongoing facilitation and alignment with economic strategy	Strong signal of momentum to market
	Confirm conference, event and mixed-use components aligned with district needs		
Year 4 (Consenting & Construction Commencement)	Complete consenting processes	Developer/operator: Construction and delivery, Early bookings	Physical transformation underway
	Begin construction	Timaru District Council: Regulatory approvals, streetscape alignment	Early bookings and conference interest secured
	Develop pre-opening marketing focused on conferences, events, corporate and government markets	Venture Timaru: Market positioning, early bookings support	Positive shift in confidence and perception
	Align with CBD activation and event programming		
Year 5 (Consolidation, review, and future infrastructure planning)	Hotel opens and becomes operational	Hotel operator: Operations and service delivery	Timaru competitive for regional and national conferences
	Actively attract conferences, industry forums, government and corporate events	Venture Timaru: Support conference attraction and sector engagement	Increased visitor spend and business travel
	Leverage hotel to support investor visits, delegations and sector clusters	Timaru District Council & partners: Event and placemaking alignment	Stronger CBD vibrancy and investor confidence
	Review performance and identify expansion or complementary opportunities		Platform established for further mixed-use and experience-led development

5.CBD Revitalisation and Inner City & Town centre living

Why is this transformational?

Inner and near city living is the single most powerful lever available to transform the Timaru CBD and district town centres. While infrastructure investment, placemaking initiatives, and events all contribute to revitalisation, it is people living within walking distance of centres that fundamentally change how these places function, feel, and perform.

A growing residential population creates consistent, everyday activity rather than reliance on peak retail hours or occasional events. People who live nearby use cafés, services, green spaces, and cultural facilities daily, supporting local businesses and creating natural vibrancy. Increased residential presence improves safety through passive surveillance, strengthens community connection, and builds the confidence investors need to commit to long-term development. Christchurch is an example of how town centres anchored by residential populations are more resilient, adaptable, and economically sustainable than those reliant on retail alone.

Objective: Increase the number of people living within and around Timaru CBD and district town centres to drive long-term revitalisation, strengthen economic confidence, support workforce, and create vibrant, resilient, lived-in centres through targeted planning reform, investment attraction, residential delivery, and placemaking – supported by selective implementation of the CityTown Masterplan.

For Timaru, this shift is particularly important because the CBD continues to be perceived as a proxy for the district's overall economic performance. This perception gap undermines confidence and investment. Increasing the number of people living in and around the CBD directly addresses this issue by ensuring the city's economic strength is visible in its most prominent place.

Prioritising inner and near city living also directly supports the district's wider transformational objectives. It strengthens business and workforce attraction by offering the lifestyle, walkability, and amenity increasingly sought by skilled workers. It supports youth retention by creating vibrant, social, mixed-use environments that appeal to younger people. It enables ageing well by allowing older residents to downsize while remaining close to services, healthcare, and social connection. It also helps correct current housing mismatches by delivering apartments, townhouses, and mixed-use housing options that are currently under-supplied.

This approach extends beyond the Timaru CBD. Temuka's emerging residential development close to its town centre demonstrates the opportunity for district-wide application. By prioritising inner and near town centre living across the district, with the Timaru CBD as the primary anchor, Timaru can develop a connected network of strong, lived-in centres that support population growth, improve liveability, and reduce reliance on car-based travel. Anchor developments such as the planned hotel and theatre will accelerate this transformation, but their long-term impact depends on being surrounded by a critical mass of residents. Inner and near city is the foundation upon which successful placemaking, investment attraction, and town centre revitalisation depend.

To support this shift, the CityTown Masterplan facilitated by Timaru District Council provides an important enabling framework. While current funding does not allow for full implementation at the pace originally envisaged, the Masterplan remains highly relevant as a long-term spatial and placemaking guide. Its value lies in ensuring that incremental change – whether driven by public investment, private development, or community activation, contributes to a coherent, high-quality urban environment that supports residential amenity, walkability, safety, and everyday use.

Rather than being treated as a single, capital-intensive project, the CityTown Masterplan can be used as a live prioritisation and sequencing tool.

By focusing on those elements that most directly enhance inner-city living, such as pedestrian connections, public space quality, streetscape improvements, and activation the district can maintain momentum and deliver visible improvements even within constrained funding environments.

This approach keeps the long-term vision intact while allowing delivery to occur in manageable stages aligned with the district's five-year transformational priorities.

Inner and near city living sets the direction for change, while the CityTown Masterplan supports how that change is delivered.

