



Strategic Theme:

3 A Prosperous Town Centre

Strategic Priorities aimed at strengthening Blenheim’s local economy

Initiatives under this Theme include:

- Creating new and capitalising on existing development opportunities in key locations.
- Setting up programmes and infrastructure aimed at training and employment of the local community, with a particular focus on the younger segment of the population.
- Strengthening local employment opportunities through micro interventions.
- Setting up programmes, services and infrastructure aimed at strengthening Blenheim’s tourism opportunities, leveraging off the tourism potential already existing within the wider Marlborough District.



5.3.1 A snapshot of Blenheim's economy

Economy and employment trends

Recent employment trends in the Marlborough District show that Blenheim essentially remains a rural service centre and that agriculture continues to be a strong component of the Marlborough economy.

Marlborough has transitioned from a diversified horticulture based economy to be strongly dependent on the high value wine industry. This specialisation has created strong employment growth, but this has left the District less diversified and therefore, more vulnerable.

There has been recent strong growth in employment in business services. However, this still leaves Marlborough short of most business services. There is therefore potential for future office based service growth, albeit modest. This demand will naturally seek space in the Blenheim CBD. Much of this growth could be accommodated in existing premises and sites in the town centre.

Retailing offers limited prospects for growth without some other stimulus or economic driver. This leaves the tourism and visitor economy offering the greatest prospects for Blenheim's future economic growth. Encouragement or support for this sector in the Town Centre should be improved.

Future demand for Town Centre land and space

Realistically, there is limited demand for future light industrial land, which can easily be accommodated elsewhere. It is therefore not essential to protect all industrial land on the periphery of the town centre, such as areas in Sinclair Street, Auckland Street and Park Terrace. Some can be released for future residential, mixed-use and/ or tourist development.

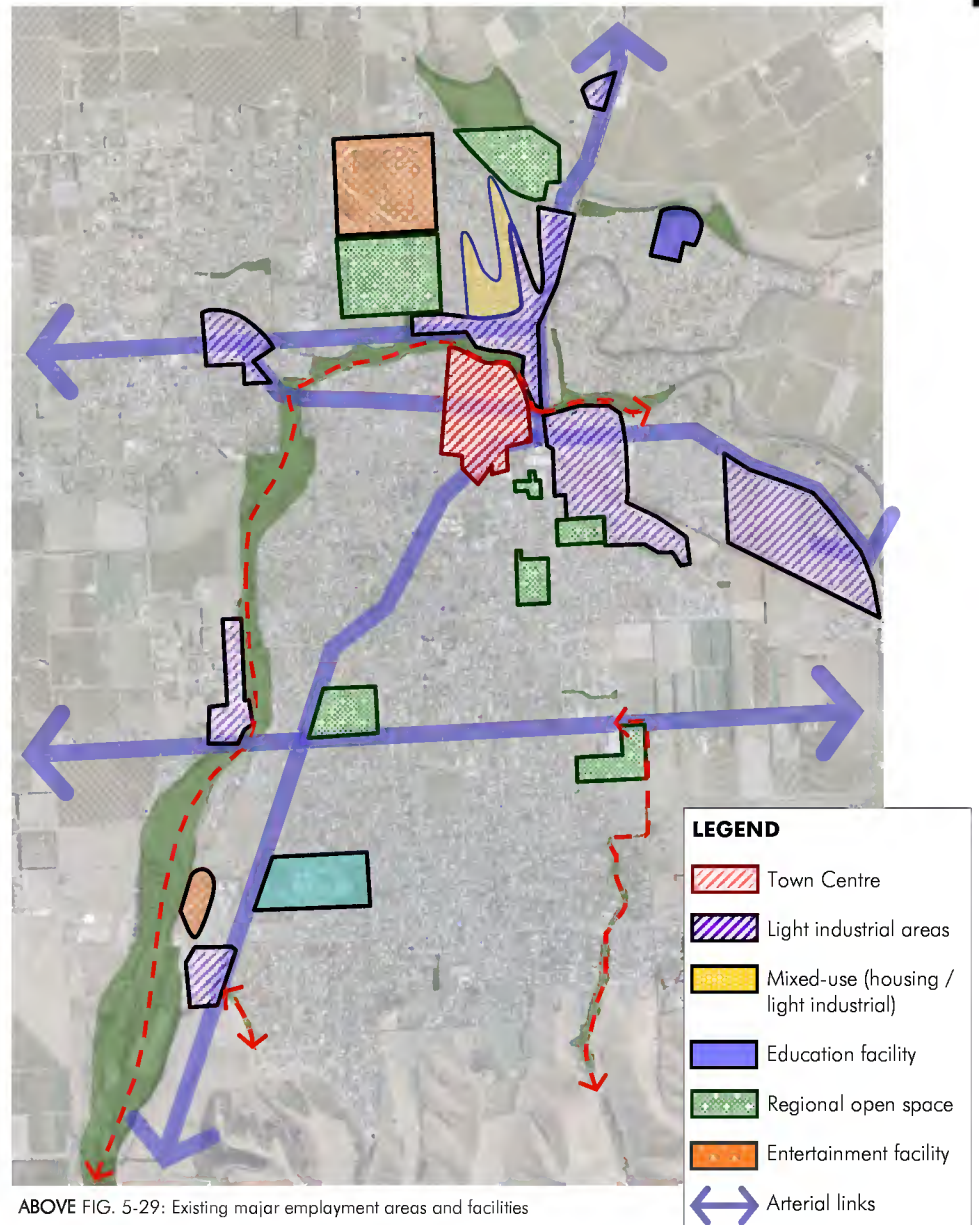
Office demand will be modest (requiring between 1.3 to 3.9ha up to 2031). Therefore, there will be insufficient demand to create new office precincts. The risk of the benefits from this growth being dissipated by being scattered throughout the town centre should be understood. To counter this, the best strategy is to indicate best infill sites and promote the preferred direction of office growth within the town centre. This offers the best prospect to benefit from future tightly clustered growth.

