Appendix C: **Summary of Initial Engagement**
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Learnings from other Councils

To help guide us, we have reached out to other New Zealand Councils with established UD Panels to get a better understanding of how their Panels have been set up and what is needed to make them work.

Prior to our meetings with these Councils, we pre-circulated a number of questions relating to triggers, the Panel review process, Panel members, administration, and some other general questions. This memo provides a summary of our discussions, highlighting those items that are of most interest to Tauranga City Council and the future establishment of an UD Panel.

The key takeaways from our meetings with other NZ Councils with UD Panels are summarised below.

Christchurch City Council (Josie Schroder, Principal Urban Designer, 18 November 2021)

- Having urban designers on staff in the review role is crucial at CCC – they run the end-to-end process with the applicant and the Panel. It was wondered whether a 'user pays' in-house Council urban designer could be justified through pre-application fees;
- Having design matters included in the City Plan is also fundamental – there needs to be some sort of documentation to back it up and give it weight (i.e., an objective or a strategy, or matters of assessment);
- The Panel takes a 'no surprises approach' and there shouldn't be anything in the written recommendations that hasn't been raised during the Panel meeting;
- Panel members were sought through the ROI process and selected due to their wide-ranging skills and ability to cover more than one area of expertise (i.e., an architect with a heritage background, or a landscape architect with cultural experience). External specialist advisors are infrequently required;
- CCC are looking into other potential methods to encourage quality built outcomes – such as via development or financial contributions to encourage things such as location and design;
- CCC support local design events and presentations – through funding, resourcing, volunteering.

Panel Review:

- Panel sessions typically last 1.5 hours and are usually fortnightly. When busy there may be up to 3 or 4 per week;
- A quorum of three panel members are present at each meeting;
- The Council urban design advisor will determine what needs to go to Panel (based on triggers or otherwise). They will usually have a pre-meet with the applicant, determine

the best panelists and take it through to Panel and then on through the application process. An end-to-end approach;
- Council seeks to take proposals to Panel early in the process – when the applicant to has spent less time and money and are more willing to take on advice;
- The administrative side of things is undertaken by the Hearing Advisors Team (time involved is equivalent to .75 to 1 FTE);
- The Panel takes a 'no surprises approach' - there shouldn't be anything in the recommendations that hasn't been raised during the meeting;
- Recommendations are signed off by the Chair and the UD team (for clarity, risks to Council etc.) and are submitted to the applicant within 5 working days;
- Other approaches to provide independent advice have been explored by CCC – such as a Panel workshop approach – which may be suitable in Tauranga.

Panel Members:

- There is a pool of 18-20 panelists;
- There are several convenors (chairs) amongst the Panel who have undertaken training for this role;
- The small pool of panelists helps to ensure consistency. Council typically tries to pair up applicants with the panelists who have reviewed previous proposals, to build rapport and consistency. Panelists are paid for their time in the Panel sessions. Their time reviewing an application and undertaking site visits is considered 'community good' and they are not reimbursed for this time;
- There are not external specialist advisors that are called upon. Panelists are often selected for having specialist skills and expertise (included in the ROI), such as heritage, sustainability, cultural. Council staff are utilised where needed - such as transport and heritage.

Triggers:

- The listed triggers include a 'catch-all' that if a proposal is deemed to be of significance by a Principal Urban Design Advisor or Urban Design Team Leader that it will be put forward to go to Panel;
- The triggers established for CCC have evolved as development size has increased. Residential development triggers were once >4 residential units. This was raised to >8 and now it is >18 residential units;
- Including triggers for out of zone activities has been important.

<u>Hamilton City Council (Colin Hattingh – Senior Urban Design Planner, Paul Bowman – City Planning Unit Team Leader, 25 November 2021)</u>

- There is a need for an urban designer on-staff to filter applications, recommend what goes to Panel, collate feedback, consult with other Council staff, and continue to provide a review and feedback role with the applicant. There is also a need for a dedicated person in an administrative role;
- Council believe it has been important for the Panel to have a common understanding of what Council wants to promote in terms of design. HCC provides this through their design guide VISTA and offers training to panelists on this;
- Their policy framework (with most activities in the central city Restricted Discretionary) enables flexibility and gives the Panel more weight - advice from panel remains non-statutory;

- The use of Development Contribution Remissions for proposals that go to Panel is new and potentially problematic – representing a tick-box exercise as Panel is non-statutory;
- The Panel ideally doesn't see anything that is already in the consenting process. It is a strong preference that the Panel only see things at pre-application stage as beyond this it's most often too late to provide meaningful advice;
- HCC haven't used the Panel in their own projects as much as they would like to;
- HCC believe their Panel meetings were initially too theoretical – and that specifics are important. The applicant wants to leave with 3-5 key points to look at / work on;
- It has been noted that those applicants who have good designs are more willing to go to Panel than those who perhaps could benefit the most from Panel guidance;
- Having an UD champion within Council is important – for elevating urban design both internally and externally;
- Publicising good outcomes and creating 'design awards' is a way to build support / buy-in;
- It is important that Council shows an ongoing commitment to up-skilling / training / education of Council staff;
- The budget for the Panel historically came through Council sponsorship. This came with associated reporting / paperwork. The Panel's budget currently comes from the GM and City Planning.

