



Strengthening Communities

in Tāmaki Makaurau

What does 'good' look like and how do we get there?

Introduction.

This report is based on findings from an online survey, in person conversations, written responses, and a half-day hui that focused on what 'good' looks like in terms of strong communities in Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland. The work was co-funded by Department of Internal Affairs, Inspiring Communities, Community Waitakere, ANCAD, Auckland Council, Catalyse and Walk Together.

106 people contributed information via an online survey, in-person conversations and written responses over two weeks in November 2023. Most were part of communities, community group or community organisation, with only 13 working for local or central government or for philanthropic funders. Almost 90% said strengthening regional community relationships and connections is either extremely or very important at this time.

92 people attended the half-day hui in December 2023. Attendees came from a diverse range of roles, regions of Auckland, ethnicities, and backgrounds. Most of these people were also from communities, community groups and community organisations.

The report summarises the key themes of what 'good' looks like and identifies milestones for 3 and 6 years. It also discusses why and how communicating the value of strong communities and community work is important and highlights key challenges to achieving these goals.

This information is designed to inform steps that can be taken now. It is free to use and share.

Hui.



2 key themes.

Overall, for strong communities, there are two key themes for what ‘good’ looks like:

1. People have access to “all the basics” and are connected to other people; engaged with organisations who can provide support and opportunities; and enabled to make decisions and take action together at the local level, leading to thriving people and communities.
2. Community organisations are relevant and useful because they have strong collaborative and mutually respectful relationships with local people, other organisations, central and local government, and funders.

Good looks different in different places, at different times and for different people. Good is underpinned by values of care, equity, kindness, manaakitanga, and respect. Good should be mana-enhancing, nurturing, inclusive and at the expense of no-one. Good “actively embodies” Te Tiriti o Waitangi, te reo Māori and te ao Māori. Good is about having choices and about living in ways that mitigate and adapt to climate change, and help heal the planet. Good is about local people having opportunities to influence actions that impact on them, locally and beyond.

Together, this means good in Tāmaki Makaurau is about “peaceful social cohesion” through connection, relationships, manaakitanga (care for one another) and kaitiakitanga (care for nature), where everyone has a range of options to thrive and “we are on our different waka but rowing towards the same goals”.

What 'good' looks like

89.7%

People are connected, and live in inclusive communities.

"Lots of community connection and interaction among diverse people", increased trust between groups and local people enabled to get together, make decisions and take action together at the local level.

- Less loneliness.
- Public spaces are accessible for everyone.
- Opportunities for people to connect and know their neighbours.

64%

People are thriving.

People live good lives, "have choices, and are thriving not just surviving". This means all communities have access to:

- Incomes and work that provide opportunities for personal and city-wide advancement.
- Community facilities, open spaces, art, events, opportunities to connect and have fun!

54%

People have what they need.

Everyone's basic needs are met, and "poverty is not a barrier". Everyone has:

- Food.
- Transport.
- Education.
- Healthcare.
- Employment.
- Safety.
- A place to call home.

Shared Values:

Care

Equity

Kindness

Manaakitanga

Respect

92%

Collaborative relationships within and between people, organisations, government, and funders.

"Authentic connection and long-term relationships" with "genuine manaakitanga (care for one another) and whanaungatanga (stability in relationships)".

- Communities are at the centre of planning and action so successes are built on and people, organisations and systems work to their strengths to further improve physical and social infrastructure.

67%

Information, resources, and power are shared and accessible.

"Knowledge is shared freely - community is not competitive"

- Citizen review panels and other participatory democracy processes are used for wider reaching decision-making.
- Funders are working towards goals that matter to local communities as well as to wider society.
- Community organisations work together and pool resources to work towards common visions.

53%

Te Tiriti o Waitangi, te reo Māori and te ao Māori are embraced and embedded.

"Tikanga, kaupapa and matauranga are actively embodied", well supported financially and with expertise.