The way forward

A few exceptional, but affordable initiatives, in a few strategic locations, could make a world of difference to Blenheim's economic future.

Initiatives can be grouped into three categories:

- Development, business and investment attraction;
- Community, youth and economic development; and
- Visitor, resident and tourist attraction.



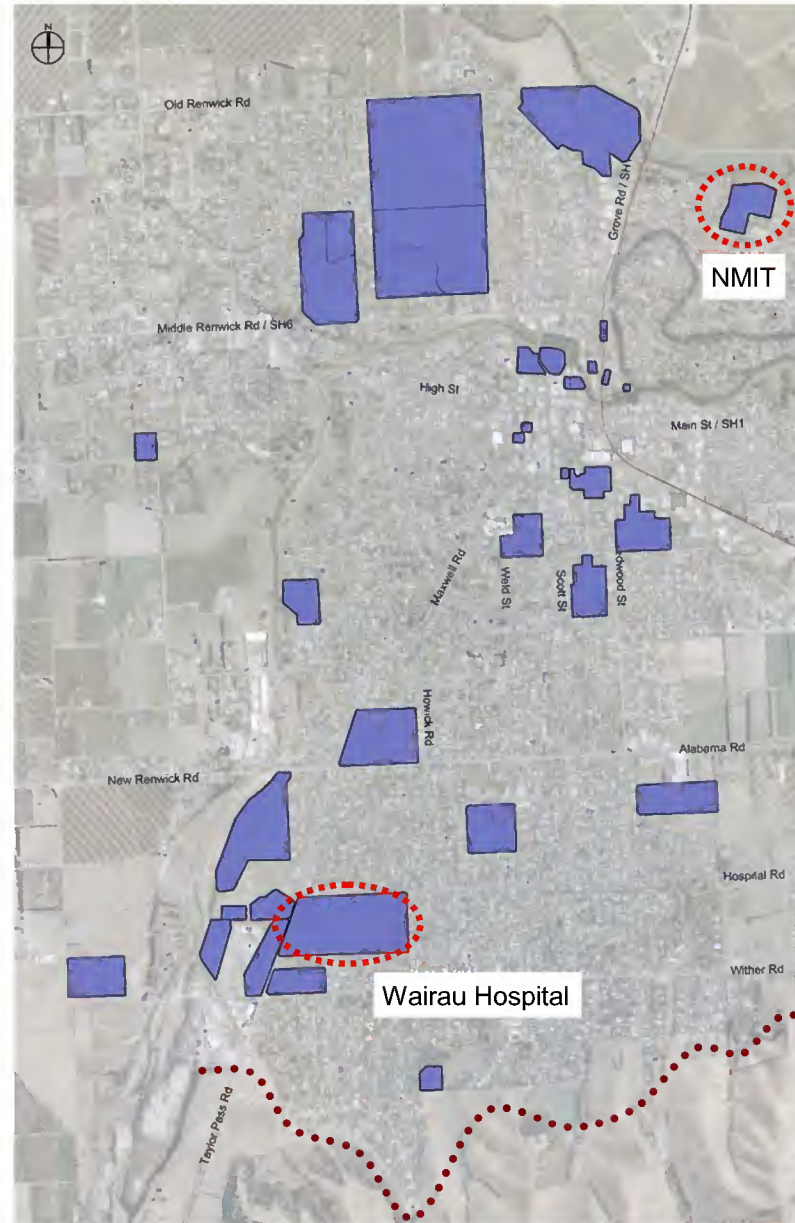
ABOVE FIG. 5-29: Existing major employment areas and facilities

5.3.2 Employment opportunities

Investing in the town centre's local employment does not need to be expensive. A few micro interventions aimed at grass roots level could generate the required spin-off to generate or improve business activity.

Employment Initiatives

- Develop a **Small Business Incubator**, to incubate and grow out local start-up and home based businesses. Include Individual small business space (easy in/easy out lease, at bottom of commercial market rentals, with own electricity meter); personable Manager with business mentor role on site; visiting small business advice (to meet identified client needs); local small business mentors (matched to incubator clients); shared reception, telephone answering and fee for service office services (Possibly set up as a community business, and/or set up to train local young people in basic office skills); and a café. Develop this as a hub for broader outreach services, as an incubator without walls initiative targeting new start-up small businesses and home based businesses seeking business skills or wishing to expand. Consider the possibility of combining with community service organisations and sharing facilities. Best use for adaptive re-use of the existing Library building (1400 sqm). Alternatively, adaptive re-use of the old Art Gallery or the addition of space into the proposal for the new Library Building.
- Develop a **Community and Small Business Support Centre** for time-share use by Marlborough small businesses, local community groups, after school tutoring, and visiting public and private advice agencies (including those supporting seasonal workers, and ethnic groups). This centre should include a good quality, small board room (with adjoining kitchen/catering); small tutorial and interview rooms; small meeting/workshop room; and small computer training room. Best located within or close to the proposed small business incubator. Best use for the adaptive re-use of the upper floor space of the existing Library building. Alternatively, incorporate into proposal for a new Library or possible adaptive re-use of the old Farmers Building.
- Run regular **Business Skills Initiatives** to develop Blenheim's reputation as a computer literate community by providing a regular series of short workshops and courses on topics such as internet use, doing business on the internet, turning crafts into businesses, selling services to government and big business. Consider involving NMIT and/or the Community College. Consider providing venues and running courses in the proposed library, alternatively in the proposed small business support centre.



