



2025 ROTORUA LAKES COUNCIL LOCAL ELECTIONS HANDBOOK

ROTORUA TOURISM INDUSTRY PARTNERSHIP

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This handbook is a resource produced by the RTIP to help our tourism and hospitality whanau better understand the 2025 local government elections for Rotorua.

In this handbook you will find:

- An introduction to Local Government Elections
- An overview the Aotearoa New Zealand Tourism and Hospitality landscape
- A summary of Rotorua economically, socially, culturally and environmentally
- An outline of current challenges and successes for Rotorua's tourism sector
- A guide to local election candidates with responses to sector-specific questions

Our goal is to support informed voting and encourage a stronger connection between elected officials and the Rotorua visitor economy.



Have your say on who represents your community by voting in the 2025 local elections. Local elections decide who represents us on our city, district, and regional councils.

The people elected to local councils get to make decisions about our daily lives and the future of our towns and cities. They set and collect rates, oversee town planning, and provide services like rubbish collection, parks and libraries.

In some parts of New Zealand, local elections are also held for local and community boards, licensing trusts, and some other organisations.

Why Local Elections Matter

Local government makes decisions that affect your everyday life — like parks, roads, housing, tourism, events, water, waste, and local business rules. In Rotorua, this includes decisions that directly impact the visitor economy, tourism operators, and our shared community spaces.

Who Can Vote?

You can vote if you:

- Are 18 years or older
- Are a New Zealand citizen or permanent resident
- Have lived in New Zealand for at least one year continuously
- Are enrolled on the electoral roll

Voting when you own property in a council area, but don't live there

Each council has a ratepayer roll for people who pay rates on a property but live in another part of the country. In that situation, a person can vote in the area where they live, and the area where they pay rates. To apply, contact the electoral officer for the local council area where you pay rates but do not live.

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Maori Wards

If you're of New Zealand Māori descent, you can choose to enrol on the Māori roll or the general roll.

The roll you choose may affect who you can vote for at local elections.

If you choose the Māori roll and your council has a Māori ward or constituency, you will vote for candidates in the Māori ward or constituency.

If you choose the general roll, or your council does not have a Māori ward or constituency, you will vote for candidates in a general ward or constituency.

No matter which roll you're on, you will choose from the same list of candidates when making your vote for mayor.

Maori Wards Referendum

Some local councils that have Maori Wards or constituencies have been directed by Central Government to hold a binding referendum. The referendum will ask voters whether or not they support keeping them. If the majority vote against Maori Wards there will be NO Maori Ward Election in 2028 and 2031.



How It Works

Local government elections are held every three years. This year they are from the 9th September to the 11th October. You'll get your voting papers in the mail. Mark your choices and return them by post or to a voting box near you.

What Are You Voting For?

In Rotorua, you vote for:

- Mayor – leads the Council
- Councillors – make decisions about local services and spending
- Community Board Members

Rotorua Lakes Council uses the Single Transferable Vote (STV) system – you rank candidates in order of preference [1, 2, 3, etc].

The Rotorua Lakes Community Board

The Rotorua Lakes Community Board was established in 2007 and has four elected members and one Council-appointed councillor. The board gives a voice to specific communities within Rotorua, roughly covering Hamurana and lakes Rotoiti, Rotoehu, Rotoma, Okareka and Tarawera. Board members act as representatives, advocates and connectors of these communities.

The role of a community board member is varied and focuses mainly on providing a voice for either the lakes or rural communities and acting as a bridge between the community and the council.

The Rotorua Lakes Community Board meets once a month, and meetings are open for public attendance.

Rotorua Rural Community Board

Established in 2016, The Rotorua Rural Community Board has four elected members and one Council-appointed councillor. The board provides a voice to rural communities, acting as representatives, advocates and connectors. The rural board covers an extensive area with approximately 8000 residents to the north, south, east and west of Rotorua.

The role of a community board member is varied and focuses on advocacy and acting as a bridge between the community and the council.

The Rotorua Rural Community Board meets once a month, and these meetings are open to the public to attend.



ENROL, VOTE, BE HEARD, MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

If you're enrolled to vote, you get to have a say in general elections, local elections and referendums. Elections are your chance to have a say about who represents you on the issues that you care about.

It's easy to enrol or update your details. You can:

- visit vote.nz and use your New Zealand driver licence, New Zealand passport or RealMe verified identity to enrol online
- call free 0800 36 76 56 and ask for a form to be sent to you

When you've enrolled, your name will go on the electoral roll. You must be on the electoral roll to vote.

You need to update your details every time you move house



This section provides an insight in to the Tourism and Hospitality sector from the view of two of our advocacy associations; New Zealand Maori Tourism and Tourism Industry Aotearoa



**NZ MĀORI
TOURISM**
HE TOA TAKITINI
'OUR STRENGTH IS IN UNITY'

NZ Maori Tourism is an independent incorporated society that promotes, guides and supports the Maori tourism sector.

Our vision is a future where our communities thrive, guided by deep respect for our heritage and the sustainable use of resources.

By nurturing our cultural identity, fostering economic growth and enhancing well-being and putting tangata and whenua at the centre of what we do, we will build a legacy of enduring prosperity for future generations.

Our mission is to foster prosperity for our tangata and our whenua while actively contributing to our cultural, social and economic wealth.

Through innovation and collaboration, and inclusive practices, we aim to create an environment that empowers individuals, celebrates diversity of thought and promotes equitable opportunities.



Annual Arrivals

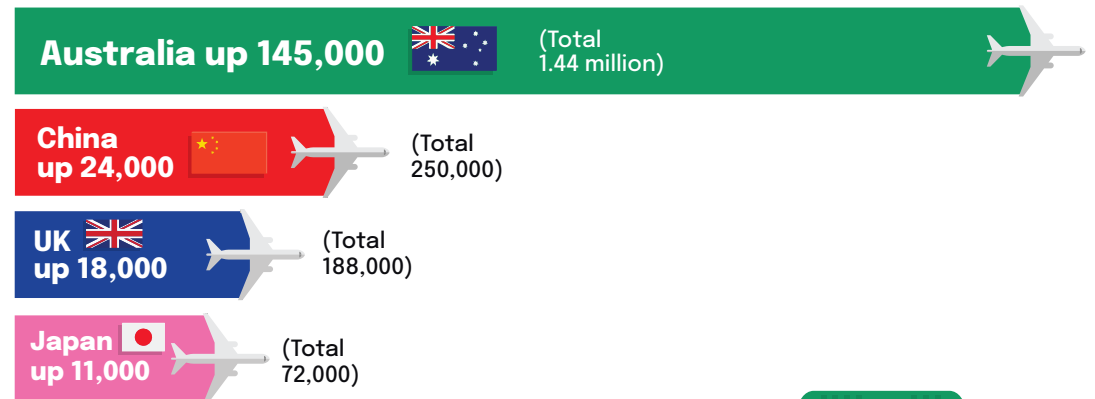
Year ended May 2025

3.37 million

↑ Increase of 167,000
from the May 2024 year



The biggest annual *changes* in arrivals:



Top 10 countries

Year ended May 2025





HE PAE TUKUTUKU - OUR 2050 VISION

Tourism makes a vital contribution to our economy, encourages social connectivity internationally and domestically, and showcases our whenua, our cultural diversity and timeless experiences. Tourism fosters pride and is a catalyst for regional prosperity.

Our vision is for a tourism industry that delivers strongly and positively for Aotearoa New Zealand, our people, our economy, and our environment. This is an exciting future where tourism takes on the challenges ahead while always providing world class visitor experiences and wide benefits for New Zealanders. The central premise of this Tourism 2050 Blueprint is balanced growth where tourism is a flourishing and growing industry that contributes to people, place and culture.

TOURISM BY THE NUMBERS

Key tourism stats for year to March 2024

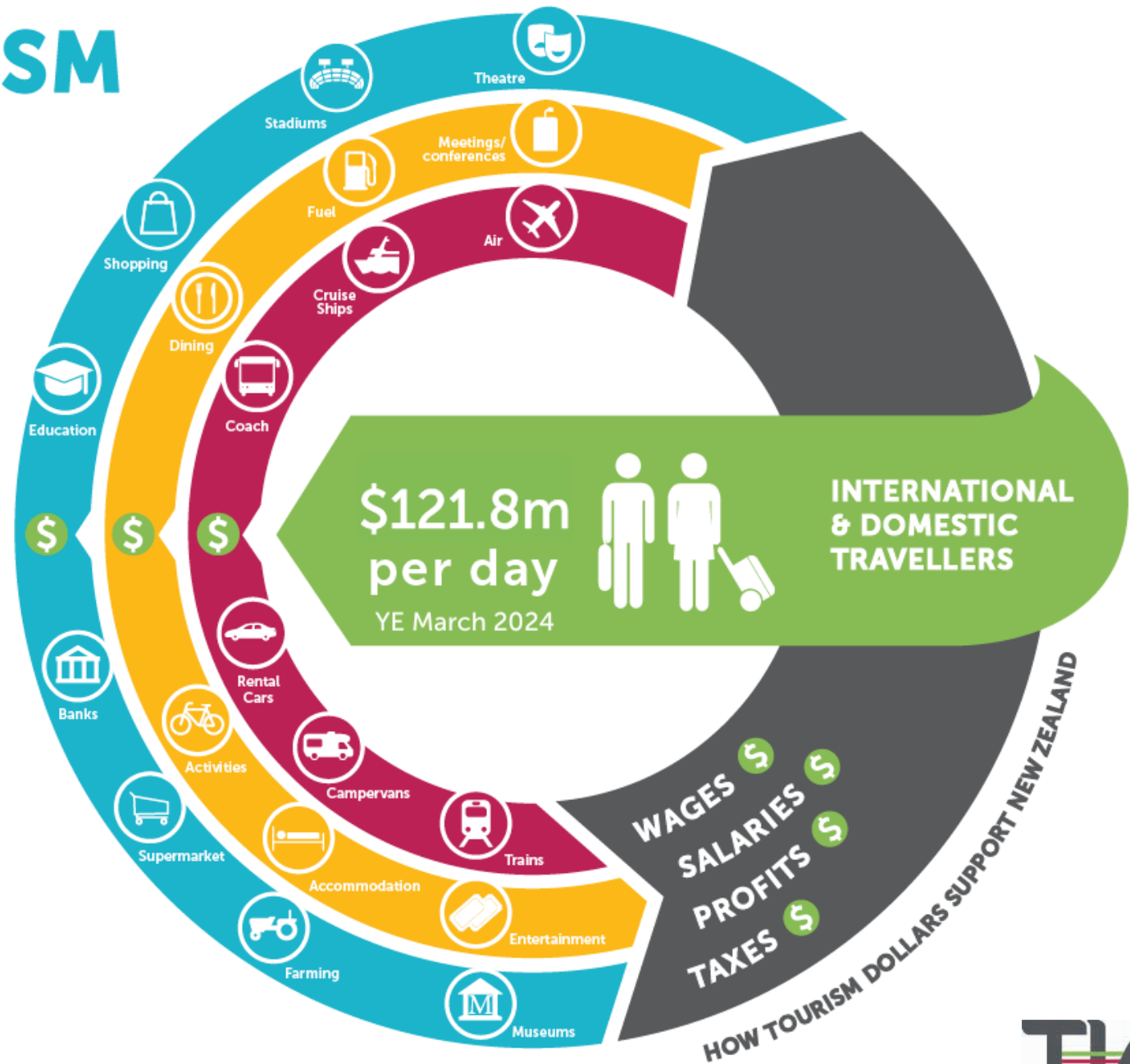
- total tourism expenditure was \$44.4 billion
- tourism generated a direct and indirect contribution to GDP of \$28.7 billion, or 7.5 percent of GDP
- international tourism's overall contribution to New Zealand's total exports of goods and services was 17.2 percent
- international tourism expenditure was \$16.9 billion. GST paid by visitors was \$4.1 billion, of which \$1.7 billion was by international visitors
- domestic tourism expenditure was \$27.5 billion
- international student expenditure was \$3.8 billion

Employment:

- the total employed in tourism was 303,420. Of these, 182,727 were directly employed in tourism and 120,693 indirectly.
- as a share of the total number of people employed in New Zealand, direct and indirect tourism employment was 10.7 percent.

from the TIA website.

THE POWER OF TOURISM



LOCATION AND POPULATION

Rotorua is in a strategic central location positioned just outside of the golden triangle of Auckland, Hamilton and Tauranga and has excellent infrastructure to facilitate the transfer of goods, energy and information.

With a population exceeding 70,000, Rotorua has a unique combination of a skilled workforce, a supportive business environment, and distinctive market opportunities that position it as a compelling destination for businesses and families seeking to flourish in a diverse and dynamic setting.

KEY INDUSTRIES

Several major industries thrive in Rotorua, making our city a smart choice to do business.

Rotorua is well known for agriculture, forestry and wood processing, geothermal, Māori culture, and tourism, which significantly contribute to our economy and employment opportunities.

Population over
77,000
 people

AWESOMELY
 FABULOUSLY
 PEACEFULLY
 UNIQUELY
 LOVINGLY
ENCHANTINGLY
 JOYFULLY
 MAJESTICALLY
 ENRICHINGLY
 FABULOUSLY

63%
 are of working
 age (15-64)

18%
 were born
 overseas

43%
 are Māori

21%
 are aged
 0-14

Famously
ROTORUA
 RotoruaNZ.com

TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY

The tourism industry in Rotorua is the largest employer and the highest contributor to Rotorua's GDP.

The main economic contributors to the tourism industry are accommodation providers, cafés, restaurants and bars, visitor experiences, and retailers.

Rotorua is one of New Zealand's most-visited cities, so it is crucial for us to increase the commercial value the visitor market brings to the city. We continue to investigate the barriers and opportunities for tourism growth in Rotorua, and have set a goal to achieve a \$1 billion visitor spend by 2030.



QUARTERLY ECONOMIC MONITOR

Like many regions across New Zealand, Rotorua is in recession with the construction sector in particular contributing to a contracting local economy. Infometrics provisionally estimates that the Rotorua economy contracted 0.9% over the year to March 2025.

The construction sector has struggled against high interest rates, weak consumer demand (which makes business reluctant to invest in new buildings), and the tight fiscal environment. A 61% fall in non-residential consents, albeit from historically high levels, is evidence of construction sector difficulties.