Panel Review:

- Panel sessions typically last 1.5 hours and can occur fortnightly but on average occur monthly;
- Four to five panelists are present at each meeting;
- The Council urban designer selects the Panel - determining which panelists are available and do not have conflicts of interest;
- The applicant has 45 minutes to present, there is a 40-minute Q&A. Panelists write up their individual feedback and this is collated by the Chair and sent on to Council to review and forward on to the applicant;
- The Panel seeks to provide a more informal approach – so as not to be viewed as a 'design crit'. Aim is to work with applicant to drive improvements where necessary;
- The Panel focuses on specifics of the design – enabling the applicant to leave with 3 to 5 key points to consider. Previously Panels had provided advice that was too theoretical and/or too critical.

Panel Members:

- There is currently a pool of 19 panelists (a recent increase from 13);
- The majority of these are local with two from outside of Hamilton (Tauranga and Auckland);
- Most panelists do not charge for their time and see it as giving back to the city. There is however an agreed hourly rate - if payment is requested;
- Any member of the Panel can Chair the meeting, regardless of discipline;
- Associate members or external experts are called upon where required;
- Panel members will be involved in reviewing the update of HCC's UD Panel Terms of Reference.

Triggers:

- Form a guideline – the Council urban designer helps to determine what needs to go to Panel;
- It is likely that if the Medium Density Residential Standards bill goes through that the Panel will predominantly be looking at developments 4 storeys and above.

Feedback from TCC

During this initial research phase, we consulted with various Tauranga City Council (TCC) teams to determine their aspirations with regards to an Urban Design Panel (UD Panel). We wanted to understand the value that a Panel could add to their team(s), how it could assist them in their roles and in the promotion of quality built outcomes in Tauranga. We also sought their insight on potential hurdles to the establishment and on-going success of an UD Panel in Tauranga.

Prior to our meetings with these teams, we pre-circulated a comparisons table which detailed the triggers and considerations of established UD Panels in New Zealand (namely those at Auckland, Hamilton, and Christchurch City Councils). This table provided a useful starting point for discussion, determining where staff believed it might be appropriate for TCC to mirror what has been established in other Councils, what elements might not be appropriate in the Tauranga context and what might be missing.

The key takeaways from our meetings with TCC teams are summarised below.

Urban Communities and City Planning (Carl Lucca, Corinne Frischknecht, Janine Speedy, Kirsty Graveling – 16 November 2021)

- A need to take a wider look at how UD is approached at TCC - to identify gaps, priorities, and recommendations;
- The potential ability of the Panel to be involved in informing and reviewing future City Plan iterations and other guidance documents;
- The ability for the Panel considerations / scope of review to reflect and build upon those established for the Residential Outcomes Framework;
- The need to test triggers on recent TCC projects to determine if they are too broad or too specific. This will help to inform the frequency of Panel reviews and the number of Panel members;
- The difficulty in sourcing local Panel members that have the expertise needed and not tied up through potential conflicts of interest;
- The possibility of utilising a media campaign to help raise the profile of urban design in Tauranga – to illustrate how urban design can improve outcomes on public and private projects.

Resource Consents (Amy Spurdle – Team Lead, 22 November 2021)

- The importance of the Panel as an education tool – to support, engage and educate applicants, local design professionals and Council staff (consenting officers) around quality design solutions and best practice urban design;
- The importance of a proposal going to UD Panel at the pre-application stage so as not to be perceived as interfering with the consenting process and associated statutory timeframes;

- The importance of striving for a City Plan that promotes quality outcomes through incorporation of design matters – to give the Panel and Council officers more weight in their recommendations;
- The increasing need for in-house UD support in the review space – particularly if the UD Panel will focus on the larger, more complex developments. This was particularly noted for residential developments (i.e., 4-12 dwellings per site) – which are, and will increasingly comprise, most future applications. These developments will have a significant influence on the character and amenity of Tauranga's neighbourhoods – and resources need to be invested to promote quality outcomes;
- The need for UD Panel triggers and considerations to not be too prescriptive or absolute to enable flexibility.