Near & Inner City Living and CBD Revitalisation – 5 Year Plan (detailed)

Year 1 (Reset the Narrative, Remove Barriers, Maintain Momentum)	Publicly position inner and near city living as the foundation of CBD and town centre revitalisation.	Timaru District Council: Planning reform and process improvement, Masterplan prioritisation, public realm improvements.	Clear and consistent narrative that town centres are places to live.
	Confirm the Timaru CBD as the primary anchor, with other district town centres identified as other priority locations.	Venture Timaru: Economic narrative alignment, investor messaging.	Reduced regulatory and perception barriers to centre-based housing.
	Map priority residential intensification areas within walking distance of town centres.	CBD Group & Town Centre Groups: Advocacy, business coordination, activation.	Early visible change maintaining public and investor confidence.
	Review and adjust planning rules, density controls, height limits, and parking requirements to enable centre-based residential and mixed-use development.	Property Owners & Developers: Early feasibility engagement.	CityTown Masterplan kept live and credible.
	Audit vacant and underutilised buildings suitable for residential conversion or adaptive reuse.		
	Reconfirm the CityTown Masterplan as the long-term placemaking framework and reprioritise existing funding toward Masterplan elements that support residential amenity, walkability, and safety.		
	Deliver visible, low-cost improvements that improve confidence and perception (lighting, cleanliness, temporary activation).		
	Support adaptive reuse of existing CBD buildings for residential living.		
	Support and accelerate near-town-centre residential development already underway in Temuka.		

Year 2 (Build a Centre-Based Residential Pipeline)	Actively re-engage and attract developers focused on apartments, townhouses, build-to-rent, and age-friendly housing.	Venture Timaru: Prospectus development, developer and investor engagement.	A visible pipeline of inner and near town centre residential projects.
	Release a targeted CBD and Town Centre Living Investment Prospectus highlighting priority sites and housing typologies.	Timaru District Council: Incentives, infrastructure coordination, planning certainty.	Increased investor confidence in CBD and Temuka living.
	Introduce targeted incentives or streamlined consenting where appropriate to support centre-based living.	Developers & Investors: Project feasibility and commitment.	Improved amenity in areas targeted for residential growth.
	Align public realm spending with residential development locations, using CityTown Masterplan principles to guide streetscape upgrades and public space improvements.	CBD & Town Centre Groups: Local coordination and communication.	Strong alignment between housing delivery and economic strategy.
	Embed centre-based living into workforce attraction, youth retention, and age-friendly strategies.		
Year 3 (Delivery, Construction and Visible Change)	Construction commences on multiple residential and mixed-use developments in the CBD and priority town centres.	Developers: Construction and delivery.	Visible construction signalling irreversible change.
	Intensify placemaking, activation, and events to support a growing resident population.	Timaru District Council: Consenting support, infrastructure and placemaking delivery.	Growing residential population near town centres.
	Align messaging and delivery with hotel and theatre development momentum.	Venture Timaru: Promotion and population attraction.	Increased foot traffic and business confidence.
	Promote centre-based living to skilled workers, young professionals & students, downsizers, and remote workers.	CBD Group & Town Centre Groups: Activation and business engagement.	Improved local and external perception of the CBD.

Year 4 (Hub Activation & Knowledge Transfer)	Complete and occupy early residential developments.	Timaru District Council: Public realm integration, service alignment.	Town centres functioning as lived-in community hubs.
	Support expansion of hospitality, services, and community amenities responding to increased population.	Venture Timaru: Storytelling, investment leverage.	Stronger day, evening and weekend activity.
	Strengthen night-time economy and community programming.	Private Sector: Hospitality, service and amenity expansion.	Increased social connection and quality of life.
	Leverage hotel pre-opening activity to reinforce CBD confidence and district positioning.	Community & Business Groups: Place-based coordination.	Reinforced confidence for further private investment.
Year 5 (Consolidation, review, and future infrastructure planning)	Leverage the opening of the hotel to position Timaru as a liveable, connected regional city.	Venture Timaru: Investment and population growth leverage.	Significantly increased population living near town centres.
	Review which levers have most effectively increased inner and near city living and prioritise them for scale.	Timaru District Council: Strategy refresh and long-term infrastructure planning.	A revitalised Timaru CBD supported by strong town centres such as Temuka.
	Refresh staging of CityTown Masterplan elements aligned with residential growth.	Developers & Investors: Continued residential and mixed-use development.	Improved perception aligned with economic reality.
	Extend successful centre-based living approaches to other town centres.	Community Groups: Stewardship and place identity.	A scalable, residential-led regeneration model embedded in policy and practice.
	Embed inner and near centre living as a permanent planning and investment principle.		