In contrast, residential consents rose 40% over the year to March 2025 on the back of unusually strong December and June 2024 quarters. However, it's hard to discern a clear upward trend in residential consents, which is not surprising given that house value growth has been weak. House sales have been picking up. But a surge in new listings is giving potential buyers plenty of options to choose from, which is keeping a lid on prices.

Agriculture is benefitting from strong dairy export prices. Since the end of 2023, ANZ's Commodity Price Index shows a 23% rise in global prices for dairy products. The lower exchange rate has boosted NZ-dollar export prices by another 8-14%. Rotorua's forecast dairy payout of \$505m for the 2024/25 season is 31% higher than the payout for the 2023/24 season, which was itself a good year. Forestry continues to struggle both domestically and internationally.

Consumer spending in Rotorua fell 0.9% over the year to March 2025. Many homeowners have yet to roll onto lower mortgage rates, and job insecurity is feeding into cautious spending habits. Employment of Rotorua residents fell 1.4% over the year to March 2025, which has seen the local unemployment rate edge up to 6.6%, well above the national average of 4.9%.

Spending by tourists grew just 0.1% over the year to March 2025 despite a 1.4% rise in guest nights. International guest nights rose 6.1% but were mostly offset by a decline in domestic guest nights of 1.5%. Growth in international guest nights has been gradually weakening. If this continues, we could see a fall in total guest nights.

Tourism expenditure

March years, current prices



	Rotorua District				New Zealand			
Year	Domestic	International	Total	% growth total	Domestic	International	Total	% growth total
2009	\$320.6m	\$240.7m	\$561.3m		\$11,862.7m	\$7,407.2m	\$19,269.9m	
2010	\$315.9m	\$234.7m	\$550.6m	-1.9%	\$11,789.8m	\$7,051.7m	\$18,841.6m	-2.2%
2011	\$334.1m	\$251.7m	\$585.8m	6.4%	\$12,160.6m	\$6,723.9m	\$18,884.4m	0.2%
2012	\$343.4m	\$273.3m	\$616.7m	5.3%	\$12,417.4m	\$6,738.5m	\$19,155.9m	1.4%
2013	\$363.4m	\$251.9m	\$615.3m	-0.2%	\$12,911.3m	\$6,523.1m	\$19,434.4m	1.5%
2014	\$368.3m	\$263.4m	\$631.7m	2.7%	\$13,541.5m	\$6,921.8m	\$20,463.3m	5.3%
2015	\$407.0m	\$358.1m	\$765.1m	21.1%	\$14,447.8m	\$8,555.2m	\$23,003.1m	12.4%
2016	\$427.9m	\$424.5m	\$852.4m	11.4%	\$15,324.7m	\$10,460.6m	\$25,785.4m	12.1%
2017	\$462.1m	\$404.8m	\$866.9m	1.7%	\$16,224.1m	\$10,392.5m	\$26,616.6m	3.2%
2018	\$504.7m	\$433.5m	\$938.2m	8.2%	\$17,294.1m	\$11,440.8m	\$28,734.8m	8.0%
2019	\$514.9m	\$403.0m	\$917.9m	-2.2%	\$17,608.9m	\$11,992.4m	\$29,601.3m	3.0%
2020	\$520.7m	\$388.2m	\$908.9m	-1.0%	\$17,753.8m	\$12,350.5m	\$30,104.3m	1.7%
2021	\$624.0m	\$21.2m	\$645.2m	-29.0%	\$19,141.0m	\$1,321.8m	\$20,462.8m	-32.0%
2022	\$491.0m	\$26.7m	\$517.6m	-19.8%	\$19,256.8m	\$1,489.5m	\$20,746.3m	1.4%
2023	\$525.1m	\$201.8m	\$726.8m	40.4%	\$21,487.8m	\$8,034.9m	\$29,522.7m	42.3%
2024	\$492.0m	\$287.4m	\$779.4m	7.2%	\$20,417.4m	\$10,698.5m	\$31,115.9m	5.4%
2025	\$498.8m	\$280.8m	\$779.6m	0.0%	\$19,579.0m	\$11,526.6m	\$31,105.6m	0.0%

Economy

Gross domestic product

\$4,857m

0.5%

Growth in 2024

Employment

Filled jobs

37,479

2.1%

Growth in 2024

Productivity

GDP per filled job

\$129,603

-1.6%

Growth in 2024

Businesses

Number of business units

7,968

1.0%

Growth in 2024

Tourism

Tourism filled jobs

3,326

6.1%

Growth in 2024

Population

Estimated resident population

77,100

0.7%

Growth in 2024

Rotorua's tourism strengths lie in its unique geothermal activity, rich Maori culture, and diverse outdoor activities, attracting both domestic and international visitors. However, challenges include a perception of being a less attractive destination for some and fluctuations in visitor numbers, particularly due to reliance on international tourism.

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The following page is an unedited snapshot from Gemini AI of Rotorua's successes and challenges;



STRENGTHS

Geothermal Wonders:

Rotorua is renowned for its geothermal activity, featuring geysers, hot springs, and mud pools, making it a unique destination for visitors interested in this natural phenomenon.

Māori Cultural Experiences:

The city offers immersive cultural experiences, allowing visitors to learn about and engage with authentic Māori traditions and history.

Outdoor Adventures:

Rotorua boasts a wide range of outdoor activities, including mountain biking, white water rafting, and hiking, attracting adventure seekers.

Spa and Wellness Tourism:

Rotorua is a leading destination for spa and wellness tourism, leveraging its geothermal resources for relaxation and rejuvenation.

Strategic Location:

Rotorua's central North Island location makes it accessible from major centers like Auckland and Hamilton, making it a popular destination for weekend getaways and longer stays.

Strong Tourism Infrastructure:

Rotorua has a well-developed tourism infrastructure, including accommodation options, transportation, and visitor attractions.

Diverse Visitor Appeal:

Rotorua caters to a wide range of interests, from adventure seekers and nature lovers to those seeking relaxation and cultural immersion, making it a versatile destination.

WEAKNESSES

Reliance on International Tourism:

The city's tourism sector is heavily reliant on international visitors, and fluctuations in international travel can significantly impact the local economy.

Negative Perceptions:

There have been historical challenges with negative perceptions of Rotorua, requiring ongoing efforts to improve its image and attract visitors.

Economic Fluctuations:

Rotorua's economy has experienced contractions during times of reduced tourism, highlighting the need for diversification and resilience.

Homelessness and Social Issues:

Some residents have raised concerns about social issues like homelessness, which can impact the overall visitor experience.

Seasonality:

While Rotorua attracts visitors year-round, there can be seasonal fluctuations in visitor numbers, impacting businesses that rely on tourism.

Image and Marketing:

Continuous efforts are needed to promote Rotorua's strengths and address negative perceptions, particularly in the domestic market.

Competition:

Rotorua faces competition from other tourist destinations, both nationally and internationally, requiring it to differentiate itself and offer unique experiences.



MEET THE CANDIDATES

ROTORUA LAKES COUNCIL MAYORAL CANDIDATES

QUICK FACTS:

There are a total of 5 mayoral candidates.

There is 1 vacancy for the Mayor of Rotorua.

Tania Tapsell is the current Mayor of Rotorua and is seeking re-election. Tania and Haehaetu Barrett are only standing as mayoral candidates and are not seeking appointment to the wards or the boards.

Robert Lee and Don Patterson are current councillors. Both Robert and Don along with Takeina Fraser are standing for the Mayoralty and General Wards in the 2025 election.

ROTORUA LAKES COUNCIL GENERAL WARD CANDIDATES



HAEHATU BARRETT

Please note: At the time of production (22nd August 2025) no bio or questionnaire had been submitted to the graphic designer.

Name one of your favourite places to take visitors out to dinner in Rotorua:

Name one of your favourite activities for visitors to Rotorua to do while they are here:

What do you hope to achieve from your time on council if you're elected?

What role do you see tourism and hospitality playing in the economic future of Rotorua?

Rotorua has faced reputation and perception challenges in recent years. What specific strategies or initiatives would you advocate for to restore Rotorua's brand as a premier visitor destination?

What is your perspective on collaboration and funding between the Council and the Rotorua Regional Tourism Organisation to achieve aligned economic and community outcomes? Should Council increase, maintain, or reduce its level of support and investment?

What new initiatives would you bring to the leadership table to see Rotorua tourism and hospitality grow?

If elected, how will you directly engage and support the tourism and hospitality industry in your decision-making?

ROTORUA LAKES COUNCIL GENERAL WARD CANDIDATES



TAKEINA FRASER

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ROTORUA LAKES COUNCIL GENERAL WARD CANDIDATES



ROBERT LEE

I was born and raised in Rotorua. I lived in Auckland for five years and London for two and a half. I taught myself to program computers as a teenager and left high school to accept my first job, which was as a computer programmer. I have worked on Business, School and, most recently, Private Training Establishment Administration software. I also wrote the Fitness Testing software used by BOP Steamers when we won the Ranfurly Shield.

In addition I have also worked in Business Administration and Sales. During my Big OE, I worked in a top London hotel as a Performance Cocktail Bartender for two years.

I have been married for 28 years and we have three wonderful children.

I played cricket for many years and more recently golf.

I was in Rotary for eight years, leading various youth projects including Rotary Youth Programme of Enrichment (RYPEN), Interact (junior Rotary Clubs in High Schools) where I mentored the students to organise various events.

Over the past 20 years I have been involved in advocacy for various people and causes both in and out of Court. Most recently I was the founding President of Saving Springfield, which presented a petition of over 5,000 signatures to Council in 2021.

I successfully ran for Council in 2022 to make a positive difference to Council and to our city. This year I am running for Mayor, having served a one term 'apprenticeship', to make an even greater difference.

Name one of your favourite places to take visitors out to dinner in Rotorua:

Skyline Skyrides

Name one of your favourite activities for visitors to Rotorua to do while they are here:

Hot pools and soon it may be the resurrected Lakeland Queen.

What do you hope to achieve from your time on council if you're elected?

Recapture Rotorua's mojo as the top tourist destination in the North Island and as 'a great place to live, work, play and invest' by restoring democratic governance.

What role do you see tourism and hospitality playing in the economic future of Rotorua?

I believe tourism and hospitality are built into Rotorua's DNA. That is first and foremost who we are as a city. We gave birth to the tourism and hospitality industry in New Zealand and we should ensure we do everything we can to ensure that we continue to be a 'must-go' tourism destination in the North Island for both local and international visitors.

Rotorua has faced reputation and perception challenges in recent years. What specific strategies or initiatives would you advocate for to restore Rotorua's brand as a premier visitor destination?

I don't believe that Rotorua can be both a premier tourism destination as well as a premier social housing destination. The two are mutually exclusive. I would therefore like to review our housing policies which I believe have not been properly consulted on. I believe this would be the best that a Council can do to support Rotorua NZ's efforts to restore Rotorua's tarnished reputation.

What is your perspective on collaboration and funding between the Council and the Rotorua Regional Tourism Organisation to achieve aligned economic and community outcomes? Should Council increase, maintain, or reduce its level of support and investment?

Central government has signaled it will remove the "four well-beings" (social, economic, environmental and cultural) from the purpose (s10B) of the Local Government Act. That would limit the next Council's role in attempting to advance "community outcomes". I believe the focus for both Council and the Regional Tourism Operator should be the economic prosperity born out of a thriving tourism industry.

What new initiatives would you bring to the leadership table to see Rotorua tourism and hospitality grow?

I would be open to using my position and profile as Mayor of Rotorua to support Rotorua NZ's efforts to promote Rotorua as they did with Mayor Tapsell's "robe" campaign. We have a lot of great tourism offerings. It would be great to showcase what a fun place still is Rotorua is to visit - particularly for the domestic market.

If elected, how will you directly engage and support the tourism and hospitality industry in your decision-making?

I consider myself a "hospo". I had an OE in England where I worked for two years in a hotel as a performance cocktail bartender. During my time we were upgraded from 3 to 4 stars and I was one of the staff assessed by the AA. Following the upgrade our hotel attracted the Northern Football Clubs from the English Premier League when they stayed in London to play London Clubs. I am into doing whatever is required to help promote Rotorua as a great place to visit as I did back then.

ROTORUA LAKES COUNCIL MAYORAL CANDIDATES



DON PATTERSON

I am proudly Rotorua born and bred, raised in a blended, working-class family on a small farm between the Awahou and Waiteti streams. My ancestors first arrived in Aotearoa in 1859. Educated locally, I served as President of the Student Council and grew up with a passion for sport, competing in soccer, rugby league, and at a national level, in bodybuilding.

With a strong work ethic from an early age, I have been employed since 13. After studying Advertising & Marketing, I spent eight years at the World-Famous Tudor Towers, entertaining and running promotions. I later helped launch Rotorua's first private radio station, 96FM, where I secured 3 major concerts (Jimmy Barnes, The Angels, Diesel) and worked a decade in sales, including two years as Sales Manager.

Next, was 11 years as Business Development Manager for TRAC Thoroughbred Racing, delivering large-scale events for up to 8,000 people and hospitality for over 1,200 guests. As BDM at BOPRU, I grew commercial revenue by more than 50%, hosted international fixtures (Māori All Blacks vs Lions, 2017, vs Fiji 2019), and lifted hospitality sales by 145%, introducing the successful VIP Platform at Tauranga Domain.

My governance experience includes the Friends of the Lake Charitable Trust, Rotorua Promotions Society, the Event Marketing Portfolio Group, and three years with Rotorua Lakes Council.

I have a deep connection to this Rohe, which drives my passion for protecting Rotorua's natural wonders and unique culture, while working to restore our city's place as a premier global visitor destination.

Name one of your favourite places to take visitors out to dinner in Rotorua:

El Mexicano Zapata Express on Amohau Street. Unforgettable flavours and vibrant rhythms, mixed with Eduardo's warm hospitality and infectious smile!

Name one of your favourite activities for visitors to Rotorua to do while they are here:

On fine days, the walk around Lake Tikitapu or through the Redwoods, followed by coffee in one of our great Cafes. Soon, a visit to Te Whare Taonga o Te Arawa/Rotorua Museum will be at the top of our list!

What do you hope to achieve from your time on council if you're elected?