LEFT FIG. 5-30: Distribution of Blenheim-wide existing key community facilities. Indicated are two major institutions: Nelson Marlborough Institute of Technology and the Wairau Hospital.

5.3.3 Community opportunities

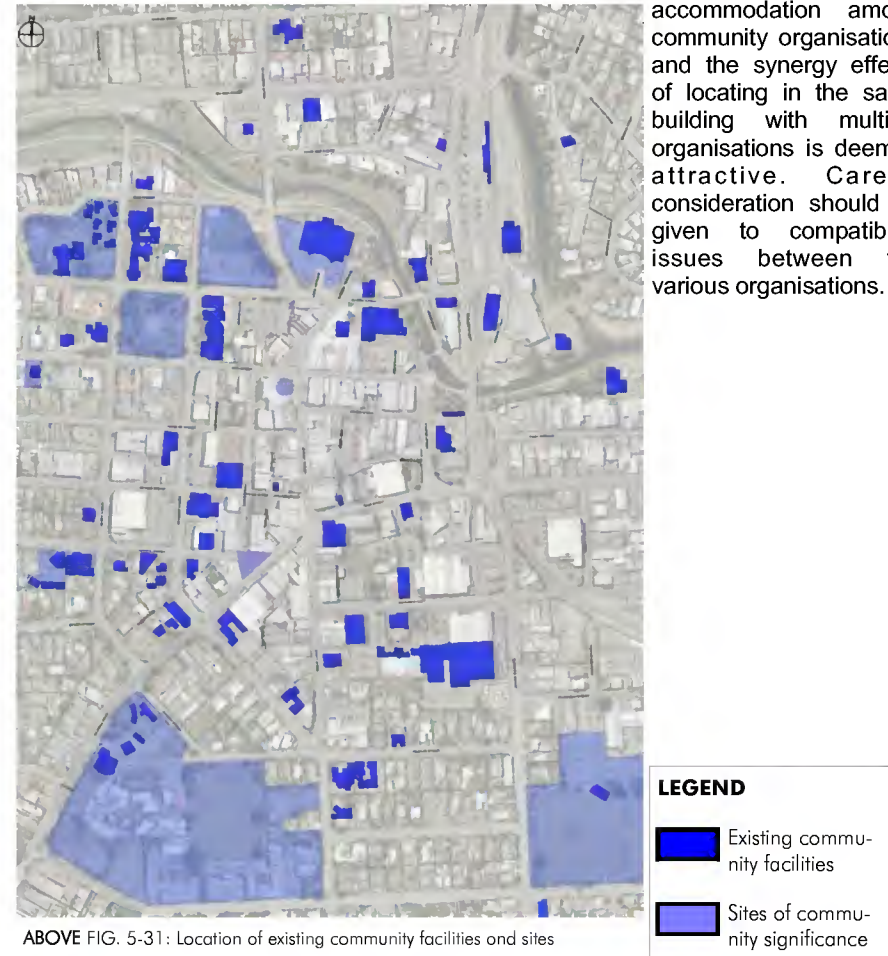
Setting up programmes and infrastructure aimed at training of local residents to further the social wellbeing of the community. A particular focus should be placed on learning and development opportunities for the younger segment of the population.

Community Initiatives:

- Develop a Multi-media and Sound Studio available to the local community, visitors and local small businesses. This initiative should be targeted to providing Marlborough's young people opportunities to gain potentially marketable skills from informal recreation pursuits. This could include: Computer game making software; Multi-media and design software; Animation lab; Film editing and post production; Band rehearsal and sound recording studio; DJ studio; Computer aided music composition; Sound mixing and CD cutting Lab; Computer controlled sound & lighting; Multi-media sight and sound production; Computer controlled laser light show production; Stage skills and equipment set-up & training (Roady skills); Outdoor performance and events equipment set-up & training. Considered the best option for re-use of the existing old Art Gallery. Alternatively create this special youth development space in the proposed new Library.
- Plan for off-route Small Group Congregation Points when intervening in the town centre. These places are for local young people and seasonal workers from different ethnic and Island backgrounds in the town centre. Locate them in highly visible, public places, where they will not interfere with retail trade and other pedestrian traffic.
- Run Professional Development and Other Courses in the CBD. Liaise with NMIT and the Hospital management to run professional development and other meetings and courses in the town centre. With the aim of activating and encouraging staff, students, external speakers and business visitors to come to the town centre meet and stay on afterwards, with their colleagues, families and friends. Consider providing a free venue (at new spaces or the Conference Centre).
- Develop a Community Arts Centre where creative people can pursue their life time interests in the creative arts, also welcoming tourists and visitors. Consider including: Both wet and dry craft rooms; Painting, glazing and enamelling room; Drying and storage rooms; Kiln, and finishing dips (wood chips, oil, water); Jewellery making equipment and benches; Fashion and dressmaking room; Sculpture and carving space; Display space (consider seeking different organisations to take over the space for regular events each month throughout the year); Best of Marlborough Craft Gallery. This could be developed as part of the proposed new Art Gallery. Alternatively, consider adaptive re-use of one of the following buildings: current library, current Art Gallery, current Farmers Building, or the Old Clubs building.
- Develop a Life Long Learning Centre where the local community and local workers can pursue their interests. This should be aimed at attracting wealthy retirees, new business founders, talented, skilled and creative people and their families to