The above Council teams both mentioned the importance of Council-led projects being held to a high standard by the Panel to lead by example in terms of urban design, but also in other matters such as sustainability.

Spaces and Places and Transportation (Guy Protheroe, Sarah Dove, Doug Spittle, 23 November 2021)

- The ability of the 'Street Design Toolkit' to inform Panel considerations;
- The potential for the UD Panel to help review / advise on future iterations of the 'Street Design Toolkit.';
- The potential to utilise established forums to build support for the Panel (i.e., Urban Task Force, Priority 1, etc.);
- The potential opportunity to build interest in urban design through the utilisation of the 3D model being prepared for the city;
- The benefit of being able to reference the UD Panel in the tendering phase – so there is an early expectation that larger infrastructure projects will be encouraged to utilise UD Panel expertise;
- The small pool of experts that might be suitable for a Panel was referenced and the need for the panelists to be at the top of their game was emphasised.

Strategic Māori Engagement (Carlo Ellis, Manager – 13 January 2022)

- There is a need to involve mana whenua in this. Mana whenua adds character and authenticity to a proposal. They emphasise the importance of inter-generational thinking and are always looking out for future generations;
- Te Rangapū Mana Whenua o Tauranga Moana Partnership could assist with the selection of appropriate panel members;
- Tauranga Moana design principles will be an important reference and that training of the Panel in these principles should occur;
- Any information pack that is sent to panelists should include a summary of cultural considerations;
- The panel should be familiar with hapu management plans.

Feedback from local built environment professionals

To help inform the Draft Terms of Reference and understand the current climate we reached out to several local built environment professionals to seek feedback – both on the overall concept of the Panel and more specifically on the Draft Terms of Reference document. As part of this phase of our research and testing, we spoke to the following:

- Roger Dowling and Camden Cummings (7 December 2021);
- Scott Adams and Morgan Jones (13 December 2021);
- Rebecca Ryder (15 December 2021);
- Carlo Ellis, Te Pio Kawe and Antoine Coffin (24 January 2022);
- Phil Green and Jason Benton (9 February 2022);
- Gurv Singh and Lezel Botha (14 February 2022);
- Libby Gosling and Nathan York (16 February 2022);
- Phil Green, Keith Frentz and Ailsa Fischer (24 February 2022);

The key takeaways form our meetings with these professionals are summarised below under three key themes (urban design panel logistics, broader urban design considerations and marketing and communications around the urban design panel).

Urban design panel logistics

- Prior to becoming operational, the Panel should:
  - Receive training in the Tauranga Moana Design Principles; and
  - Meet with KO to understand their internal design review process.
- The panel must:
  - Have a clear purpose, vision and understanding of the resources required;
  - Have clear prompts so that applicants understand what it is that they will be challenged on – what is fundamental and what is nice to have;
  - Focus on consistency and speed;
  - Be balanced and pragmatic;
  - Get the right information to the right people prior to Panel review;
  - Have Māori design and culture capability and involve tangata whenua in a meaningful way -
    - Māori design and culture are separate areas of expertise, and both would add value to the panel. Māori design is a technical expertise – someone with skills and experience in reflecting Kaupapa Māori (this person may not necessarily be Māori) and Māori culture should be a mana whenua voice to ensure local expression of Māori values (this person must be Māori and is whakapapa).
  - Be cognisant of both community needs and market demands;
  - Consider specific issues and also the wider cumulative effect of development;
  - Remain free;
  - Have a local Chair;
- The Panel may need to be intentionally bigger at the start as there is likely to be a transition period from those with panel experience elsewhere to those that are new to an urban design panel;
- The Panel could potentially have a role post-lodgement in large / significant projects in the application of consent conditions that specifically relate to design aspects;
- The role of the Panel in the review of designated sites should be investigated.

Broader urban design considerations

- Policy change is required to give the urban design panel teeth so that it can have meaningful influence;
- Council's urban design representative must be well-known to the development community and the point person – able to be contacted early on in the process (i.e. prior to pre-application meetings) to discuss the application and potentially convene a Panel review session;
- Iwi and hapu management plans need to be more frequently utilised and referenced – ideally incorporated into mapping layers;
- Broader design guidelines should be prepared for Tauranga with different scales – i.e., local, and national examples of what the city might look and feel like in the future.

Marketing and communication around the urban design panel

- Council will need to do some initial work to get the development community on-board
- Applicants must be confident that the Panel will be beneficial and won't tie things up / slow things down;
- Council must be cognisant that an urban design panel may be a hard sell in the current climate – especially with current construction and consenting delays;
- Tauranga needs to celebrate good design stories – through awards, festivals, public lectures.