After visiting Singapore and Monte Carlo last year, my eyes were opened to just how successful Rotorua can be. Their wealth has created attributes that are largely man-made and their citizens are truly proud of what they have achieved. WE, on the other hand, are far richer in natural wonders and unique culture. So, by harnessing our most precious resource, OUR PEOPLE, and working TOGETHER, Rotorua can restore our rightful place as a premier global visitor destination.

What role do you see tourism and hospitality playing in the economic future of Rotorua?

Tourism is positioned to be the engine of Rotorua's recovery and growth. It is one of the few levers that can stimulate jobs, small-business revenue, and citywide confidence—especially by leaning into Rotorua's distinctive strengths (geothermal, Māori culture, outdoor/adventure, spa/wellness) to attract higher-value, longer visitation.

Rotorua has faced reputation and perception challenges in recent years. What specific strategies or initiatives would you advocate for to restore Rotorua's brand as a premier visitor destination?

Build campaigns around Rotorua's core advantages - Geothermal, Māori cultural immersion, outdoor adventure, and wellness, paired with strong product packaging and distribution. Boost Event-linked

visitation through the quieter periods (e.g.: the successful "Run The Forest") along with other sports/tournaments and Concerts/Shows, utilising existing facilities, adding to the vibrancy and appeal of Rotorua.

What is your perspective on collaboration and funding between the Council and the Rotorua Regional Tourism Organisation to achieve aligned economic and community outcomes? Should Council increase, maintain, or reduce its level of support and investment?
Maintain core funding and increase targeted co-investment tied to outcomes with clear community benefit.

What new initiatives would you bring to the leadership table to see Rotorua tourism and hospitality grow?

Short Term - A co-invested, community-aligned plan that directly addresses negative perceptions, pairs storytelling with on-the-ground improvements to our offerings.

Medium Term - Rotorua Airport - Establish a group to co-fund feasibility, identify potential partner airlines, and cooperative marketing strategies, with the initial priorities being Rotorua - Queenstown and trans-Tasman routes.

Long Term - Foster the developing BOP Film Industry to enable opportunities to "tell our stories" on the global stage. Rotorua is rich with legends, landscapes and talent!

If elected, how will you directly engage and support the tourism and hospitality industry in your decision-making?

I will commit to regular hui with RTIP, RotoruaNZ, operators, and iwi/hapū representatives, aligning council decisions with industry needs. I will maintain scheduled engagement with local and central government on issues that impact tourism - such as air connectivity, investment in events and infrastructure and a future 'Bed Tax' or levy.

ROTORUA LAKES COUNCIL MAYORAL CANDIDATES



TANIA TAPSELL

Thank you for taking an interest in our elections, it's a pleasure to share with our tourism partners how I intend to support you and why I'll be your best choice for Mayor. I understand and have worked in tourism and businesses helping to promote and grow Rotorua. I understand that to deliver real results you need to be connected, genuine and consistently committed.

My vision is to make Rotorua a better place for all – for those who live here and those who visit us. As your Mayor, I've worked tirelessly to fix issues and restore Rotorua's reputation as a world-class destination. To support more visitors to Rotorua we did a "Robe Trip" campaign and I also lead a delegation of twenty tourism operators on an awesome North Island Roadshow through China. It's important your Mayor is a great representative for your district and our people and I hope you've seen the passion and energy I've put in to promoting Rotorua.

I've also got a great team backing me, including my Deputy Mayor Sandra Kai Fong. Because of our collective efforts we'll soon see an end to emergency housing motels, improved community safety through the additional Police we've secured, we're well underway with rebuilding the Museum and have also seen a record number of new homes built. We're ready to keep the momentum going. I've loved supporting the tourism industry and ask that you please support me to ensure strong, experienced leadership to deliver real results for Rotorua.

Name one of your favourite places to take visitors out to dinner in Rotorua:

Atticus Finch for dinner and cocktails

Name one of your favourite activities for visitors to Rotorua to do while they are here:

Relax and recharge in one of our beautiful spa's

What do you hope to achieve from your time on council if you're elected?

Do you ever find yourself thinking this could be so much better? Because same. That's why I stood for Council and where my drive and passion comes from. Wanting to reach our full potential and ensure Rotorua is a better place for all.

What role do you see tourism and hospitality playing in the economic future of Rotorua?

I've lost count of the number of times I've said tourism and hospitality are our biggest employer, it's a great way of reminding people how significant and important these industries are. We have an exciting future ahead of us but we also know attracting visitors is competitive, so it requires targeted and smart investment to attract people to stay longer and try more experiences while they're here.

Rotorua has faced reputation and perception challenges in recent years. What specific strategies or initiatives would you advocate for to restore Rotorua's brand as a premier visitor destination?

Tell me about it. On my first day as Mayor I was on national TV saying we're ending emergency housing motels and I'm proud we'll do this by the end of this year. I also remain focused on improving community safety and dealing with issues of rough sleeping in the inner city. To deliver real results I'm proud to have increased the investment Council puts into promoting our destination and put more focus on attracting and supporting major events. Now that the problems are almost fixed

we've also allocated \$9.9 million over the next three years to refresh our CBD and Fenton St. What we do will be informed by consultation with our businesses and community and we expect it will attract significant further private investment as a result.

What is your perspective on collaboration and funding between the Council and the Rotorua Regional Tourism Organisation to achieve aligned economic and community outcomes? Should Council increase, maintain, or reduce its level of support and investment?

I'm a big supporter of RotoruaNZ and was supportive of the increased funding we've allocated them to promote our destination. We've also given them the task of looking after our venues and attracting more events and conferences.

What new initiatives would you bring to the leadership table to see Rotorua tourism and hospitality grow?

We brought in a new short term rental accommodation rate which charges suppliers such as Air BnBs and then we reinvest this straight back into promoting our destination. I would like to explore if these providers would also be open to this investment going in to supporting hosting events in Rotorua as I see events being a major drawcard of visitors, especially to help boost tourism and hospitality during quieter seasons.

If elected, how will you directly engage and support the tourism and hospitality industry in your decision-making?

I'm open minded to any suggestions that you may have and would love to build closer and more consistent communication across the industries to ensure that we're delivering for you. I was proud to support hosting TRENZ and MEETINGS as well as announce that next year we'll be hosting the Hospitality NZ Conference. These were all massive wins to boost our industry. To help with future support and decision-making I will continue to have a visible and consistent presence alongside you doing the hard yards to promote Rotorua as a top place to visit, live and work.

ROTORUA LAKES COUNCIL RURAL CANDIDATE

ROTORUA LAKES COUNCIL RURAL WARD CANDIDATES

QUICK FACTS:

There is only 1 rural ward candidate.

There is 1 vacancy for the rural ward.

Karen Barker was the previous candidate and is the only person to seek election for this position.



KAREN BARKER

Please note: At the time of production (22nd August 2025) no bio or questionnaire had been submitted to the graphic designer.

ROTORUA LAKES COUNCIL GENERAL WARD CANDIDATES

QUICK FACTS:

There are a total of 22 general ward candidates.

There are 6 vacancies for the general ward.

All 6 current general ward councillors are seeking re-election.

Takeina Fraser, Robert Lee and Don Patterson's profiles are listed in the Mayoral section only but they are also running in the General Ward election.

ROTORUA LAKES COUNCIL GENERAL WARD CANDIDATES



JARED ADAMS

I'm standing as an independent candidate for Rotorua Lakes Council 2025.

Locals know me as someone who shows up, at council meetings, public forums, and in holding decision makers to account. Whether it's pushing for smarter spending, safer streets, or genuine transparency, I speak up and get involved.

I care deeply about good governance, supporting local business, and helping families thrive. Having lived in Rotorua since 1990, I've seen our city through highs and lows, and I believe it's time to restore trust in council by focusing on the basics, reducing waste, and listening to the community.

My goal is simple, to make Rotorua a place where people feel safe, proud, and optimistic about the future, for residents, for visitors, and for the next generation.

Name one of your favourite places to take visitors out to dinner in Rotorua:

Skyline Skyrides or Eat Streat.

Name one of your favourite activities for visitors to Rotorua to do while they are here:

If it's their first time, Te Puia/MACI are must do. Personally, I love the Wai Ariki Spa and Polynesian Pools, Rotorua at its best and I love hot pools.

What do you hope to achieve from your time on council if you're elected?

Restore trust in council through smarter spending, transparency, and stronger community engagement. Reinvest in the basics that many suburbs need, manage debt responsibly, and ensure growth benefits all of Rotorua.

What role do you see tourism and hospitality playing in the economic future of Rotorua?

Tourism is critical. It's been the heart of Rotorua since I moved here in 1990 and always will be, I've supported nearly every attraction and hospitality business during my years here. We should be the tourism capital of New Zealand, it's a pillar of our economy and future growth.

Rotorua has faced reputation and perception challenges in recent years. What specific strategies or initiatives would you advocate for to restore Rotorua's brand as a premier visitor destination?

By being honest about the past and focusing forward. Crime and motels used as housing have hurt our image can't hide that. The solution is safer streets, strong marketing like TRENZ, reinvesting in our attractions and marketing, and ensuring infrastructure can handle peak demand. Rotorua's natural beauty and people remain world class, we need to showcase that.

What is your perspective on collaboration and funding between the Council and the Rotorua Regional Tourism Organisation to achieve aligned economic and community outcomes? Should Council increase, maintain, or reduce its level of support and investment?

Funding should be performance based. Council support must continue, but with transparency and tangible outcomes for ratepayers. Every dollar invested should show a return for the community and tourism sector

What new initiatives would you bring to the leadership table to see Rotorua tourism and hospitality grow?

Extend visitor stay lengths by encouraging more events and smart promotion on different weekends. Rotorua should use cost effective influencer and celebrity opportunities, like when iShowSpeed visited and engaged thousands of locals online. We are one of the best destinations in the world, we have depth and diversity and we need to keep telling that story.

If elected, how will you directly engage and support the tourism and hospitality industry in your decision-making?

By being accessible! I was part of RTIP being created and I will meet operators directly, listen to their concerns, and bring their voice into council decisions. I know this industry well, it is vital to Rotorua's growth, and I will back it 100 percent.

ROTORUA LAKES COUNCIL GENERAL WARD CANDIDATES



PHILLY ANGUS

Kia ora, my name is Philly Angus. Nearly 30 years ago, I moved to Rotorua to pursue a career in broadcasting. Today, I work alongside local businesses, providing marketing, event, and management services that support and strengthen their success. My experience in leadership and governance with community organisations, further strengthen my skill set.

I'm an effective communicator, with a natural ability to connect with people and build valued relationships. I'm committed to encouraging local business growth. I will continue to champion tourism, sport, culture, arts, and events—key pillars of a vibrant city and a strong local economy.

People. Place. Purpose. I believe in working with purpose, ensuring that every decision made is a sensible and prudent one, that has our people and our place at heart.

Having raised two wonderful children here with my husband Rob, I'm passionate about Rotorua—our city, our people, and building a strong, thriving future for the next generation.

Name one of your favourite places to take visitors out to dinner in Rotorua:

We offer a diverse range of incredible restaurants and cafes in Rotorua which provide great dining options from casual dining to pub feeds, tasty tapas to cultural feasts – all providing unique experiences within themselves. Choosing one is tricky, but for their incredible range, generous portions, quality, service and ability to cater to large groups and families – I'd have to say the Pig & Whistle Historic Pub for a casual dining experience.

Name one of your favourite activities for visitors to Rotorua to do while they are here:

As an avid Mountain Biker, I would have to take our manuhiri riding in the Whakarewarewa Forest to show off our world-class trail network. I never take for granted how lucky we are to have the Forest as our backyard and the positive impact it has on our city, employment opportunities, boosting to the economy, attracting people to call Rotorua their home, as well as helping with mental and physical wellbeing of not only our visitors, but also our people. The Forest is such a valuable asset and is 100% part of who we are as a city.

What do you hope to achieve from your time on council if you're elected?

I hope to make significant positive impact during the term, and hope that people who trusted me with their vote will proud that they did. We need to ensure that strategies and decisions made in the coming term are ones made with the best interests of future generations at heart. Decisions that serve our people and our city well – this includes local business across all the sectors including Tourism. I love Rotorua. I'm proud to call Rotorua home. I look forward to doing the mahi, to ensure that our city continues to grow while always having People. Place. Purpose. at the heart of decision making.

What role do you see tourism and hospitality playing in the economic future of Rotorua?

Tourism and hospitality are in our blood. It's part of who we are and is one of the key pillars of our economic growth. We need to ensure that we're fostering a united front working together collaboratively to ensure that Rotorua continues to be the epicenter of Tourism in New Zealand, and a "must visit" destination for our international manuhiri.

Rotorua has faced reputation and perception challenges in recent years. What specific strategies or initiatives would you advocate for to restore Rotorua's brand as a premier visitor destination?

I believe in a strong collaborative approach. We have incredible depth in knowledge and experience in Rotorua and working with local providers, businesses, iwi, our community and council, will not only provide a united front, but a united vision for the future of our city. Our city thrives on our manaakitanga, we need to ensure that we are doing everything in our power to champion growth and build our brand – including advocating for the industry, building a year-round event calendar, along with focusing on developing a vibrant CBD with late-night activity for locals and visitors, while highlighting our unique environment and culture which makes Rotorua so special.

What is your perspective on collaboration and funding between the Council and the Rotorua Regional Tourism Organisation to achieve aligned economic and community outcomes? Should Council increase, maintain, or reduce its level of support and investment?

I fully support the collaborative funding between Council and Rotorua Regional Tourism Organisation for the mahi that they provide leading Rotorua's tourism promotion, destination management and event attraction, while supporting the broader economy.

We have seen an increase in funding to assist with our reputation rebuild with marketing campaigns significant to showcasing Rotorua to regional, national, and international audiences.

I firmly stand beside maintaining Council's level of support and investment and looking at ways to grow that support for the future with co-investment opportunities.

What new initiatives would you bring to the leadership table to see Rotorua tourism and hospitality grow?

I am fully committed to People. Place. Purpose. I have a proven track record of getting jobs done, and I'm well connected within Rotorua, including the Tourism and Hospitality Industry

I believe that my positive approach brings new energy to the table and provides a fresh way of looking at every issue and decision.

I am friendly, approachable and always happy to listen. I am committed to doing the mahi – which will include fostering relationships, attending meetings outside Council requirements and continuing speak highly of our city to encourage more visitors and a sense of pride of who we are.

If elected, how will you directly engage and support the tourism and hospitality industry in your decision-making?