Marlborough and the Blenheim City Centre. Also provide a computer supported homework centre for different aged children. It is best incorporated as part of the proposed new Library. Alternatively, it could be located as part of adaptive re-use of the existing Library building. Alternatively, adaptive re-use of the old Art Gallery or the old Farmers Building could be a suitable location.

- Redevelop the current library building as a Community Services Cluster. Using an existing building has the benefit of keeping rents low, as many of these organisations rely on grants. Another advantage of this preferred option is the presence of other organisations located in George Street. There is currently some demand for better accommodation among community organisations and the synergy effects of locating in the same building with multiple organisations is deemed attractive. Careful consideration should be given to compatibility issues between the various organisations.



ABOVE FIG. 5-31: Location of existing community facilities and sites

Technical background: site assessment for a new cluster of Community organisations

The current Community Centre in Alfred Street (next to WINZ) functions well. About 20 groups are currently based in it, ranging from elderly groups to health organisations. Its location is easily accessible by foot and close to other key services for people using the centre. The only reason for organisations to move out would be the poor internal environment of the building, i.e. very few windows and a lack of natural light.

Creating a new cluster of community groups and services would be aimed at other groups outside the community centre, looking to cluster for synergy effects. When establishing a new cluster of services, four considerations are important:

1. Outside funding is required for the purchase and outfit of the building.
2. The location should be within close proximity of other services.
3. Synergy with the library service is attractive for access to information, meeting space, internet and computer access.
4. Still being able to operate building on a cost recovery basis – keeping rentals affordable.

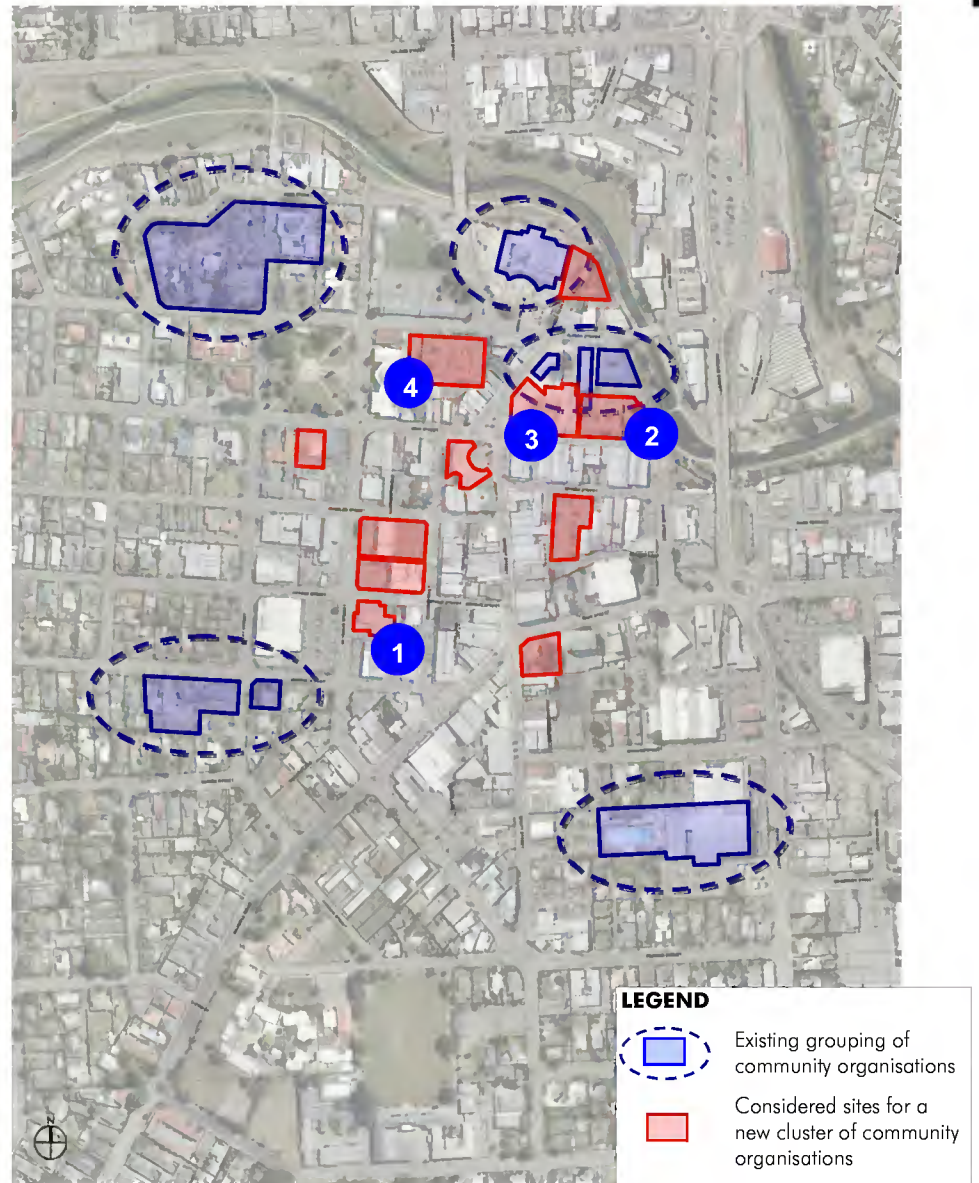
Refer to figure 5-32. All red sites and buildings are considered for possible use as a community services cluster.

