

Concept plans approved for proposed \$5.5m Waka Hub in Napier

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Artist image of the proposed Ahuriri Waka Hub. Photo / NCC

Fresh concept plans have been released for a proposed Waka Hub in Napier.

The Ahuriri Waka Hub project is anticipated to become a “northern gateway” for Napier next to Pandora Rd and the Napier Sailing Club.

The project was first announced in 2018 and is now making headway - with [a new site chosen last year](#) in the inner harbour and concept designs now approved.

A total of \$5.5 million has also been allocated for the project including \$2.2m from the Government’s Better Off Funding pool and \$3.3m from Napier City Council.

The proposed hub will house the 22m-long [ocean waka Te Matau-a-Māui](#) on a new 40m-long floating pontoon jetty.

The Ātea a Rangi Educational Trust would lease the hub from the council, who own the land and are a major funder.

Napier City Council unanimously agreed on Thursday to approve the concept designs and move to the next stage.

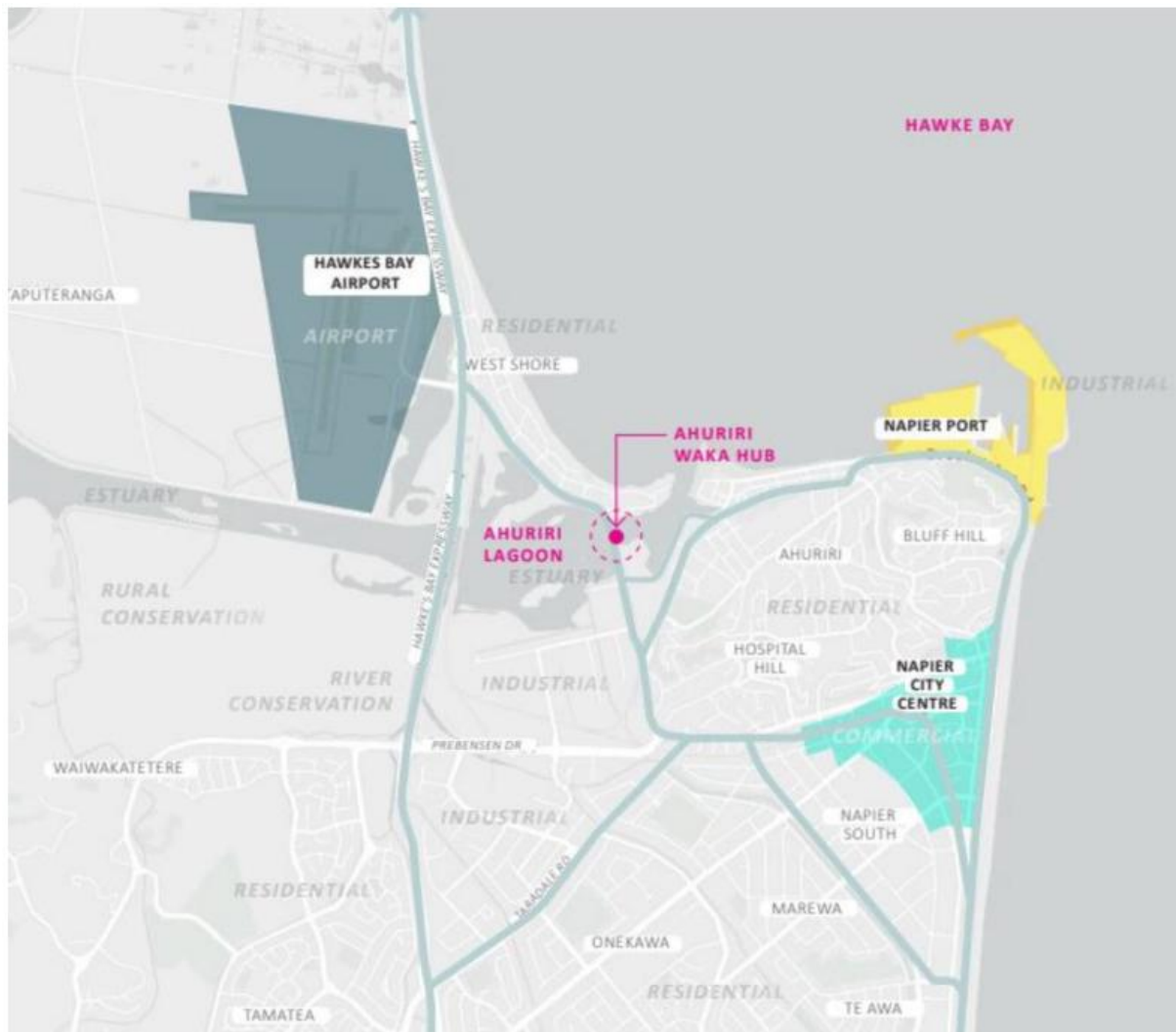
The next stage is a “developed design” with more details and refinements, which would then be followed by “an early procurement process” pending council approvals.

The project was initially proposed for another section of the harbour, Iron Pot, but that location was scrapped due to the high cost.

“[This] is a wonderful asset that is going to become a significant landmark and be visible to people coming into the city and for those in the Ahuriri area,” councillor Maxine Boag said.

Boag said it would also provide a safe and protected home for Te Matau-a-Maui and offer storytelling opportunities and acknowledgement of whakapapa (ancestors).

[The Te Matau-a-Māui waka](#) was launched in 2009.



The proposed site for the Waka Hub. Photo / NCC

Since its launch, it has sailed tens of thousands of nautical miles, the equivalent of going around the world multiple times.

It is also used for educational programmes.

Napier City Council, the sailing club and Ātea a Rangi Educational Trust have all shown support for the hub's proposed location.

Currently, the Te Matau-a-Māui waka is berthed at another location nearby in the inner harbour, at the end of a working fishing wharf.

"The site is unsuitable, with poor visitor experience, inadequate mooring, and no secure access, leading to damage and vandalism [to the waka]," a project report stated.

"There are no facilities for crew or visitors, no defined gathering space, with no dedicated space for ceremonial activities, demonstrations associated with the waka, or ceremonial activities."

A dedicated building was "essential", the report stated.

There will also be room on the pontoon for a visiting waka.



The current location of the ocean-voyaging Te Matau-a-Māui waka. Photo / NCC

Ātea a Rangi Educational Trust reported last year the waka was being damaged in bad weather while moored to a fixed wharf, and a floating pontoon was required.

The trust is also supportive of being next to the sailing club, as both groups provide sailing and navigation programmes for youth.

Council papers stated the proposed hub would become “a significant northern gateway to Ahuriri” and provide “a world-class public space that showcases celestial navigation and its cultural significance to Aotearoa”.

Gary Hamilton-Irvine is a Hawke’s Bay-based reporter who covers a range of news topics including business, councils, breaking news and cyclone recovery. He formerly worked at News Corp Australia.