Being an Elected Councillor is a privilege, and one that I will hopefully be able to fulfill come October. Staying directly engaged and connected to the Tourism and Hospitality Industry will also strengthen my place at the table and provide you with a strong voice for key issues. I will continue to champion the industry, attend hui and make myself available for conversations for the betterment of our city and well-informed decision making.

ROTORUA LAKES COUNCIL GENERAL WARD CANDIDATES



GREGG BROWN

If re-elected, I will keep supporting the Mayor in her quest to ensure Rotorua retains its position as the #1 tourist destination in New Zealand.

Given I have skin in the game, supporting tourism and RTIP is an actual priority for us. We advertise in most tourism publications.

[Please note: No answers were received for the questionnaire.]

Name one of your favourite places to take visitors out to dinner in Rotorua:
Obviously the Pig & Whistle is our favourite spot for dinner although the Katsu Chicken Special Pho at Saigon 60 is a winter winner.

Name one of your favourite activities for visitors to Rotorua to do while they are here:
Mountain Biking in Whakarewarewa is our go to attraction.

What do you hope to achieve from your time on council if you're elected?

What role do you see tourism and hospitality playing in the economic future of Rotorua?

Rotorua has faced reputation and perception challenges in recent years. What specific strategies or initiatives would you advocate for to restore Rotorua's brand as a premier visitor destination?

What is your perspective on collaboration and funding between the Council and the Rotorua Regional Tourism Organisation to achieve aligned economic and community outcomes? Should Council increase, maintain, or reduce its level of support and investment?

What new initiatives would you bring to the leadership table to see Rotorua tourism and hospitality grow?

If elected, how will you directly engage and support the tourism and hospitality industry in your decision-making?

ROTORUA LAKES COUNCIL GENERAL WARD CANDIDATES



JENNY CHAPMAN

Kia ora koutou. I'm Jenny Chapman, proud mum of five daughters, wife to Eden, and a passionate primary school teacher with 25 years of experience. I've also served eight years on Catholic school boards, a fundamental way to support and strengthen our local community. I bring strong leadership, governance experience, and a heart for people.

For over 16 years, Rotorua has been my home, my classroom, and my inspiration. Every day I see the energy, resilience, and potential of our people. I believe Rotorua deserves leadership that listens, acts with integrity, and puts people first. My vision is a safe, vibrant, and thriving city where families flourish and our children grow up proud to belong.

Tourism is a vital part of Rotorua's story and future. Our people, our culture, and our unique natural environment are the backbone of what makes this place special. I am committed to ensuring tourism is not only world-class for visitors, but also sustainable and beneficial for locals. That means investing in infrastructure that enhances visitor experiences, supporting cultural tourism led by mana whenua, and exploring a fair tourist levy so visitors help contribute to the services and spaces we all enjoy.

I believe Rotorua can lead with pride, showcasing our heritage and environment while strengthening opportunities for our people. Together, we can grow a future where tourism supports community wellbeing and Rotorua continues to shine as Aotearoa's premier destination.

Ngā mihi nui ki a koutou.

Name one of your favourite places to take visitors out to dinner in Rotorua:

I love to showcase Eat Street when I have visitors. It's such a vibrant hub where people can browse the menus, feel the warmth of the welcomes, and choose whichever restaurant takes their fancy. It's Rotorua hospitality at its best.

Name one of your favourite activities for visitors to Rotorua to do while they are here:

Te Puia is always at the top of my list. It's the perfect combination of authentic Māori culture, stunning geothermal activity, kiwi viewing, and world-class kai. It really captures the heart of Rotorua and what makes our region so special.

What do you hope to achieve from your time on council if you're elected?

I want Rotorua to be a city that locals are proud to call home and visitors find unforgettable. To achieve that, we need future-focused investment in infrastructure, events, and initiatives that grow our economy, support local businesses, and create safe, thriving communities.

What role do you see tourism and hospitality playing in the economic future of Rotorua?

Tourism is central to Rotorua's future. Our people, our stories, and our natural environment make this a world-class destination. By investing in infrastructure that creates outstanding visitor experiences, we'll encourage repeat visits, grow jobs, and ease pressure on local ratepayers.

Rotorua has faced reputation and perception challenges in recent years. What specific strategies or initiatives would you advocate for to restore Rotorua's brand as a premier visitor destination?

We need to tell our positive stories better. Rotorua has worked hard to build new housing and care for vulnerable people, while still welcoming visitors. By showcasing our progress, celebrating our cultural identity, and investing in safe, vibrant spaces, we can rebuild Rotorua's reputation with pride.

What is your perspective on collaboration and funding between the Council and the Rotorua Regional Tourism Organisation to achieve aligned economic and community outcomes? Should Council increase, maintain, or reduce its level of support and investment?

Partnership is key. Tourism creates jobs and opportunities for locals, so Council must invest wisely and sustainably. I support exploring a visitor levy, with community input, so tourism contributes directly to infrastructure and growth without overburdening ratepayers.

What new initiatives would you bring to the leadership table to see Rotorua tourism and hospitality grow?

I'd focus on what makes Rotorua unique; our cultural heritage and incredible natural environment. I'd back a visitor levy to fund infrastructure and reinvest in tourism, ensuring growth benefits everyone. We must enhance the visitor experience while protecting our community and environment.

If elected, how will you directly engage and support the tourism and hospitality industry in your decision-making?

I'll stay close to the industry by listening, meeting regularly, and working alongside operators. Their voices and insights should shape council decisions. By building strong relationships, we can deliver sustainable growth that supports both Rotorua's economy and its people.

ROTORUA LAKES COUNCIL GENERAL WARD CANDIDATES



RICHARD COLLINS

THINK POSITIVE – choose a positive future for our district – a prosperous, sustainable future for all.

I'd like to be elected as a member of a council that is responsible and accountable with ratepayers' money. Managing debt, spending wisely, and concentrating on core commitments [water, waste, roading, community wellbeing, etc.], while being fair, inclusive, and transparent.

I understand there are complex issues to resolve, with many sides to every argument. I will be open to ideas, and will listen to all opinions, and take those into consideration when making decisions on behalf of the whole community.

I'm married to my lovely wife Rachel, with two primary school children. I'm currently on their school board. We also have two older children who no longer live at home.

I'm an independent candidate, who is honest, reliable, hardworking, and proud to live and work in Rotorua.

Name one of your favourite places to take visitors out to dinner in Rotorua:

Only one ? I can't do that - there are too many lovely restaurants and eateries in Rotorua to only pick one. I like the variety of Eat Street, and usually choose the restaurant on the spur of the moment - last week I had a fantastic steak and ribs platter !

Name one of your favourite activities for visitors to Rotorua to do while they are here:

Again, only one ? Depends on the visitor, and what they like to do - there is something for everyone here in Rotorua. The gondola and luge are a favourite with most visitors, and those with a more adventurous spirit can go on to adrenaline activities, like sky swing, or velocity valley, white water rafting, canopy tours, zorb, or a good long hike or ride in the redwoods.

What do you hope to achieve from your time on council if you're elected?

My biggest concern, and reason for standing, is to make sure council is fair and transparent. That they'll be responsible and accountable with ratepayers' money - managing debt, spending wisely, and concentrating on core commitments [water, waste, roading, community wellbeing, etc.]

What role do you see tourism and hospitality playing in the economic future of Rotorua?

Tourism and hospitality is a big part of the Rotorua economy - it has been since 1907 when it was a tourist and health centre controlled by the Government [Department of Tourist and Health Resorts], when we were known for the geothermal activity (and it's health benefits), the scenic views, and the cultural experiences.

Adding to that, these days we have the outdoor adventuring, both sport and recreational, and being a central location for conferences.

Tourism is a major income earner for the whole of New Zealand, and Rotorua needs to get its fair share. Unfortunately, Rotorua is often being bypassed, and where tourists used to come into New Zealand via Auckland and travel down to Rotorua before heading further south (often flying direct to Christchurch or Queenstown), now we're missing out. Air New Zealand and Qantas (then became Jetstar) used to fly direct to Christchurch and Queenstown. Rotorua missed out on getting Jetstar back in 2015, and Air New Zealand has just two flights each a day to Auckland, Wellington, and Christchurch, which is not enough flexibility and is quite pricey.

Rotorua has faced reputation and perception challenges in recent years. What specific strategies or initiatives would you advocate for to restore Rotorua's brand as a premier visitor destination?

Unfortunately, yes, Rotorua's reputation has been tarnished a bit in recent years. The effects of Covid have had impacts, and the Governments handling of housing issues has not helped.

I believe having pride in our city, and feeling safe, are key to both tourists and our locals alike. It is one thing to get tourists to come to the area, but then we need them to stay, enjoy it, and spend their money locally, come back again, and recommend to others. If their experience here is not exceptional, then we're losing opportunities in the future. Has the damage of the last couple of years had a lasting effect ? I hope not, and if it has then we need to reverse it.

What is your perspective on collaboration and funding between the Council and the Rotorua Regional Tourism Organisation to achieve aligned economic and community outcomes? Should Council increase, maintain, or reduce its level of support and investment?

I believe the council should facilitate and help organise, but funding should be provided by those that will ultimately benefit. The Business and Economic Development targeted rate is probably the best method for this, but is this \$10m per annum being spent to the best effect ? There should also be more funding from Central Government from the International Visitor Conservation and Tourism Levy collected, and a share of GST collected (tourists pay GST too). I presume the Economic Development Agency and the Regional Tourism Organisation functions are being conducted appropriately by the council's RotoruaNZ CCO, but I am not the expert here, and would expect to get feedback directly from the industry on the CCO's performance. I do have concerns around the Sir Howard Morrison Centre and the Energy Events Centre being managed by RotoruaNZ CCO, but this can and should be handled by clear reporting of events activities versus Economic Development Agency and Regional Tourism Organisation functions. I do not believe the council should be underwriting any events (the risks should sit with those who aim to profit).

What new initiatives would you bring to the leadership table to see Rotorua tourism and hospitality grow?

Tourism and hospitality is not my area of specialty, so I would be looking for input from those in the industry. But as previously stated, I want council to be fair, inclusive, and transparent - and if this is done, then tourism and hospitality will benefit.

If elected, how will you directly engage and support the tourism and hospitality industry in your decision-making?

I will be open to ideas, and will listen to all opinions, and take those into consideration when making decisions on behalf of the whole community.

Rotorua needs to be a welcoming place to visit - and to stay, whether that be short-term as a tourist, or long-term as a resident.

ROTORUA LAKES COUNCIL GENERAL WARD CANDIDATES



BRENDAN DAVIS

I am proud to call Rotorua my home, with 30 years in tourism and 12 years as head of a secondary school department. I also spent a year working on a New Zealand government research program in Antarctica. Known for my honesty and strong work ethic, I aim to use my life experience to drive positive outcomes for the many vulnerable groups in our city.

I am committed to supporting our youth and actively engage with local groups such as Love Soup, Rotorua Multicultural Council, and Riding for Disabled. By working together, we can build a stronger, safer, and more inclusive Rotorua for everyone.

My vision is a city that encourages community engagement, gives back to our elderly, and supports our youth and families. I believe in Rotorua and, with your vote, I would be honoured to help make our community a better place to live..

Name one of your favourite places to take visitors out to dinner in Rotorua:

Pig and whistle

Name one of your favourite activities for visitors to Rotorua to do while they are here:

Mitai village

What do you hope to achieve from your time on council if you're elected?

To bring Rotorua back to its former glory as a first choice destination for tourists.

What role do you see tourism and hospitality playing in the economic future of Rotorua?

This is one of the main components I would see in helping Rotorua to have a high economic performance.

Rotorua has faced reputation and perception challenges in recent years. What specific strategies or initiatives would you advocate for to restore Rotorua's brand as a premier visitor destination?

Firstly Rotorua needs to clean up the city, sort out the homelessness and the safety of residents only then can the city truly become a great city for people to come and enjoy our hospitality.

What is your perspective on collaboration and funding between the Council and the Rotorua Regional Tourism Organisation to achieve aligned economic and community outcomes? Should Council increase, maintain, or reduce its level of support and investment?

The council is not in a good position financially at present to invest a greater amount of money into tourism and I would support a marketing proposal for the government to finance.

What new initiatives would you bring to the leadership table to see Rotorua tourism and hospitality grow?

I think that's a question of sitting around with the interested parties and finding solutions that will work for all of us.

If elected, how will you directly engage and support the tourism and hospitality industry in your decision-making?

I will actively seek out and engage with RTIP and tourism operators to find out what and how the council can support the industry to grow.

ROTORUA LAKES COUNCIL GENERAL WARD CANDIDATES



MATHEW DOIDGE

After a decade offshore, I returned to New Zealand 15 years ago when my partner accepted a position at JPC (where she is Head of Science). I am an academic by profession, having researched and lectured at universities around the world. I now research remotely for the University of Canterbury. Through my work, I have participated in cutting-edge international projects on issues including sustainable development and smart regional growth. I serve on a number of boards internationally and locally, including that of St Mary's Primary School.

With a background in research, critical analysis and complex problem-solving, I have the skillset to make a meaningful contribution to the work of the Council. My vision is for a vibrant and sustainable Rotorua with a strong economy, a city that is inclusive and equitable, providing opportunities for all. I will support decision-making that is evidence-based, and aware of the economic stresses confronting many of our citizens.

Name one of your favourite places to take visitors out to dinner in Rotorua:

Okere Falls Store – the drive out gives guests a great introduction to Rotorua and its surroundings.

Name one of your favourite activities for visitors to Rotorua to do while they are here:

The Redwoods – this offers a variety of activities, and has always been enjoyed by visitors we have taken there.

What do you hope to achieve from your time on council if you're elected?

I would like to see the affordability and liveability of the city for all residents given greater prominence in Council decision-taking, as well as a renewed focus on sustainability, on addressing the environmental challenges confronting our region, and on continuing to improve security within the inner city. All of these directly impact the tourism and hospitality sector.

What role do you see tourism and hospitality playing in the economic future of Rotorua?