Reasons for dismissing sites and buildings are one or more of the following:

- The site or building is too far removed from the pedestrian flows in the town centre;
- The site or building is considered to be in such a prime retail location, that rents will be unaffordable for most organisations; and
- The site or building is too far removed from other community services.

Rating of the top 4 sites/ buildings is based on the following:

- 1 - The current library building is the preferred location. The existing building will be re-used, which is cheaper than newly built; it is within walking distance from the major retail; it is within walking distance from an existing group of services in George Street; it is across the street from the proposed new library.
- 2 - The great advantage of this site on High Street is its proximity to the existing community centre. It could be attractive to build a purpose built building, but this will only be affordable if combined with a library.
- 3 - This option would be adaptive re-use of the current Farmers building. It is a very attractive option right in the heart of the town centre and very close to the community centre. High rental values would make this option less feasible.
- 4 - This assumes the construction of the Alfred Street carparking building with inclusion of community spaces. The accessibility for pedestrians would be better if these uses could be located on the proposed pedestrian link with Queen Street, rather than the Alfred Street side. High rental values would make this option less feasible.



ABOVE FIG. 5-32: Distribution of community organisations over the town centre and considered sites for a new cluster, including the top 4.

5.3.4 Tourism opportunities

Plenty of world class tourism attractions exist in Marlborough. Blenheim currently functions as an information and access hub for the district. This role should be strengthened through a range of initiatives. However, this Vision specifically focuses on programmes, services and infrastructure aimed at strengthening Blenheim's local attractiveness and creating new opportunities for local tourism.

Locating the i-Site in a more central location (refer to Strategic Theme 1) is part of the investment in Blenheim's tourism potential. **Further tourism Initiatives are:**

- Promote The Four Hour Coastal Drive as a reason to overnight in Blenheim. Promote any observation areas, wine and craft experiences along the way.
- Celebrate and showcase Marlborough foods in several initiatives on 'Signature Dishes'.
- Light town centre trees and Taylor River reserves with coloured backlights and flood lights to create a strong visual impression at night for pedestrians and passing traffic. Install mood lighting along the Taylor River walkways to increase their evening and night-time use.
- Run a regular program of events on the river bank. Beginning monthly and progressing to weekly Friday evening and weekend events. The aim is to attract residents and visitors to the Town Centre and inducing impulse expenditure. Consider turning a riverside building into an all weather venue for riverside events.
- Attract local residents and tourists to the town centre by the organisation of free evening laser light shows at night and weekends (especially in lower volume tourism months). Consider projecting them on to misting fountain in the Taylor River, viewed from the existing amphitheatre, river café and river bank reserves. Having an event in the evenings encourages more visitors to stay overnight in the town.
- Develop a Wine Discovery centre, combined with advice and an introduction to career paths in the wine industry. This could also be the first port of call for those in the wine industry, where different wineries and their key staff are introduced and information is provided about the different vintages and stocks of wines available. The Wine Centre is best co-located in an inner city location.
- Investigate the feasibility of the development of something like a 'Kitchen Stadium' or 'Health Lab' – a multi-purpose facility for food and wine events, cooking demonstrations, cooking courses, health product events, interactive health product making demonstrations, and local small business development in this field. Consider combination with the proposed wine discovery centre above or adaptive re-use of the existing art gallery building when a new art gallery is constructed.
- Possibly in conjunction with this, promote historic, health and native plants as a visitor attraction and for use in 'Kitchen Stadium'/ 'Health Lab' activities. Run these events from the proposed kitchen stadium (proposed for the combined i-Site/ Wine Discovery Centre or in the old Art Gallery).

- Install clusters of themed public art and sculptures for visitors, residents and tourists to play on and be photographed beside. Select up to six locations, thereby creating the reason for residents and visitors to move around the town centre on foot.



ABOVE & RIGHT FIG. 5-33: Examples of laser light shows projected onto misting fountains



ABOVE FIG. 5-34: Examples of themed public art and adventure playgrounds

Technical background: analysis visitor opportunities

Only a third of Blenheim visitors stay over-night, with the average overnight stay of business and recreational visitors being only 1.6 nights.

It is therefore clear that:

- Tapping into the day visitor and over-night tourism market will be particularly important for Blenheim's economic future and prosperity.
- Attracting the same age groups (older, over 50 year olds, and young adults aged 20 to 29 years old) is important to capture the incomes of local residents, visitors and tourists.
- It is also essential to stem the loss of local young people, and couples at the early family formation stage of their life cycle.
- It is also important to attract and retain former defence personnel, talented and creative people and new business founders who can live where ever they wish and are vital to underpin a more diversified Regional economy.