- Te Tiriti o Waitangi is taught, understood, respected, and applied.
- Te reo Māori is used, understood and taught.
- Te ao Māori values and approaches are included in decision making and action taking.

43%

Climate responsive, resilient and regenerative lifestyles and neighbourhoods.

There are "well-looked after nature spaces" in the city and individuals, groups, organisations and systems are:

- Enabled to live sustainable lives - socially, environmentally, and financially.
- Prepared for extreme weather events.
- Acting on climate responsive plans developed and revised alongside/with communities and community organisations.

“Good is communities where everyone feels valued and safe, no matter what their social or economic status is.”

“Good is grounded in Te Ao Māori and Te Tiriti o Waitangi.”

“Good is shared values and respecting differences in values and embracing that.”

“Good is strong neighbourhood identities built from a deep relationship with the land - our places. This means understanding our landscapes, communities, histories, mana whenua narratives.”

Where we want to be in 3 years

Improved understandings of different ways of wellbeing means there is **more diversity in who is engaged** with in communities, & in representation.

Better systems & opportunities for **communication and collaboration** between organisations are established & used.

A youth engagement & support focus means **more youth involvement** in education & local and city development processes.

Investment has been made in **knowledge and information sharing systems** & databases and these are widely used & promoted.

Education on **Te Tiriti o Waitangi, te reo Māori & te ao Māori** is widely available, & embedded in shared community & organisational visions & strategies.

Community organisations have **secure resourcing & community connector/worker roles** are established, well paid, valued, & celebrated.

Funders are continuing to build & **strengthen relationships & partnerships** with organisations to achieve shared goals.

Strong **emergency resilience plans** in place, built in collaboration with council & communities.

Neighbourhood level development is a focus, ensuring **local access to essential goods & services** as well as a **range of transport options** to the wider city.

Placemaking and beautifying local areas is happening more regularly, making Tāmaki Makaurau a place people want to live in.

Shared visions have been built alongside various communities of place & affinity across the city & these **used to guide change/development**.

The **multiple values of community engagement & strong communities** are well communicated, understood & part of decision making.

Significant progress has been made to better care for the natural environment, building **resilience to extreme weather events & impacts of climate change**.

Community facilities are accessible to all & fun events, parties, activities are supported to **get people active and engaged** with local places & people.

Long-standing crises (e.g. emergency housing, food security) are less of a priority because **resources & systems are accessible & securely funded**.

Where we want to be in 6 years

Communities are inclusive in ways that enable diversity (age, race, gender, ability etc) to flourish without doing harm to others.

Organisations have the capacity and capability to be proactive & responsive to changing local circumstances.

Long-term plans & visions are developed & implemented collaboratively, & include local people and organisations in decision making.

There is a **deeper culture & practice of sharing & collaboration** (resources & funding) among organisations.

Civics are taught widely, & **local people are engaged** in community & government decision making, beyond voting.

A range of safe, accessible, reliable and convenient **public & active transport options** are available locally & city-wide.

Neighbourhoods are places where **people can easily access what they need** to survive & thrive.

Community-led climate action, in partnership with government, is prioritised, underway & yielding results.

Youth are engaged in what matters to them & to wider society, with their voices amplified & respected.

People & organisations can readily **access information and resources** in a variety of ways.

Te Tiriti o Waitangi te reo Māori and te ao Māori are embraced, embedded, & put into practice.

Community organisations are **partnering & working together** on shared goals more.

Everyone has **access to quality food, housing, work, health & education** & living wages are implemented.

“Everyone should be able to afford adequate housing, have enough food and have financial support and stability.”

“Authentic connection and long-term relationships with genuine manaakitanga (care for one another) and whanaungatanga (stability in relationships) [that] contribute to the overall resilience and vitality of a community.”

“The future envisions strategic alignment with local government priorities, and connecting community leaders and groups that share similar goals. Working alongside and in partnership emerged as critical components of strong community development.”