Tourism and hospitality are fundamental to Rotorua's future. These sectors (directly and indirectly) are among the most significant employers, and account for a significant proportion of our GDP. However, while growth has been notable in the last couple of years, the data I have seen suggests that it still lags behind tourism growth in New Zealand as a whole, and tourist spending (once inflation is taken into account) is still struggling to exceed pre-pandemic levels. Closing this gap should be an important part of the Council's economic focus. Partnerships between sectoral bodies and the Council (notably greater engagement and transparency between stakeholders and the Destination Management team) to promote Rotorua as a destination will therefore continue to be necessary, as will Council action both to address local issues that have impacted potential visitors' perceptions of our region, and to alleviate the financial burden on ratepayers so as to facilitate household discretionary spending on local tourism and hospitality.

Rotorua has faced reputation and perception challenges in recent years. What specific strategies or initiatives would you advocate for to restore Rotorua's brand as a premier visitor destination?

In part, this will come down to addressing the causal factors underpinning that reputational harm. Much of this has been associated with emergency housing solutions, and with the unhoused population in Rotorua. This is a consequence of the significant housing deficit with which the city has been grappling over a number of years. Eliminating the housing deficit must therefore continue to be a focus of Council action. Central to this, however, must be discussion around how to draw the correct balance between, on the one hand, the need for affordable housing, and on the other, the provision of short-term accommodation options through the likes of Airbnb and Bookabach which are important to the tourism and hospitality sector.

Marketing for Rotorua tourism should continue to focus on its unique blend of cultural, natural, and adventure-based attractions and activities. Attracting sporting, cultural and industry-based events should remain a priority, providing as they do both ways to more fully utilise existing facilities, and a means to overcome perceptions through experience. Hosting sporting and cultural events, in particular, also offer the important opportunity to shift narratives on Rotorua, providing alternative stories to the more negative reporting that has been a feature of recent years.

What is your perspective on collaboration and funding between the Council and the Rotorua Regional Tourism Organisation to achieve aligned economic and community outcomes? Should Council increase, maintain, or reduce its level of support and investment?

I do not at this stage support increased funding to the RRTO, unless alternative revenue streams to fund this are identified. The financial burden on Rotorua's ratepayers has increased significantly in recent years – a

compound increase in rates of 52 per cent over the last five years alone. Local authority rates are currently the largest driver of the rise in the CPI. Council therefore needs to be cautious about additional spending if the burden is to fall on ratepayers. If increased funding to the RRTO for the promotion of Rotorua as a destination is to be realised, this will need to involve exploring alternative mechanisms for revenue generation, or savings elsewhere in the Council budget. Endeavouring to shift major Council assets such as the Energy Events Centre, Howard Morrison Centre and the International Stadium into profitability might, for example, offer one means of freeing up spending for other priority areas. Consultation with stakeholders and sector representatives around the utilisation of such assets, and around the generation of other revenue streams, will be needed.

What new initiatives would you bring to the leadership table to see Rotorua tourism and hospitality grow?

I do not purport to be an expert on the tourism and hospitality sector, and believe that appropriate initiatives for growth are best generated through consultation with the sector. My everyday work involves listening and learning, and data/evidence gathering and analysis, which should be the foundational requirements of informed decision-taking at the Council level. I would bring this approach to any consideration of the needs of tourism and hospitality in Rotorua. That said, there are areas where I would be keen to explore possibilities, including advocating for greater transport connectivity, including more and better-scheduled flights into Rotorua.

If elected, how will you directly engage and support the tourism and hospitality industry in your decision-making?

As I have noted in my previous answers, genuine engagement with stakeholders is fundamental to high quality decision-taking at the Council level. I will support and participate in such exchange.

ROTORUA LAKES COUNCIL GENERAL WARD CANDIDATES



FRANK GRAPL

Frank The Tank - Revive and thrive
Rotorua - Together

Connecting Community.

For The People. Not The Politics.

Kia ora. Te Arawa born and bred in Rotorua. My mahi is in local and international hospitality and tourism. Passionate about volunteering in our community such as serving on the Multicultural Rotorua Council executive committee uniting all cultures through festivals (sports, arts, music, food and dance). I want to encourage the younger generation to engage and vote in council matters, be invested in the future of their city. Council needs to engage more with locals and local businesses to light up our city, make it feel and look inviting again to keep RotoVegas alive. Revive and thrive Rotorua - together.

Name one of your favourite places to take visitors out to dinner in Rotorua:
Skyline Rotorua Stratosphere Restaurant.

Name one of your favourite activities for visitors to Rotorua to do while they are here:
Walk around our thermal activity such as Te Puia, Whakarewarewa, Ohinemutu, Kuirau Park

What do you hope to achieve from your time on council if you're elected?
Much more open and active engagement with our locals from our council and understandable clear decisions being made for our city. Especially more engagement with our youth, tourism and hospitality. All 3 are our direct link from our past, present and future.

Most youth and locals of all ages have absolutely no idea who our past and current councillors even are or what kind of priorities our past and present council actually has when spending the public's money.
A severe disconnect between council and the general public currently exists and I would like to help bridge this gap and connect community much more openly and consistently among all our locals of all ages.

What role do you see tourism and hospitality playing in the economic future of Rotorua?

A leadership role. Rotorua has been world famous for over a century for hospitality and tourism in New Zealand and worldwide and was always leading the way for all of Aotearoa in the past.

Rotorua and manaakitanga go hand in hand. Tourism is deeply rooted in our natural and commercial resources more than most if not all of Aotearoa and this leadership role is vital with connecting our locals and International visitors interconnected in cooperation with our council.

Rotorua has faced reputation and perception challenges in recent years. What specific strategies or initiatives would you advocate for to restore Rotorua's brand as a premier visitor destination?

Without rehoming the homeless elsewhere, our reputation will continue to suffer. Until we do that, our reputation worldwide will continue to be damaged despite any success we celebrate along the way. The success will be outshined by the current climate of homelessness and I see it every week in our city and hear it from most of our locals and many tourists.

To really reboot and re boost our Rotorua brand on a truly International successful scale? We'll need to first solve/resolve the situation of where in Rotorua or elsewhere the homeless issue can be wholeheartedly and honestly addressed instead of continuously being swept under the rug and resurfacing time and again.

What is your perspective on collaboration and funding between the Council and the Rotorua Regional Tourism Organisation to achieve aligned economic and community outcomes? Should Council increase, maintain, or reduce its level of support and investment?

We should be daily or weekly collaborating/communicating in close cooperation. Maintain support and investment while exploring how other local business also outside of tourism can interconnect and benefit economically.

What new initiatives would you bring to the leadership table to see Rotorua tourism and hospitality grow?

Bring in our International Rotorua born and locally living celebrities such as Temurera Morrison, Cliff Curtis, Manu Bennett, Steven Adams, Liam Messam along with their friends such as honorary Rotorua citizen - Jason Momoa to help draw in the Rotorua and international community to the city through a variety of yearly consistent events such as becoming a part of the New Zealand International Film Festival, and showcasing events locally around Rotorua with attached film community themes and meet and greets, interactive fun with locals and International visitors.

Inner city sports events with signings and photo opportunities and Rotorua business voucher give aways. Interactive with locals and youth especially. Many other sports and film celebrities constantly love visiting Rotorua and supporting Rotorua and would do more if we just ask.

New Zealand and visiting International social media influencers.

They are a great draw card to bring everyone together and millions of followers on their social networks will follow their advice and experience in Rotorua and come to explore our beautiful city too, more often.

We can make this a consistent habit very easily without costing a fortune.

If elected, how will you directly engage and support the tourism and hospitality industry in your decision-making?

I know many in the industry and will regularly invite them and all others to the table to touch base, review the statistics and look at strategies and ideas especially of people that think outside the box.

I am already in the tourism and hospitality industry. I will have a grasp on what the industry feels and needs more of and less of.

I will be able to genuinely relate and connect with our industry as I always have and utilize the experience of my travel, tourism, hospitality experience and open mind from the 52 countries I have been fortunate to explore in my life thus far.

ROTORUA LAKES COUNCIL GENERAL WARD CANDIDATES



RYAN GRAY

Born and raised in Rotorua, after gaining experience around Aotearoa and the UK I returned to Rotorua to raise my son here because I believe in the untapped potential of our special place.

As a Councillor, I would be unafraid to acknowledge the issues we're facing, but be relentlessly focused on enduring solutions which improve our district for all.

Everyone deserves the opportunity to thrive. Council needs to get basics right - sensible planning to enable more homes in the right places, investing in quality public spaces and parks to be proud of, and building infrastructure to ensure our children inherit a city ready for the future.

We need strategies to put downward pressure on rates.

I have extensive experience in the hotel sector, both in operations and in head office roles for a major hotel chain locally and internationally. I currently work in the public sector as a Senior Advisor providing communications advice to Government Ministers. I have previously worked in the Beehive for a Cabinet Minister and as support for an MP. I also volunteer as the Chairman of the Rotorua Action Sports Charitable Trust where we're working to get a new skatepark built in Rotorua. All this is to say I know how business and government works so I know how to deliver and get things done.

I believe Rotorua can be the best place to raise a family, start a business and get ahead.

Name one of your favourite places to take visitors out to dinner in Rotorua:

It's so hard to pick just one so...fish and chips from Rivers catch to eat at the lake in summer or Poco for a fancy dinner.

Name one of your favourite activities for visitors to Rotorua to do while they are here:

Hiking rainbow mountain and a starlit dip at hot n cold for the adventurous or for a laid-back option Te Puia as a one stop shop for what Rotorua is all about.

What do you hope to achieve from your time on council if you're elected?

I think Rotorua can be the best place to raise a family, start a business and get ahead. Key to achieving this is reclaiming our reputation as a vibrant, safe, and welcoming city for both locals and visitors. As a Councillor I would fight for investment into parks, streets and community facilities. These strategic investments are aimed at increasing the sense of pride we have in our city, they give kids and adults safe places to play, meet and build community. In turn this means people are more likely to stay or move to Rotorua. I would also like to see dog control rules reformed to crack down on roaming dogs, reduce fees for responsible owners and improve community safety by making Rotorua more dog friendly.

Through my role, I would work to unite residents, businesses, and council in a shared vision for a safer, livelier city that supports long-term prosperity for all.

What role do you see tourism and hospitality playing in the economic future of Rotorua?

Tourism and hospitality are central pillars in Rotorua's economic future, not only as major drivers of employment and income, but also as catalysts for wider economic activity and community vibrancy. By attracting youth and international visitors who tend to stay longer, spend widely across the region, and return again and again, Rotorua can diversify its visitor mix and strengthen its economic resilience. Investing in the visitor experience—from cultural events to high-quality public facilities, these directly support businesses, job creation, and a positive cycle of regional development that benefits locals as much as visitors.

Rotorua has faced reputation and perception challenges in recent years. What specific strategies or initiatives would you advocate for to restore Rotorua's brand as a premier visitor destination?

We need to ensure that the promise of Rotorua is the reality. Repairing a damaged reputation needs action on multiple fronts:

1. Ensuring our public spaces and places are welcoming, safe and well cared for. This can be done through ensuring adequate funding is invested into parks and streets. Ensuring Rotorua continues to advocate for government resourcing to address homelessness and related addiction and mental health needs visible on our city streets, all while making our city feel safer through both policing, and designing our city to be bright, busy and vibrant.
2. Getting people back to Rotorua through appropriate marketing. Despite outside perceptions, once people come to Rotorua, walk the forest, swim in the lake, dine out and visit a tourist attraction they are reminded of what a beautiful place we are. Word of mouth about how Rotorua is back on its feet will improve our reputation faster than anything else.
3. Fostering genuine collaborations with tourism operators, mana whenua, and community groups to ensure a welcoming and authentic Rotorua experience. Key to this strategy would be prioritising public safety, celebrating local cultural identity, and highlighting the region's unique experiences in national and international campaigns.

What is your perspective on collaboration and funding between the Council and the Rotorua Regional Tourism Organisation to achieve aligned economic and community outcomes? Should Council increase, maintain, or reduce its level of support and investment?

At a minimum investment in RotoruaNZ should be maintained, and subject to consultation with those who fund it - businesses of Rotorua - boosted. We must stand up for Rotorua, not rely on TourismNZ, if we are to really drive growth. Collaboration and funding between the Council and RotoruaNZ must remain robust, responsive, and closely aligned to the aspirations of the sector and wider community.

What new initiatives would you bring to the leadership table to see Rotorua tourism and hospitality grow?

Growth relies on increased visitation and spending. Ensuring Rotorua is seen as a welcoming, safe and vibrant place to stay will see people stay for longer and spend more.

Effective partnerships and coordinated funding streams enable both risk-sharing and innovation, ensuring Rotorua can keep pace with visitor expectations and sector priorities, from air connectivity to sustainability initiatives. Among new initiatives I would push for in the longer term is a regional airport, in partnership with our Bay of Plenty whanau, which would diversify access, reduce cost over the long term and attract higher-value visitors directly to our doorstep.

I would also champion targeted campaigns that not only market Rotorua's unique offerings but encourage visitors to extend their stay and explore beyond traditional hotspots—thereby dispersing the economic benefits across the community and seasons. Expanding event offerings, particularly in the winter and shoulder months, and leveraging technology to enhance visitor engagement would also be key focus areas.

If elected, how will you directly engage and support the tourism and hospitality industry in your decision-making?

Kanohi ki te kanohi, face to face. As a Councillor I would directly engage the tourism and hospitality industry through ongoing dialogue, actively seeking consultation with sector representatives, and establishing regular forums to ensure that council decisions are informed by industry insights, challenges, and opportunities. My approach would be transparent and collaborative, prioritising initiatives and policies that support growth, resilience, and Rotorua's reputation as a premier destination. Commitment to open communication and genuine partnership would be the cornerstone of my support for the industry.

ROTORUA LAKES COUNCIL GENERAL WARD CANDIDATES



SANDRA KAI FONG

For the last 3 years I am proud to have been Deputy Mayor working alongside Mayor Tania to ensure that the council priorities and work programme reflected the challenges the district was facing. We have worked hard on restoring Rotorua's reputation as a world class tourism destination, addressing emergency housing motels, homelessness and crime in the CBD and see the tourism sector as a vital part of Rotorua's economy. Council has also made significant investment into waters infrastructure and ensured greater financial oversight of the capital works programme like the museum restoration and ensured zoning for housing and commercial is appropriate for the future.

I'm seeking your support for re-election to build on the work undertaken to deliver further progress for our community.

I bring professional experience having practiced law in Rotorua and have other business, philanthropic, investment and governance experience. I am the current chair of the Community and District development committee which has responsibility for RotoruaNZ and the airport.