There are also opportunities for the Blenheim town centre to attract:

- Staff and students from NMIT;
- Staff and visitors to the District Hospital (subject to major redevelopment);
- Residents and visitors to local sports fields and those attending sporting and recreational events;
- The partners and the families of those attending conferences; and
- Workers and their families and friends before and after work, and at weekends.

The major difficulties faced by the Blenheim CBD in attracting these groups, is:

- The distance of many sporting and recreational opportunities from the CBD;
- The lack of any reason to visit the CBD beyond for normal shopping activities available elsewhere;
- The lack of any reason for tourists and visitors to come into the CBD, or to leave from and return to the CBD (apart from convenient, brief over night stays – especially when using the Inter-Island ferry), and
- The lack of major recreational and visitor attractions, able to keep each of these target age groups interested and actively engage in the Blenheim CBD for at least 1.5 hours each. (So that they spend more on meals, entertainment, casual shopping impulse expenditure and additional over night stays).

Many of the implementation initiatives recommended in the last section of this report are specifically aimed at addressing a combination of these needs, with minimal Council expenditure.

5.3.5 Development opportunities

It is not essential to protect all fringe CBD industrial land for the limited demand for future light industrial uses. Some can be released for future residential and tourist development. The best location for good quality, flexible, small-scale **service trades** and **showroom** space is on Sinclair Street (refer to figure 5-38).



RIGHT FIG. 5-35: Examples of small showrooms and service trade spaces

Office demand will be modest and there is the risk that benefits from this growth are being dissipated by being scattered throughout the town centre. As there will be insufficient demand to create new office precincts, the best strategy is to indicate best infill sites and promote the preferred direction of office growth within the town centre. This offers the best prospect to benefit from future tightly clustered growth. The best locations for these are in streets such as Seymour and Symons.

More valuable and prestigious sites with high exposure are located by the river (end of High Street; Russell Terrace; next to the fire station). These are suitable for corporate headquarters or a major hotel (fig. 5-38).



LEFT FIG. 5-36: Examples of small clusters of good quality affordable offices.

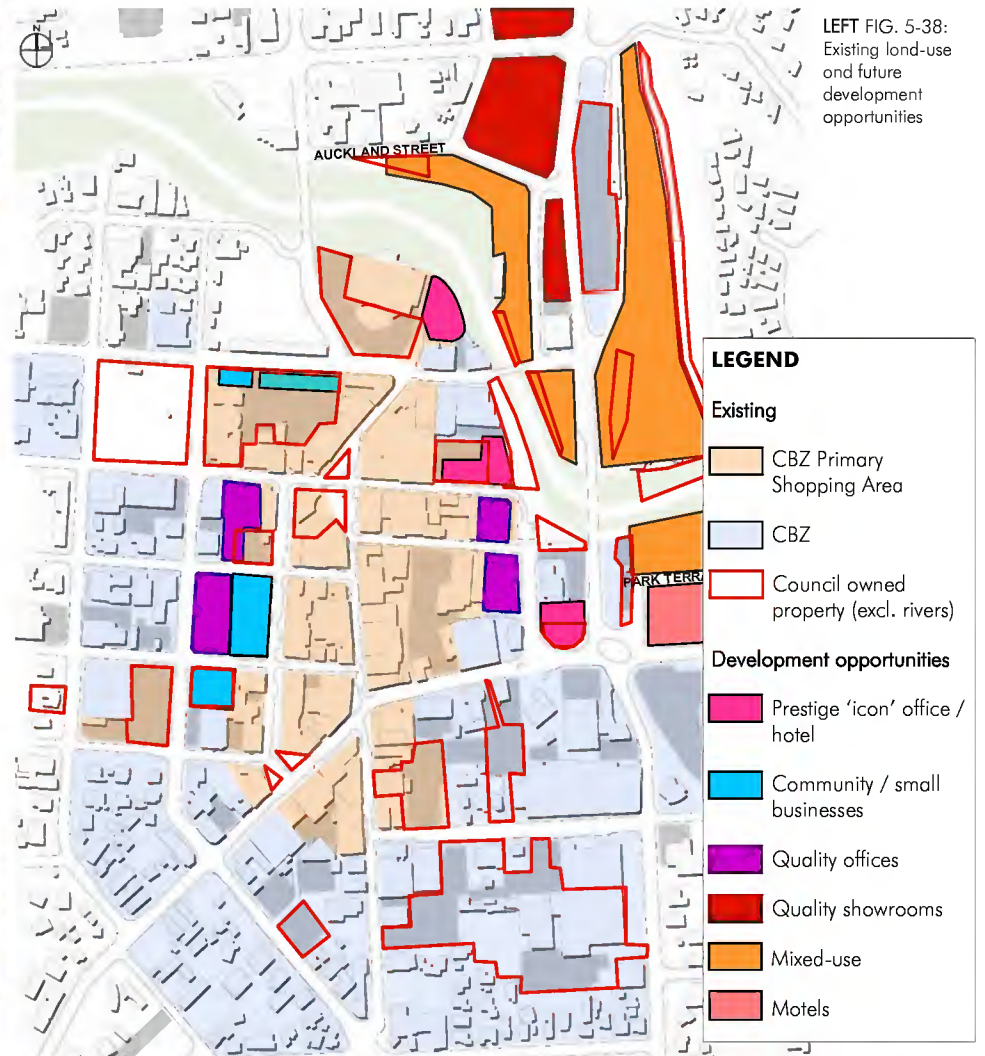
Sites with high amenity close to the retail heart could be expected to attract **mixed-use** office and residential development (Auckland Street; Park terrace, refer to Figure 5-38). Such space could accommodate live/ work and home based businesses, with residential located on the first floor above stop bank level.