“Community is not a business - the ‘profits’ are not financial: they are resilience and well-being. The processes are collaborative and uplifting; knowledge is shared freely; and success is a continuous cycle of adapting what works.”

Communicating the value of strong communities and good community work.

The work that community groups and organisations do, and the work that is needed to get to 'good', can be difficult to find out about as well as undervalued and/or ignored. Survey and conversation respondents said being able to communicate value and worthiness to funders, council, other community groups, and people, is very important because when the value of community work is widely understood, a broader range of people, groups and organisations are resourced to work together and shared goals are more attainable, useful and relevant.

- Community organisations and groups are thus often better placed to influence positive system change, secure sufficient resourcing, retain and grow staff and members, as well as connect effectively about things that matter and build trust and relationships with locals, other groups and organisations.
- Councils, government and businesses are better able to reach and include a more diverse range of people and their lived experience alongside subject-matter experts in ways that are mutually useful and respectful and which benefit both longer and shorter term projects, resources and service delivery.
- Together, understanding the value of strong communities and good community work results in initiatives that are fit for purpose, agile, well loved and well used as well as more resilient and adaptable communities, and a city people want to be part of.

Communicating value is an area community groups and organisations have some agency over, and can influence. Most of the time, however, available resources are insufficient and communicating the value of strong communities and good community work is only able to supported in limited ways, such as word of mouth and networking; sharing stories, images and videos; or through funded evaluations. Investment in research, data, graphic design, community awards and celebrations is, for example, much more difficult for most communities, groups and organisations.

6 best ways to communicate value

Use research, data, and information to showcase how community work (processes, outputs and outcomes) **contribute to shared goals** e.g. how tree planting improves water quality as well as bringing diverse groups together.

Share good news in newspapers, on news websites, on social media and in place (billboards, noticeboards, shop windows, pavements) to **show people what already happens and how they can be part of it.**

Invest in good graphic design and use simple messaging - use the same **tools and styles as the audience you want to reach.**

Network - word of mouth is powerful. Spread the word **in language different audiences can understand at events organised by them as well as for them.**

Have fun! A picture (or video) speaks 1000 words - get the message out on Tiktok, Instagram, X etc and focus on **immediate goals and needs as well as the longer term.**

Community **awards and celebrations** to show how much we value community work and workers.

"...know your audience! Tell them things that build on what they know in language they understand."

"Know what the decision makers value and use that to guide how we communicate the things community work values."

"Language that aligns with the Mayoral vision will travel."

"...those who are unaware..., they have to see it, you know, they have to visually see it in the community."

8 key challenges

People's
basic needs
not being met.

Lack of unity
in vision, purpose, and
long-term planning.

Lack of funding
sustainable and
long-term.

A changing and
**uncertain political
and economic**
environment.

Community work is
**unknown,
undervalued,
and/or ignored.**

Climate change
and extreme weather
events.

**Fatigue, loss of
skilled staff, and
negative thinking.**

Discrimination
and lack of diversity.

What next?

‘Good’ strong communities happen when we **work together to our strengths. If you’d like to be part of making progress towards ‘good’ in Tāmaki Makaurau:**

- Use and share the information in this report widely.
- Help us develop a communications strategy to share what we have heard even more widely.
- Join the [mailing list](#) to keep in touch and receive an invitation to an action-focused hui.
- Share the invitation to the hui to plan collaborative action, and join in (mid-March, TBC).

Appendices.

More detail on key points from the workshop,
survey and conversations*

* Collated findings in full are [here](#).

What 'good' looks like.

People have what they need.

Survey respondents and hui attendees all made it clear that to achieve 'good', first "all people need to have the basics - food, housing, bills able to be paid" because these are the things that assist the development of good strong communities, and good personal lives as well as helping resist division - "good looks like an everyday life. Good is uplifting, it is better connected and proud of who we are, where we are. It is about connection to whenua." Basic needs include access to safe, warm, dry, and affordable housing, healthy and affordable kai, quality education, transport, employment, and living in safe, violence-free, communities.