Name one of your favourite places to take visitors out to dinner in Rotorua:

Regent Hotel

Name one of your favourite activities for visitors to Rotorua to do while they are here:

Walking or mountain biking in the forest.

What do you hope to achieve from your time on council if you're elected?

Continue building on the work already undertaken this term on those key priorities of housing, infrastructure and economic growth through support of RotoruaNZ in destination marketing of Rotorua as a place to visit, work and invest. Next term the council will need to look to drive more efficiencies and cost savings into a targeted work program, finalise funding and opening the museum, growth in business and housing and looking at investment into or divestment of strategic council assets.

What role do you see tourism and hospitality playing in the economic future of Rotorua?

Rotorua is one of New Zealand's most visited cities and a big contributor to GDP and jobs. Tourism and hospitality are a vital part of our economy alongside our forestry and wood processing sector. If these 2 sectors continue to grow, then so will our economy.

Rotorua has faced reputation and perception challenges in recent years. What specific strategies or initiatives would you advocate for to restore Rotorua's brand as a premier visitor destination?

Council has already embarked on a reputation rebuild programme. This included addressing the emergency housing motels and crime incidents in the CBD. Rotorua people should be proud of the place where we live and be the ambassadors for promoting all the great things that happen here. Future investment into tourism and accommodation options, providing great service and ongoing and

targeted marketing of our destination will be vital as well as great cultural and sporting events alongside a growing conference market. Council should continue to provide support for RotoruaNZ and our airport who are at the forefront of promoting Rotorua to visitors.

What is your perspective on collaboration and funding between the Council and the Rotorua Regional Tourism Organisation to achieve aligned economic and community outcomes? Should Council increase, maintain, or reduce its level of support and investment?

Council needs to continue to support RotoruaNZ who are tasked with our destination marketing as well as economic development. The level of funding may need review depending on what key areas RotoruaNZ will be tasked to deliver. Council has recently transferred the management of the Sir Howard Morrison Centre and the Energy Events Centre to RotoruaNZ to drive more conferences and events and a return on investment for those venues. Rates funding through the short term rental targeted rate and the economic and development targeted rate could be reassessed. overburdening ratepayers.

What new initiatives would you bring to the leadership table to see Rotorua tourism and hospitality grow?

Be open to how council can help and facilitate new investment. However continued support and advocacy for the work we are currently doing is critical as we can only build on our success to date.

If elected, how will you directly engage and support the tourism and hospitality industry in your decision-making?

As Deputy Mayor working alongside Mayor Tania, we have been and will continue to be passionate advocates for the tourism and hospitality sector. Support has been shown with our goal for a world class tourism destination. Happy to meet, share ideas and have done so at various forums throughout this term. I will continue to support the work of RotoruaNZ and the airport.

ROTORUA LAKES COUNCIL GENERAL WARD CANDIDATES



REYNOLD MACPHERSON

[Please note: Declined to provide a bio or answer the questionnaire.]

Name one of your favourite places to take visitors out to dinner in Rotorua:

Name one of your favourite activities for visitors to Rotorua to do while they are here:

What do you hope to achieve from your time on council if you're elected?

What role do you see tourism and hospitality playing in the economic future of Rotorua?

Rotorua has faced reputation and perception challenges in recent years. What specific strategies or initiatives would you advocate for to restore Rotorua's brand as a premier visitor destination?

What is your perspective on collaboration and funding between the Council and the Rotorua Regional Tourism Organisation to achieve aligned economic and community outcomes? Should Council increase, maintain, or reduce its level of support and investment?

What new initiatives would you bring to the leadership table to see Rotorua tourism and hospitality grow?

If elected, how will you directly engage and support the tourism and hospitality industry in your decision-making?

ROTORUA LAKES COUNCIL GENERAL WARD CANDIDATES



JASON MONAHAN

Please note: At the time of production (22nd August 2025) no bio or questionnaire had been submitted to the graphic designer.

Name one of your favourite places to take visitors out to dinner in Rotorua:

Name one of your favourite activities for visitors to Rotorua to do while they are here:

What do you hope to achieve from your time on council if you're elected?

What role do you see tourism and hospitality playing in the economic future of Rotorua?

Rotorua has faced reputation and perception challenges in recent years. What specific strategies or initiatives would you advocate for to restore Rotorua's brand as a premier visitor destination?

What is your perspective on collaboration and funding between the Council and the Rotorua Regional Tourism Organisation to achieve aligned economic and community outcomes? Should Council increase, maintain, or reduce its level of support and investment?

What new initiatives would you bring to the leadership table to see Rotorua tourism and hospitality grow?

If elected, how will you directly engage and support the tourism and hospitality industry in your decision-making?

ROTORUA LAKES COUNCIL GENERAL WARD CANDIDATES



MARIANA MORRISSON

I am standing for Rotorua Lakes Council to bring strategic policy, strong leadership, and a deeply community-led approach to the table. As a lifelong Rotorua resident, I've worked across iwi, community, and government to co-design strategies in housing, aged care, disability inclusion always with whānau and community at the centre. I understand the vital role tourism and hospitality play in growing Rotorua's economy, creating jobs, and showcasing our culture to the world, and I'm committed to ensuring these sectors thrive alongside our wider community.

My leadership is grounded, collaborative, and future-focused, with a proven ability to turn vision into action through sound strategy and policy design. Rotorua needs councillors who understand both the lived realities of our people and the systems that shape our future.

I bring the skills to influence policy, the heart to connect with community, and the courage to lead change that's inclusive, sustainable, and locally driven.

Name one of your favourite places to take visitors out to dinner in Rotorua:

One of my favourite places to take visitors out to dinner in Rotorua is Te Puia.

Name one of your favourite activities for visitors to Rotorua to do while they are here:

One of my favourite activities for visitors to Rotorua is relaxing in the Polynesian Spa's thermal pools.

What do you hope to achieve from your time on council if you're elected?

If elected, I want to deliver policies that grow Rotorua's economy, strengthen tourism and hospitality, and invest in housing, aged care, and disability inclusion all shaped by genuine community leadership. My goal is a council that works alongside whānau, iwi, and local businesses to create sustainable growth, protect our unique environment, and ensure every Rotorua resident benefits from the decisions we make.

What role do you see tourism and hospitality playing in the economic future of Rotorua?

Tourism and hospitality are key to Rotorua's economic future, driving jobs and business growth. Through partnerships like the Rotorua Tourism Investment Partnership and RotoruaNZ, the sector can grow sustainably while benefiting local whānau, iwi, and businesses.

Rotorua has faced reputation and perception challenges in recent years.

What specific strategies or initiatives would you advocate for to restore Rotorua's brand as a premier visitor destination?

I would back initiatives like the Rotorua Tourism Investment Partnership and Destination Management Plan, promoting coordinated marketing, cultural experiences, and sustainable tourism to restore Rotorua as a premier visitor destination.

What is your perspective on collaboration and funding between the Council and the Rotorua Regional Tourism Organisation to achieve aligned economic and community outcomes? Should Council increase, maintain, or reduce its level of support and investment?

Collaboration between Council and the Rotorua Regional Tourism Organisation is essential to align economic growth with community benefit. I support maintaining and strategically increasing Council's investment in joint initiatives that grow tourism sustainably, create jobs, and ensure local whānau and businesses share in the benefits.

What new initiatives would you bring to the leadership table to see Rotorua tourism and hospitality grow?

I would champion sustainable tourism practices that protect our environment while growing jobs and economic opportunities for the community.

If elected, how will you directly engage and support the tourism and hospitality industry in your decision-making?

If elected, I will engage directly with tourism and hospitality stakeholders to ensure their voices shape Council decisions and advocate for initiatives that grow the sector sustainably while benefiting the wider Rotorua community.

ROTORUA LAKES COUNCIL GENERAL WARD CANDIDATES



PAM NEILSON

I'm Pam Neilson, I am the 4th generation of 6 that call Rotorua home.

I have decided to run for council because I feel an ordinary voice like mine is not represented and I hope to be your voice if you feel the same.

What we need is a focus on our roading and infrastructure to keep Rotorua liveable.

We need to adapt quickly to the new builds that are now available as well as the many planned and current developments that will increase pressure on our essential services and further affect our ease of travel.

We need less focus on vanity projects and personal agendas, and more focus on practicality.

A well decorated, inefficient city is OK for tourists, yet unliveable for our local community.

I stand for practical, focused spending to create a liveable city for locals.
Happy Locals = Happy Tourists.

Name one of your favourite places to take visitors out to dinner in Rotorua:
Stratosphere Restaurant at Skyline Skyrides

Name one of your favourite activities for visitors to Rotorua to do while they are here:
Have a picnic at The Centennial Park Tree Trust

What do you hope to achieve from your time on council if you're elected?
To represent the wishes of the people of Rotorua and ensure there are readily available answers to the many concerns I hear residents speak of. A focus on practical spending especially on long neglected infrastructure, we can not keep passing the problem down the chain to the next generation.

What role do you see tourism and hospitality playing in the economic future of Rotorua?
Tourism and Hospitality has always been a major contributor to the economy in Rotorua and should remain a prime concern in decision making.

Rotorua has faced reputation and perception challenges in recent years. What specific strategies or initiatives would you advocate for to restore Rotorua's brand as a premier visitor destination?

I would encourage more photo opportunities for "instagramable moments" to be shared on social media. Taking advantage of modern day marketing such as online influencers and integrating their material into Tourism promotion to reestablish Rotorua as a must see destination for both domestic and international visitors.

What is your perspective on collaboration and funding between the Council and the Rotorua Regional Tourism Organisation to achieve aligned economic and community outcomes? Should Council increase, maintain, or reduce its level of support and investment?
Council should at minimum maintain its current level of support and if practical, considering the investment required in infrastructure, look to increase support.

What new initiatives would you bring to the leadership table to see Rotorua tourism and hospitality grow?
We need to look at a greater variety of marketing avenues such as social media influencers that have a massive online presence.
I would encourage more collaboration amongst local businesses to create personalised destination experiences.

If elected, how will you directly engage and support the tourism and hospitality industry in your decision-making?
I would speak with groups and associations such as RTIP as well as business owners individually in order to gain their perspective and make well informed decisions.

ROTORUA LAKES COUNCIL GENERAL WARD CANDIDATES



CONAN O'BRIEN

I'm standing for re-election to Council to continue the fight of the last three years. Successes include saving the Reserves our predecessors tried to sell, Springfield Golf Club has a new lease, we've pressured Central Government to close Emergency Housing in Motels by the end of the year. Infracore has been reformed. There are fundamental reviews across Council looking at ways for efficiencies and cost savings. Operations such as Howard Morrison Centre and Energy Events Centre have been placed on a profit footing and changes to Parking and our substantial investment in our CBD are on the way. We finally have policies recognising Accessibility and Disability issues, and how we can support improvements and the required infrastructure and facilities. But there's far more to be done. Communities such as Ngongotaha, Ngapuna and Ohinemutu and our Rural Villages like Mamaku and Reporoa, need a New Deal for support, resourcing, and engagement to ensure they thrive.

Over the last three years I've asked the hard questions of Officials and holding those in power to account and being accountable to those who put me there – that's what a Councillor should do. I don't sit there quietly and 'count-the-numbers' to see who's winning, I say what I mean and mean what I say.

I pledge to you, my commitment continuing to Restore our CBD and Environment, Rebuild your trust in Council, Reform Council for better, efficient services, smaller bureaucracy, reduce rate rises, lower debt levels.

Name one of your favourite places to take visitors out to dinner in Rotorua:

Giovanni's at Lynmore Junction

Name one of your favourite activities for visitors to Rotorua to do while they are here:

Waitapu Thermal Wonderland and Waimangu Volcanic Valley combined day.

What do you hope to achieve from your time on council if you're elected?

Restore fiscal responsibility, expand Council's funding streams (too much reliance on Rates and Charges), support efforts to reform Council to reduce red tape and keep rates lower. Support Rural Communities for their fair share of resources for investment and growth. Recognition by the Industry of Accessibility and Disability issues and how solutions can be beneficial profit-wise.

What role do you see tourism and hospitality playing in the economic future of Rotorua?

Massive, but Council should be doing more to encourage diversification of Rotorua's economy and lessen our reliance on Tourism/Hospo in economic downturns. We need to grow industries that are high paying, and wealth creating with wide distribution across the district.

Rotorua has faced reputation and perception challenges in recent years. What specific strategies or initiatives would you advocate for to restore Rotorua's brand as a premier visitor destination?

CBD Re-vitalisation and Plan, working with Regional Council for a Region-wide focus on supporting infrastructure for Tourism, Advocate for more Government support with anti-social behaviour focus.

What is your perspective on collaboration and funding between the Council and the Rotorua Regional Tourism Organisation to achieve aligned economic and community outcomes? Should Council increase, maintain, or reduce its level of support and investment?

I think Council should have real dialogue with groups like RTIP and listen constructively to ensure we achieve the outcomes we both

desire. If increases in support are requested, we must ensure there is broad-based consensus and support for increases in funding and how that funding is raised. What is the aim, who pays and why?, how do we measure success, if it fails, how do we learn the lessons for the future?

Council must be bolder in reviewing expenditures – too often events that are past their peak are kept on life-support by Councillors too closely attached to pet projects. Also the aim of Council's support should be one reduction in the long-term, to encourage self-sustainability, discourage reliance of Council subsidies, and so funding can be shifted by Council onto new projects and areas for development.

In my opinion, the worst mistake Council made this term was the shockingly bad communication and process around the introduction of the rating changes to Short Term Accommodation. Poorly thought out, woefully communicated and executed. We can't let this happen again but should use this an example of what NOT to do in the future.

What new initiatives would you bring to the leadership table to see Rotorua tourism and hospitality grow?

Rotorua has been too easily divided by those without the district's best interests at heart. Projects like Waste-water Treatment and the Vaughans Road by-pass are examples of decisions made by Councillors without foresight and/or courage. Too much focus on "what's popular", rather than "what's right". I bring practicality, common-sense and courage to stop the kick-the-can-down-the-road mentality, and deal with issues now.

If elected, how will you directly engage and support the tourism and hospitality industry in your decision-making?

Personally reach out to RTIP for more engagement about matters and issues that Council and other entities can co-operate with.