RIGHT FIG. 5-37: Examples of town house style flexible residential offices

Initiatives:

- Promote a Development Vision for the future town centre, setting out the nature and desired location for different types of development.
- Prepare indicative designs for developments on strategic sites to illustrate the type of good quality, affordable developments desirable for particular strategic sites.
- Develop demonstration projects to showcase quality affordable developments.



LEFT FIG. 5-38: Existing land-use and future development opportunities

Technical Background: Development opportunities

Light Industrial Land

Potential supply and demand for light industrial land

The demand for additional light industrial land from 2008 to 2031 in Marlborough District, in the realistic existing economy scenario was found to be 36ha.

Comprising:

→ Food Industry	13.6ha	(39% of demand)
→ Light Industries	0.3 ha	(1%)
→ Printing and Publishing	2.4ha	(7%)
→ Construction and Utilities	8.9ha	(26%)
→ Wholesaling	<u>9.7ha</u>	(28%)
	34.9ha	
→ Vehicle Sales and services	1.8ha	
→ Machinery and Equipment hire	<u>0.3ha</u>	
	2.1ha	
Total	36.0ha	

The more aspirational demand for Light Industrial Land

The demand for additional light industrial land in Marlborough in the aspirational transition to match the South Island economy was found to be 80.7ha.

Comprising:

→ Food Industry	17.4ha	(23% of demand)
→ Light Industries	5.2ha	(7%)
→ Printing & Publishing	5.0ha	(7%)
→ Construction & Utilities	12.1ha	(16%)
→ Wholesaling	<u>37.5ha</u>	(49%)
	77.3ha	
→ Vehicle Sales & services	3.1ha	
→ Machinery & Equip. Hire	<u>0.3ha</u>	
	3.4ha	
Total	80.7 ha	

These figures are for the whole of the Marlborough District. Only part of this demand will need to be supplied in the vicinity of Blenheim.

On the supply side, there is an additional 36.0ha of land to be provided at Riverland Estate (connecting through to the Cloudy Bay Industrial Estate). This is sufficient to meet

the projected demand for light industrial land to 2031, under the realistic demand projection, without taking into account existing vacant industrial land there, and near the Blenheim City Centre. There is also a proposal for 25ha of additional industrial land, closer to the Blenheim CBD. This will give a total supply of light industrial land in excess of 61ha. This should be adequate to meet even the more aspirational demand envisaged up to 2031.

Office Space

Potential Demand for Different Types of Office Space

The demand for additional office space from 2008 to 2031 in the Blenheim town centre in the realistic existing economy scenario was found to be 10,700 sqm.

Comprising:

→ Prestige Corporate Space	1,500 sqm	(14% of demand)
→ Moderate Medium Rental Space	3,300 sqm	(31%)
→ Good Quality Affordable Space	5,900 sqm	(55%)

Only 500 sqm of this 10,700 sqm of office space required retail frontage, this would require about 30 linear metres of ground floor retail frontage, in or adjacent to the retail heart of the Blenheim CBD. In total the demand for town centre office space would average less than 490 sq m p.a. under this realistic existing economy scenario. This demand would require only about 1.3 ha of town centre land up to 2031.

The more aspirational demand for Office Space

The demand for additional office space under the more optimistic aspirational economy was still found to be only 31,100 sq m.

Comprising:

→ Prestige Corporate Space	3,500 sqm	(11% of demand)
→ Moderate Medium Rental Space	6,400 sqm	(21%)
→ Good Quality Affordable Space	21,200 sqm	(55%)

Only 700 sqm of this 31,100 sqm of office space required retail frontage, this would require about 42 linear metres of ground floor retail frontage, in or adjacent to the retail heart of the Blenheim CBD.

In total the demand for town centre office space would then amount to about 1,400 sqm p.a. under this more aspirational transitioning economy.

This demand would still occupy less than 4.0 ha of town centre land up to 2031.