People can thrive.

In 10 years, we want people in Tāmaki Makaurau to be "thriving, not just surviving". Thriving looks like people having fun, art and design in our communities, placemaking, green spaces for play, community events, opportunities to grow and develop (upskilling, training, education), and people can access whatever they need easily. Many attendees at our hui raised the concept of the '20 minute neighbourhood', where community members can access everything they need within 20 minutes, either by walking, biking, or using public transport. This means people would be able to access the basics (healthy food, doctors, schools), but also community hubs, parks, places to play, art etc.

People are connected and live in inclusive communities.

Through the COVID-19 pandemic, and the 2023 extreme weather events, we have seen how important it is for people to be connected to others in their community. When people are connected, they feel like they belong, they are less likely to be lonely, and they are better taken care of, and able to take care of others, during crises. Connected, inclusive communities look like people who know their neighbours; everyone can access community spaces; diversity is respected and accepted; everyone is valued for their contributions; and people aren't lonely.

Climate responsive and resilient.

Communities are resilient and adaptable in the face of climate change and natural disasters, and we have the infrastructure to withstand extreme weather events. Strong disaster recovery and response plans have been built alongside community organisations, community members, local and central government. People know where to go and what to do in an emergency, and recovery is smoother for whānau. Alongside this, in ten years we will live in ways that mitigate climate change and have begun reversing the effects of climate change. Our cities will be sustainable, there will be less reliance on cars, government policy will be focused on reversing climate change, and it will be easier for people to make sustainable choices.

What 'good' looks like.

Te Tiriti o Waitangi and Te reo Māori is embraced and embedded.

Community, council, and central government work is embedded within Te tiriti o Waitangi, and all workers have a deep understanding of the meaning and purpose of Te tiriti. Te tiriti and Te ao Māori are taught in schools, and all community members can access education too. Community work that actively embodies Te tiriti and Te ao Māori is well supported financially, and co-design with Māori organisations and communities is prioritised. Te reo is taught in schools, and used across the board.

Resources are shared, accessible, and sustainable.

Funding is not siloed or competitive, instead it is long-term and sustainable and funders have strong equitable relationships with the organisations they support. Funding is not under threat of being pulled, so that organisations can have continuity and security, and funding covers essential costs such as paying workers well. Community organisations with similar purposes and goals are partnering, working together, and sharing resources to achieve visions. This work is underpinned by relationships across and between organisations that have been built through opportunities to connect such as hui and events.

Collaborative relationships within and between organisations, government, and funders.

Long-term, respectful and meaningful relationships are built between these groups, and when a person leaves an organisation their relationship is handed over to another person to ensure continuity. Also key to this is supporting people to stay in their roles, which means community workers are well paid. In 10 years, these relationships will be well established, and all groups will have developed shared visions and kaupapa alongside community members on what they want to achieve, and how to achieve it.

How we get to good. In 3 years.

In three years, we will be laying the groundwork for our vision for the future. This means building on what we already have *and* fundamentally changing some of our systems, inequalities, and approaches. In three years:

- Diversity will be recognised as a strength, and engagement with diverse communities is valued in all community work. Multiple understandings of wellbeing will be recognised.
- Community organisations are securely funded and roles are valued, celebrated, and “well paid”, so that trained and skilled staff are retained. Community connector roles are established.
- Participatory ways (eg Citizen’s Assemblies) of building shared visions and strategies will be part of established systems and used to guide actions.
- Community organisations will be working together collaboratively, partnering to achieve shared visions and goals and supporting each other by sharing skills, resources, knowledge, and information.
- Funders will be community-informed and continue to grow relationships and partnerships with communities of all kinds to help achieve what matters to local people and to the wider city.
- The value of communities and community-based work is better understood, including by those who are currently unaware. The strengths we already have will be built on. For example, we already have many community organisations with a lot of knowledge and experience in their communities, we do not need to start by building new ones.
- Young people will be supported and engaged (listening to their voices, respecting them as experts on their own needs and experiences, and encouraging them to be involved in community) on topics that matter to them (youth hubs, education, social services) and to the wider city.
- Disaster planning and recovery as well as climate change, mitigation and adaptation will be a key part of business as usual for every organisation. Climate response/recovery plans will be built by council, government, and community organisations together through co-design/ engagement with communities. These will continue towards their goals through changes in government, council, and in staff.
- Every place is different and a focus on neighbourhood development will help build a more resilient city that works well for the people in it. Making Tāmaki Makaurau beautiful and fun through events, access to facilities, placemaking, public art, green space, and opportunities for people to get actively involved/connect with others will make people look after the places/people around them and entice others to live here. Ensuring good local and city-wide connectivity means providing a range of transport option - private, public and active.
- A transition away from ‘ambulance at the bottom of the cliff funding’, and towards long-term, equitable and sustainable solutions to social problems will be underway. Rather than funding emergency housing and food parcels, investment will be in papakainga, long term rental options, building affordable housing, reducing food waste and loss, ensuring fair trade, supporting local growing and sharing food.

How we get to good. In 6 years.

In 6 years we will be building on our strong foundations and moving towards our shared vision of 'good'.

- Have communities that embrace and celebrate diversity, where all people are actively participating in community, council, and government work and will have avenues to make their voices heard. Civics will be taught widely.
- Organisations will be well funded and workers will be well paid, and we will be retaining knowledgeable staff who have strong relationships across organisations, government, and community.
- Systems will be more flexible for people and organisations so that everyone can access what they need and live in security.
- Community organisations are working together collaboratively, they have strong working relationships and are continuing to make connections.
- Less people are falling into desperate need because we have begun transitioning away from 'ambulance at the bottom of the cliff' solutions, and instead are providing long-term holistic support to help people create and/or maintain 'good' living.
- Te Titiri o Waitangi and Te Ao Māori are well understood and embedded into community work, and this foundation will support better outcomes for Māori and for all.
- Wealth is shared, meaning all people are being paid fairly and well so that we are not losing nurses, teachers etc. A living wage is implemented across all sectors; people have their basic needs met *and* are able to live a good life on their income.
- Tāmaki Makaurau has embraced '20 minute neighbourhoods' and people are able to easily access everything they need with less reliance on cars, meaning poverty is not a barrier to accessing services and public transport is functioning well, reducing our emissions.
- Long term plans and visions for the future that were created collaboratively with community are being implemented, and results/information on progress is being continually fed back to community members and organisations so they can continue to build on this mahi and are encouraged to keep working towards 'good'.

How we communicate the 'value' of strong communities and community work.

“It’s about how we get the message across to those unconverted people or those who are unaware. They have to see it, you know, they have to visually see it in the community.”

Respondents highlighted four key reasons for better communicating the value of the work they do:

1. People are unaware of work, events, and services available.
2. People are aware, but don't understand the value-add of community work.
3. There is a need to communicate value to funders.
4. There is a need to communicate value to council and government.

The most common suggestion for showing value include:

- ‘Good news stories’ articulated through social media and online platforms, showcasing the incredible work that is already underway in communities. Key to this is ensuring that this information is easily accessible (in language, content, and easy to find), and utilises good graphic design and video editing.
- Building and utilising networks - word of mouth is powerful.
- Use of traditional’ media such as newspapers, community newsletters, and TV News.
- Quantifying work underway to showcase importance and effectiveness to central and local Government. “We need to be able to showcase and quantify the value of the work we do”.
- Hold community events.
- Community awards to celebrate work and workers.
- Posters and billboards.
- Street art.