ROTORUA LAKES COUNCIL GENERAL WARD CANDIDATES



NEVILLE RAETHEL

Please note: At the time of production (22nd August 2025) no bio or questionnaire had been submitted to the graphic designer.

Name one of your favourite places to take visitors out to dinner in Rotorua:

Name one of your favourite activities for visitors to Rotorua to do while they are here:

What do you hope to achieve from your time on council if you're elected?

What role do you see tourism and hospitality playing in the economic future of Rotorua?

Rotorua has faced reputation and perception challenges in recent years. What specific strategies or initiatives would you advocate for to restore Rotorua's brand as a premier visitor destination?

What is your perspective on collaboration and funding between the Council and the Rotorua Regional Tourism Organisation to achieve aligned economic and community outcomes? Should Council increase, maintain, or reduce its level of support and investment?

What new initiatives would you bring to the leadership table to see Rotorua tourism and hospitality grow?

If elected, how will you directly engage and support the tourism and hospitality industry in your decision-making?

ROTORUA LAKES COUNCIL GENERAL WARD CANDIDATES



BEN SANDFORD

I'm Ben Sandford. I was born and raised in Rotorua, went to Rotorua Boys High School and now work here as a lawyer. I competed in three Winter Olympics for New Zealand and spent many years travelling, living and competing overseas. I've held governance positions in international organisations, and am still involved in many national, regional and local organisations. I'm incredibly proud to be from Rotorua and call it home. I'm running for Council to do what I can to make things better. I have a track record of making positive change.

I am hard working and will provide good governance, informed decision making and vision. Rotorua is amazing but we have issues, and I would like to contribute to Council so that we can be creative in solving the issues that local government faces and can advocate effectively beyond Council. I would like to bring life back into the CBD, create a plan for our nighttime economy, ensure our sports facilities and parks are fit for purpose, and create opportunities for our communities to contribute and thrive. We need to work in unison with the Rotorua community to create a vision for what we aspire to be and look at new ways that Council can generate revenue to be able to reinvest in Rotorua. I will work collaboratively, and make sure Council is both leading and supporting to get the best for Rotorua.

Name one of your favourite places to take visitors out to dinner in Rotorua:

I love taking visitors to Poco, the food, drink and atmosphere is amazing.

Name one of your favourite activities for visitors to Rotorua to do while they are here:

If I have visitors in the summer, I usually take them for a swim out at Lake Tarawera. The views are amazing, the water crystal clear, and it's not the type of thing that my friends visiting me have easy access to where they live. They always love it! In winter I'm always recommending Wai Ariki Hot Springs and Spa, it's an amazing addition to what we offer and a truly unique experience.

What do you hope to achieve from your time on council if you're elected?

I aim to help restore Rotorua's reputation as a world class destination, strengthen sustainable economic growth, and nurture inclusive community development. My priority is ensuring Rotorua delivers high quality experiences for both visitors and locals, with a clear focus on youth and adventure travel as drivers of long term value for our economy and community.

What role do you see tourism and hospitality playing in the economic future of Rotorua?

Tourism and hospitality are vital pillars of Rotorua's economy. The sector delivers immediate revenue through visitor spend, creates seasonal and skilled jobs, supports local businesses across diverse industries, and amplifies Rotorua's cultural story. Youth and adventure tourism bring sustained economic benefits, promote regional dispersal of spend, and strengthen Rotorua's global brand through repeat visitation and positive social media advocacy.

Rotorua has faced reputation and perception challenges in recent years. What specific strategies or initiatives would you advocate for to restore Rotorua's brand as a premier visitor destination?

Restoring Rotorua's brand requires a multi pronged approach:

- Promote authentic, purpose driven visitor experiences that reflect Rotorua's culture, environment and people.
- Implement targeted youth and adventure travel marketing, leveraging powerful digital storytelling.
- Encourage year round and regionally dispersed visitation to support local communities.
- Support sustainability initiatives and actively promote Rotorua's leadership in environmentally conscious tourism.

What is your perspective on collaboration and funding between the Council and the Rotorua Regional Tourism Organisation to achieve aligned economic and community outcomes? Should Council increase, maintain, or reduce its level of support and investment?

I strongly support close collaboration between Council, RTIP, TNZ and RotoruaNZ. Strategic alignment and robust partnerships are essential to meeting our economic, cultural, and environmental goals. Given the vital role of tourism in Rotorua's economy, Council should maintain – or where proven effective, increase – investment in initiatives that attract high value visitors, improve infrastructure, and grow local skills. Funding should be guided by evidence and deliver measurable outcomes.

What new initiatives would you bring to the leadership table to see Rotorua tourism and hospitality grow?

I would advocate for:

- Campaigns to incentivise longer youth and adventure traveller stays through bundled experiences and regional travel options.
- Environmental and cultural engagement programmes, such as conservation volunteering and authentic Māori cultural experiences.
- Tech enabled visitor services and high quality digital content to enhance Rotorua's global profile.
- Bringing Rotorua's cool vibe back.
- Development of major events and conferences to stimulate shoulder season demand.
- Partnerships with education providers, hospitality businesses, and iwi to strengthen the tourism workforce and cultural connections.

If elected, how will you directly engage and support the tourism and hospitality industry in your decision-making?

I will:

- Maintain regular engagement with Rotorua's tourism and hospitality operators, from frontline workers to industry leaders.
- Use data driven insights on visitor trends and spending to inform Council policy.
- Facilitate with associations and advocacy groups such as RTIP, Hospitality NZ, Restaurant Association, Holiday Parks and BYATA through their community forums to ensure industry voices are heard.
- Champion initiatives that develop talent, upgrade infrastructure, and embed sustainability and cultural authenticity in Rotorua's visitor offering.
- Bring our cool vibe back.

ROTORUA LAKES COUNCIL GENERAL WARD CANDIDATES



RAHUL SETHI

Please note: At the time of production (22nd August 2025) no bio or questionnaire had been submitted to the graphic designer.

Name one of your favourite places to take visitors out to dinner in Rotorua:

Name one of your favourite activities for visitors to Rotorua to do while they are here:

What do you hope to achieve from your time on council if you're elected?

What role do you see tourism and hospitality playing in the economic future of Rotorua?

Rotorua has faced reputation and perception challenges in recent years. What specific strategies or initiatives would you advocate for to restore Rotorua's brand as a premier visitor destination?

What is your perspective on collaboration and funding between the Council and the Rotorua Regional Tourism Organisation to achieve aligned economic and community outcomes? Should Council increase, maintain, or reduce its level of support and investment?

What new initiatives would you bring to the leadership table to see Rotorua tourism and hospitality grow?

If elected, how will you directly engage and support the tourism and hospitality industry in your decision-making?

ROTORUA LAKES COUNCIL GENERAL WARD CANDIDATES

FISHER WANG



It has been an honour to work hard for our community serving as your Councillor representing this beautiful district – thank you for your support over the past 6 years. I am standing for re-election to Rotorua Lakes Council because I believe in a future built on integrity, progress, resilience, and community. Over the past two terms I have worked hard to deliver better outcomes for Rotorua, from investment in infrastructure, to arts and culture, and economic development.

Born and raised in Rotorua, I am proud to serve the city that shaped me. I have built strong relationships with our community, local businesses, iwi, and regional partners, and I understand both the challenges we face and the opportunities we must seize. I will continue to work tirelessly to build Rotorua's reputation, strengthen our partnerships, and ensure our visitor economy benefits both our people and our place.

Tourism is one of Rotorua's backbone industries, and I have consistently advocated for its importance to our economy, identity, and vibrancy. As Chair of the Rotorua Sustainable Charter and Trustee on Rotorua Trust, I have experience in governance, collaboration, and delivering initiatives that support economic growth with social and environmental wellbeing.

I have lived and breathed Rotorua through my work and continue to be inspired by the potential our city and people have. To strengthen my decision-making for our community's future, I have studied Law & International Relations and become an accredited RMA Commissioner. I bring energy, experience, integrity, and a deep commitment to this role, and I look forward to continuing to work together to shape a thriving community and vibrant future for Rotorua.

Name one of your favourite places to take visitors out to dinner in Rotorua:

River's Catch on Pandora Ave is a favourite, a great example of warm Rotorua hospitality that highlights local produce. It's a place I love to recommend visitors for its quality and commitment to sustainability, always with a smile.

Name one of your favourite activities for visitors to Rotorua to do while they are here:

We're so well known for our outdoor activities as a destination, there's so many to choose from. But you can't go past Whakarewarewa Forest for mountain biking or a simple stroll which showcases Rotorua's natural beauty and is a world-class experience right on our doorstep.

What do you hope to achieve from your time on council if you're elected?

I want to see Rotorua thrive as a place where people feel proud to live, work, and visit. That means ensuring tourism growth aligns with housing, infrastructure, and community investment. My focus will also be on building economic confidence in our city, delivering resilient infrastructure, and supporting sustainable growth that benefits everyone.

What role do you see tourism and hospitality playing in the economic future of Rotorua?

Tourism and hospitality are one of the main sectors of our economy and will remain central to Rotorua's economic growth. The sector provides thousands of jobs, drives investment, and promotes Rotorua on the national and world stage. By connecting tourism with other sectors, encouraging sustainability, driving innovation and new ventures, we can create a resilient visitor economy that supports a Rotorua that is future-ready.

Rotorua has faced reputation and perception challenges in recent years. What specific strategies or initiatives would you advocate for to restore Rotorua's brand as a premier visitor destination?

We are all too familiar with the challenges our city has faced over the past years, but it's not unique to just us. While we are working hard to fix the issues, I believe we also need to do more in talking

Rotorua up, the positive stories that don't make the media, and we need to lean into what makes us unique, our natural and geothermal wonders, Māori culture, outdoor adventure, and wellness. I have and will continue to support strong collaboration with our CCO, RotoruaNZ and RTIP on brand campaigns, investment in events that lift our profile, and improving safety and vibrancy in our city. I have also worked hard on showcasing Rotorua to the east Asia markets, working with outbound tour operators, airlines, and officials.

What is your perspective on collaboration and funding between the Council and the Rotorua Regional Tourism Organisation to achieve aligned economic and community outcomes? Should Council increase, maintain, or reduce its level of support and investment?

I strongly support maintaining and, where appropriate, increasing council's investment in RotoruaNZ. Tourism is one of our biggest economic drivers, and aligned strategies with RTIP and RotoruaNZ are critical. To prevent working in silos, an opportunity to explore would also be public-private partnerships that could deliver much more for our city.

What new initiatives would you bring to the leadership table to see Rotorua tourism and hospitality grow?

I have and will continue to advocate through our other CCO Rotorua Airport, for more reliable air connectivity with Air NZ, increased frequency, and a Rotorua-Queenstown connection. Leveraging our relationships with other international cities to build education-tourism exchanges, which have already seen thousands of students participate and create a positive ripple effect. Continuing to support sustainability and eco-tourism initiatives that showcase Rotorua as the most sustainable destination in the Southern Hemisphere.

If elected, how will you directly engage and support the tourism and hospitality industry in your decision-making?

I will continue regular visits with operators, hui with RTIP and RotoruaNZ, to ensure the industry voice is heard in decision-making. I will advocate for our destination at the council table, push for smart investment in events and infrastructure to grow our visitor economy, and be accessible to businesses as a genuine partner.

ROTORUA LAKES COUNCIL MAORI WARD CANDIDATES

QUICK FACTS:

There are a total of 6 Maori ward candidates.

There are 3 vacancies for the Maori ward.

2 current Maori ward councillors are seeking re-election.

ROTORUA LAKES COUNCIL MAORI WARD CANDIDATES



TREVOR MAXWELL

I am born and bred in Rotorua and tourism is the heart of what we do, and tourism is a top priority with me. I made the call; I am hoping to get the support to be elected again. Trevor would like to do one more term. 48 years on council and he is a big support of tourism the entire way through. Having been involved in tourism promotional events overseas with tourism NZ.

I think we are leading in the country, and our point of difference is the beautiful things we have here from lakes, geothermal and Maori culture and the venues we have like Skyline and the trails in the forest.

Name one of your favourite places to take visitors out to dinner in Rotorua:
Te Puia and but we have variety and anywhere with Peking Duck

Name one of your favourite activities for visitors to Rotorua to do while they are here:

Cultural performances are his go to or sight seeing locally and proudly as we are the winners of Te Matatini

What do you hope to achieve from your time on council if you're elected?

I made the call; I am hoping to get the support to be elected again. Trevor would like to do one more term. 48 years on council and he is a big support of tourism the entire way through. Having been involved in tourism promotional events overseas with tourism NZ. I think we are leading in the country, and our point of difference is the beautiful things we have here from lakes, geothermal and Maori culture and the venues we have like Skyline and the trails in the forest. Trevor hopes that the council will always support his tourism efforts.

What role do you see tourism and hospitality playing in the economic future of Rotorua?

Rotorua has faced reputation and perception challenges in recent years. What specific strategies or initiatives would you advocate for to restore Rotorua's brand as a premier visitor destination?

This something started working on, events are one of the other things that that we have some much huge talent to promote the area, the annual lakesides and major shows. The talent that omens from this city is plentiful. The clean up of our lakes with keep the fishing and kayaking strong and there are

What is your perspective on collaboration and funding between the Council and the Rotorua Regional Tourism Organisation to achieve aligned economic and community outcomes? Should Council increase, maintain, or reduce its level of support and investment?

I would love to see it increased and to see more funding. The tourism operators themselves were paying into a fund themselves which is neat. But tourism is big part of employment and opportunities for young people. RotoruaNZ is now running the events and venues and rethinking their funding to support events. There are many opportunities for tourism and as a young person I was involved in tourism from a young age. The tourists that travel here open our eyes to what is out there

What new initiatives would you bring to the leadership table to see Rotorua tourism and hospitality grow?

If elected, how will you directly engage and support the tourism and hospitality industry in your decision-making?

Get very good reports to our council meetings that keep us up to date. The members are invited to the tourism board functions and tourism NZ will engage and invite councillors too. Also to ensure that we bid for the major tourism events like TRENZ to ensure we are up with the play supporting proposals and bids and providing necessary funding. Trevor would like us to keep working with the Airbnb groups to not have them pay the mega bucks but because they provide fantastic accommodation options in Rotorua.

So overall keeping an eye on things like that and providing opportunities for council and tourism to promote to international destinations like China, Australia, USA. Trevor understands the people work hard to get the international visitors here.