5.3.6 Cost estimation, timeline & prioritisation

Ref#.	page	Action	Admin./ Physical	Timeline: short (<2yrs); medium (2-5 yrs); long (>5yrs)	Priority: high/ medium/ low	Comments/ assumptions
D1	35	Install i-Site signs 5km out of town centre on SH1 and SH6	physical	Medium term	High	3 signs
E1	57	Promote a Development Vision for the future town centre, setting out the nature and desired location for different types of development.	administrative	Short term	Medium	
E2	57	Prepare indicative designs for developments on strategic sites, illustrating the type of quality, affordable developments desirable for particular strategic town centre sites.	administrative	Medium term	Medium	
E3	57	Develop the first demonstration projects to showcase good quality affordable developments of different types in superior business settings.	administrative	Medium term	Medium	
F1	55	Promote The Four Hour Coastal Drive. Promote observation areas, wine and craft experiences along the way.	administrative	Short term	High	
F2	55	Celebrate and showcase Marlborough foods in several initiatives on 'Signature Dishes'.	administrative	Short term	High	
F3	55	Light town centre trees and Taylor River reserves with coloured backlights and flood lights. Install mood lighting along the Taylor River walkways.	physical	Short term	High	
F4	55	Run a regular program of events on the river bank. Beginning monthly and progressing to weekly Friday evening and weekend events.	administrative	Short term	Medium	
F5	55	Create free evening laser light shows at night and weekends (especially in lower volume tourism months). Consider projecting them on to misting fountain in the Taylor River, viewed from the existing amphitheatre, river café and river bank reserves.	physical	Short term	Medium	
F6	55	Develop a wine discovery centre, combined with advice and an introduction to career paths in the wine industry. Best co-located with the i-Site if in town centre.	physical	Short term	High	
F7	55	Undertake feasibility study into developing a 'Kitchen Stadium' or 'Health Lab'	physical	Short term	High	

*) Refers to Blenheim Town Centre Draft Implementation Strategy

Ref*.	page	Action	Admin./ Physical	Timeline: short (<2yrs); medium (2-5 yrs); long (>5yrs)	Priority: high/ medium/ low	Comments/ assumptions
F8	35	Develop a new i-Site in a new central location, preferably co-located with the wine discovery centre. Combine with DOC offices, Iwi regional offices. Integrate public toilets, mothercare facilities etc. Best location in association with the proposed Car Park structure in Alfred St.	physical	Short term	High	
F9	35	Downsize the current i-Site to become satellite office	physical	Medium term	Medium	
F10	55	Install themed public art, street furniture and signage to create a unique identity.	physical	Medium term	High	
F11	55	Install clusters of themed sculptures for visitors, residents and tourists to play on and be photographed beside. Select up to six locations.	physical	Medium term	High	
F12	55	Undertake feasibility study for a programme to promote historic, health and native plants as a visitor attraction as landscape elements and for interpretative, discovery and for use in 'Kitchen Stadium'/ 'Health Lab' (see F7) activities. Run these events from the proposed kitchen stadium. Consider 'heirloom varieties' plantings and/or a native plant discovery trail and nursery (with sales of plants, produce and products) with a junior playground and café.	administrative and possibly physical	Medium term	Medium	
F13	70	Improve access to the Taylor River and cycling and hiking trails, including providing skate board trails and interpretative signage. Connect these trails to the CBD and the i-site (consider opportunities for bike and skate hire, changing rooms, showers and safe bike, case/backpack storage to create reasons to come and go from the town centre). Connect them to the Wither Hills Reserve Tracks.	physical	Medium term	High	
H1	53	Plan for off-route Small Group Congregation Points when intervening in the town centre. These places are for local young people and seasonal workers from different ethnic and Island backgrounds in the town centre. Locate them in highly visible, public places, where they will not interfere with retail trade and other pedestrian traffic.	administrative and possibly physical	Short term	Medium	
H2	53	Run Professional Development and Other Courses in the CBD. Liaise with NMIT and the Hospital management to run professional development and other meetings and courses in the town centre. Consider providing a free venue (at new spaces or the Conference Centre).	administrative	Short term	High	

*) Refers to Blenheim Town Centre Draft Implementation Strategy

Ref*.	page	Action	Admin./ Physical	Timeline: short (<2yrs); medium (2-5 yrs); long (>5yrs)	Priority: high/ medium/ low	Comments/ assumptions
H3	52	Run regular Business Skills Initiatives on topics such as internet use, doing business on the internet, turning crafts into businesses, selling services to government and big business. Consider involving NMIT and/or the Community College.	administrative	Short term	High	
H4	53	Develop a Multi-media and Sound Studio available to the local community, visitors and local small businesses, targeting Marlborough's disadvantaged and at risk youth (providing opportunities to gain potentially marketable skills from informal recreation pursuits). Considered the best for re-use for the existing old Art Gallery. Alternatively create this special youth development space in the proposed new Library.	physical	Medium term	Medium	
H5	52	Develop a Small Business Incubator. Consider possibility of combining with community service organisations sharing facilities. Best use for adaptive re-use of the existing Library building (1,400 sq m). Alternatively, adaptive re-use of the old Art Gallery or add space into proposal for the new Library Building.	physical	Medium term	High	
H6	52	Develop a Community and Small Business Support Centre for time-share use by Marlborough small businesses, local community groups, after school tutoring, and visiting public and private advice agencies (including those supporting seasonal workers, and ethnic groups). Best located within or close to the proposed small business incubator. Best use for the adaptive re-use of the upper floor space of the existing Library building.	physical	Medium term	High	
H7	53	Develop a Community Arts Centre where creative people can pursue their life time interests in the creative arts, also welcoming tourists and visitors. Best developed as part of the proposed new Art Gallery.	administrative and possibly physical	Medium term	Medium	
H8	53	Develop a Life Long Learning Centre where the local community and local workers can pursue their interests. Also provide a computer supported homework centre for different aged children. Best incorporated as part of the proposed new Library.	administrative and possibly physical	Medium term	Medium	
H9	53	Redevelop the current library building as a Community Services Cluster.	physical	Medium term	Medium	

*) Refers to Blenheim Town Centre Draft Implementation Strategy