ROTORUA LAKES COUNCIL MAORI WARD CANDIDATES



MEREPEKA RAUKAWA-TAIT

As a RLC Councillor for 11 years, this year I am standing as a candidate in the Maori Ward. I bring the necessary institutional and business background knowledge that comes from putting in the hard yards over the years. But I do think local government is in for turbulent times ahead. Central government is starting to stick their nose more and more into our business with I believe little knowledge of how local democracy works. And their involvement invariably comes at additional cost to ratepayers. As one of the team of 11; one Mayor and 10 Councillors, I think it is important that we work constructively together. By all means have robust debates but as Councillors we are elected to make decisions and get on with the job. Not equivocate. I would like my term in council to be focussed on RLC developing a credible and widely supported vision for Rotorua and District over the next 20 - 30 years. Thinking strategically about the use and management of council assets and most importantly fund infrastructure with future growth in mind.

RTIP members get up every morning and work hard to be successful in their businesses. They must also have confidence in those who sit around the council table making decisions that could impact business. As ratepayers we get who we vote for. Being a Councillor is not a popularity contest. To do it well takes hard work and commitment. The choice is yours.

Name one of your favourite places to take visitors out to dinner in Rotorua:
Urbano

Name one of your favourite activities for visitors to Rotorua to do while they are here:
Visit Te Puia

What do you hope to achieve from your time on council if you're elected?
I would like RLC to consider what the future of local government might look like in 3 or 6 years time. With the outsourcing of so many services it could well be approaching its use by date. But local democracy is important so early and regular communication with ratepayers is important. I want to see RLC use its influence with central government to get serious about addressing the range of depressing social issues that plague Rotorua and district. I would also hope to see more planning and real actions taken to address the impacts of climate change.

What role do you see tourism and hospitality playing in the economic future of Rotorua?
Tourism and hospitality are vital to the economic well being of Rotorua and district. Always has been always will be. But the sector needs to know RLC has their back and will do whatever it can to see our tourism businesses are successful.

Rotorua has faced reputation and perception challenges in recent years. What specific strategies or initiatives would you advocate for to restore Rotorua's brand as a premier visitor destination?
RLC can run a campaign that gets our citizens to highlight the 3 great visitor attractions they love to share about Rotorua. Let our community tell us the 3 things our city needs to stop doing so we can start to build back social cohesion and bring back valued visitors. Maybe start with the Rotorua Daily Post sharing good news stories.

What is your perspective on collaboration and funding between the Council and the Rotorua Regional Tourism Organisation to achieve aligned economic and community outcomes? Should Council increase, maintain, or reduce its level of support and investment?
Collaboration is key. I think Council could work towards increasing its level of support and investment in RTIP. Continue also to look at further ways to increase the marketing of Rotorua.

What new initiatives would you bring to the leadership table to see Rotorua tourism and hospitality grow?
Ask our tourism and hospitality businesses to be the best they can be at their job. Get them to constantly challenge their own members on the quality of their offerings. RLC and RTIP could both seek feedback from each other as to how well they feel the other is doing. They are in this together.

If elected, how will you directly engage and support the tourism and hospitality industry in your decision-making?
Visit, be seen and listen at various tourism and hospitality businesses and events. Ask owners to tell me where the challenges are and what RLC can do to assist. Don't leave councillors guessing. Far too easy to get it wrong then.

ROTORUA LAKES COUNCIL MAORI WARD CANDIDATES



HARINA RUPAPERA

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Name one of your favourite places to take visitors out to dinner in Rotorua:

Name one of your favourite activities for visitors to Rotorua to do while they are here:

What do you hope to achieve from your time on council if you're elected?

What role do you see tourism and hospitality playing in the economic future of Rotorua?

Rotorua has faced reputation and perception challenges in recent years. What specific strategies or initiatives would you advocate for to restore Rotorua's brand as a premier visitor destination?

What is your perspective on collaboration and funding between the Council and the Rotorua Regional Tourism Organisation to achieve aligned economic and community outcomes? Should Council increase, maintain, or reduce its level of support and investment?

What new initiatives would you bring to the leadership table to see Rotorua tourism and hospitality grow?

If elected, how will you directly engage and support the tourism and hospitality industry in your decision-making?

ROTORUA LAKES COUNCIL MAORI WARD CANDIDATES



TE WHATANUI SKIPWITH

Ngā uri Tūhourangi, Ngāti Pikiao, Ngāti Whakaue.

I'm here doing the mahi - standing for our whenua, our people, and our future. I've shown leadership as an iwi and community organiser, and I've stood on the frontlines as māngai for the protection of Rotokākahi, defending our wāhi tapu and mana i te whenua. I'm a husband and father of four. I run a kaupapa Māori business supporting rangatahi and whānau through addiction recovery, mental health, and wraparound care — because I've seen what works, and I know what our people need. I'm a NZ MMA and kickboxing champion, and I bring that same energy into fighting for mana Māori motuhake and real change.

My kaupapa is grounded in mana whenua leadership & determination, whānau wellbeing, Māori futures, and protection of our taiao. I te ao, i te pō - he rā anō kei tua. Tū mai. Tautoko mai.

Name one of your favourite places to take visitors out to dinner in Rotorua:
Eat Streat and Atticus Finch

Name one of your favourite activities for visitors to Rotorua to do while they are here:
Gondalas, Luge and coming out to Tarawera

What do you hope to achieve from your time on council if you're elected?
To ensure we get positive change for the future, making correct decisions for the now to ensure that better decision-making happens, so that means we get lower rates for all communities, protection of our environment, heavy focus on mana whenua-led determination and making sure they (mana whenua) not only have a voice at the table, they also have decision-making power (not just performative/after the fact), focusing on our local economy, supporting our businesses, making sure we have more events coming through town because when we have a thriving economy, our city will do well.

What role do you see tourism and hospitality playing in the economic future of Rotorua?
Apart from Queenstown and Taupō, Rotorua is a tourism hub for the country - it's everything for Rotorua, but currently our city is not doing well economically, and we need to do better; we need to sort out our infrastructure, improve it, develop it more, and we need to invest in local businesses and infrastructure to support a thriving economy. We can't build up on shaky and outdated foundations.

Rotorua has faced reputation and perception challenges in recent years. What specific strategies or initiatives would you advocate for to restore Rotorua's brand as a premier visitor destination?
Here is one strategy/initiative. I am already working collaboratively with several on-the-ground community organisations (Love Soup Rotorua, Village of Hope and my charitable trust), with one of the focus areas being our street whānau, and looking at short-term supportive living, and a social detox unit in the CBD, and moving to mid/long-term housing. This is a 10-year strategy, and will be baselined and forecasted on the markers and milestones achieved in the first year.

What is your perspective on collaboration and funding between the Council and the Rotorua Regional Tourism Organisation to achieve aligned economic and community outcomes? Should Council increase, maintain, or reduce its level of support and investment?
Tourism is a massive part of Rotorua, and it has to work alongside our community needs. I believe both parties need to be aligned, not working in separate silos. If I am successful in my campaign, I would want to ensure we're investing smarter, making sure the benefits of tourism flow back into our local communities, businesses, jobs for our whānau and the protection of our taiao. I don't think it's about more or less money, but better value for money. Every dollar the Council invests could and should bring a return to both our economy and our community.

What new initiatives would you bring to the leadership table to see Rotorua tourism and hospitality grow?
Pushing for and promoting initiatives that connect tourism directly with our local businesses and communities, and how they can both work cohesively and collaboratively together. Potentially look at purchasing local tourism pathways. Elevating the market scene and making it easier and more attractive for locals and visitors to spend at markets. Uplifting and enhancing social media presence to promote the markets, promote local businesses, and more whānau-led village shops and enterprises. Making sure our cultural tourism is done right by recognising the important role of mana whenua and land rights of which tourism operates on today.

If elected, how will you directly engage and support the tourism and hospitality industry in your decision-making?
Kāhore ki te kāhore, face to face, being present, meeting with local tourism and hospitality industries, talking directly with you. Being open for communications and hearing from you, turning up to hui and generally being a good partner as mana whenua should be - hearing your concerns, help uplift our Tangata Tiriti whānau in the same way that I would support Tangata Whenua.

ROTORUA LAKES COUNCIL MAORI WARD CANDIDATES



TE RIKA TEMARA-BENFELL

Please note: At the time of production (22nd August 2025) no bio or questionnaire had been submitted to the graphic designer. The information

Name one of your favourite places to take visitors out to dinner in Rotorua:

Name one of your favourite activities for visitors to Rotorua to do while they are here:

What do you hope to achieve from your time on council if you're elected?

What role do you see tourism and hospitality playing in the economic future of Rotorua?

Rotorua has faced reputation and perception challenges in recent years. What specific strategies or initiatives would you advocate for to restore Rotorua's brand as a premier visitor destination?

What is your perspective on collaboration and funding between the Council and the Rotorua Regional Tourism Organisation to achieve aligned economic and community outcomes? Should Council increase, maintain, or reduce its level of support and investment?

What new initiatives would you bring to the leadership table to see Rotorua tourism and hospitality grow?

If elected, how will you directly engage and support the tourism and hospitality industry in your decision-making?

ROTORUA LAKES COUNCIL MAORI WARD CANDIDATES



RAWIRI WARU

Tihei Mauri Ora!
Ko Te Arawa te waka
Ko Ngāti Whakaue me Ngāti Rangiwewehi ōku iwi tupu
He mihi maioha tēnei ki a koutou katoa.

I currently serve as a councillor for the Rotorua Māori ward and am standing for re-election to continue representing the voices of Te Arawa and the wider Māori community.

Born and raised in Rotorua, I bring practical work experience and a deep understanding of how council works — the processes, challenges, and the importance of strategic patience. Knowing how to pick your battles and focus on what will have the greatest impact is key to delivering real lasting change. Meaningful progress requires long-term thinking, strong relationships, and careful decision-making.

During my term, I have worked hard to embed kaupapa Māori values, tikanga and iwi aspirations into council decision-making and will always do so. The Māori ward is about genuine partnership between iwi and council, giving our whānau a real voice.

Tourism and hospitality are vital to Rotorua's economy, and I advocate for Te Arawa/Māori leadership in these sectors to ensure sustainable benefits flow back to our community.

If re-elected, I will continue to be a strong, transparent advocate for Te Arawa, committed to building a thriving, healthy Rotorua for generations to come.

E kore e mutu te rere o kupu whakamihi ki a koutou katoa.

Name one of your favourite places to take visitors out to dinner in Rotorua:

Pātaka Kai at Te Puia. It's more than just a meal — it's part of a full cultural experience, grounded in manaakitanga and local produce. It's a place where you're reminded that you're in Rotorua, on Te Arawa land, with a story behind every dish.

Name one of your favourite activities for visitors to Rotorua to do while they are here:

There are just too many! It depends on who the visitors are. However, I think the best activities are when visitors get to learn our stories from the people who whakapapa or have a deep connection to this land.

What do you hope to achieve from your time on council if you're elected?

I want to continue to help shift council decision-making to be more inclusive of Te Arawa/iwi and more responsive to the needs of everyday Rotorua people. That includes supporting Māori economic development and strengthening infrastructure that benefits both locals and the visitor economy.

What role do you see tourism and hospitality playing in the economic future of Rotorua?

Tourism and hospitality are central to Rotorua's economy — but not just as a business sector. They're platforms for Te Arawa/iwi to lead, for our culture to be celebrated and sustained and for our stories to be told on our terms. It's also a major employer, so we need to make sure the jobs it creates are viable, respected, and contribute to long-term community wellbeing. I love to remind people that Rotorua is the birth place of tourism.

Rotorua has faced reputation and perception challenges in recent years. What specific strategies or initiatives would you advocate for to restore Rotorua's brand as a premier visitor destination?

Restoring Rotorua's reputation starts with restoring pride and mana at home. That means visible investment in our town centre, clear

progress on community safety and consistent messaging about who we are — a place of culture, resilience, and world-class manaakitanga. I support campaigns that put Te Arawa at the centre and use local voices to tell our stories.

What is your perspective on collaboration and funding between the Council and the Rotorua Regional Tourism Organisation to achieve aligned economic and community outcomes? Should Council increase, maintain, or reduce its level of support and investment?

Council must maintain and likely increase its investment in RotoruaNZ — but that investment should be aligned with our local values and priorities. RotoruaNZ must work closely with Te Arawa, small operators, and community leaders to ensure that economic outcomes also reflect cultural, social and environmental wellbeing. Accountability and inclusion are key. RotoruaNZ are doing a great job given the challenges Rotorua has faced in recent times but we must continue to explore and help enable the sector to find new and innovative ways to grow and thrive — the whole community will benefit.

What new initiatives would you bring to the leadership table to see Rotorua tourism and hospitality grow?

I'd support the development of a Māori Tourism Innovation Fund, focused on supporting Te Arawa and other Māori entrepreneurs in the sector. From small kai carts to digital storytelling platforms. I'd also advocate where possible for better training pathways for rangatahi into guiding, event management and hospitality leadership roles, built in partnership with iwi and local businesses.

If elected, how will you directly engage and support the tourism and hospitality industry in your decision-making?

I am already well connected in the industry and have a passion for it. I will stay connected with Te Arawa tourism leaders, small operators and the many hospitality based organisations. I want to hear directly from the people doing the work. I also believe Te Arawa should have a formal voice in key tourism-related decisions at council level, and I'll advocate for that structure to be strengthened.

ROTORUA LAKES COUNCIL LAKES COMMUNITY BOARD CANDIDATES

QUICK FACTS:

There are a total of 3 lakes community board candidates.

There are 4 vacancies for the board.

YOUR LAKES COMMUNITY BOARD CANDIDATES ARE:

PETER MACMILLAN

JENNIFER ROTHWELL

PHIL THOMASS

Board candidates were not approached for the questionnaire but will be invited to the RRTIP/BYATA networking event.

ROTORUA LAKES COUNCIL RURAL COMMUNITY BOARD CANDIDATES

QUICK FACTS:

There are a total of 6 rural community board candidates.

There are 4 vacancies for the board.

YOUR RURAL COMMUNITY BOARD CANDIDATES ARE:

RACHEL BIDOIS

RACHEL CLARK

KAREN FORLONG

COLIN GUYTON

TINA MARSHALL

TINA ROSE

Board candidates were not approached for the questionnaire but will be invited to the RRTIP/BYATA networking event.

