

Waikato Together

A Subsidiarity Model for Regional Government

Regional Strength. Local Democracy. Shared Prosperity.



Waikato Together is a modern approach to regional governance based on the principle of subsidiarity – ensuring decisions are made as close to the community as possible.

This constitutional concept sets out a fairer, clearer and more effective way to represent our people, deliver our services and plan for our future.

OUR PURPOSE

To empower communities, strengthen local democracy and deliver better outcomes for the whole of Waikato.



ONE REGION.

Working together for the whole of Waikato.



STRONG DISTRICTS.

Local leadership that understands local needs.



SHARED PROSPERITY.

Building a better future for all our communities.



Waikato Together

Regional Strength. | Local Democracy. | Shared Prosperity.

Building a stronger Waikato through local leadership and regional unity.

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THREE LOCAL AREAS WORKING TOGETHER AS ONE WAIKATO



Strong districts. Vibrant communities.
One Waikato.



This publication presents a conceptual governance model intended to encourage discussion about the future of regional government in the Waikato. Board sizes, representation arrangements and implementation details are illustrative and would ultimately be determined through legislation and public consultation.



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REGIONAL

Works together
where scale creates
better outcomes.



LOCAL

Makes decisions
closest to the people
affected.



COMMUNITY

Shapes the future
of every place.

THE SIX PRINCIPLES



These principles should guide every decision about regional governance.

1

SUBSIDIARITY



Decisions are made at
the lowest practical level.

Regional government acts
only where acting together
delivers better outcomes.

2

LOCAL DEMOCRACY



Every Local Area elects
a Local Board, while
recognised communities
elect Community Committees
with delegated responsibilities.

3

FAIR REPRESENTATION



Regional representation
reflects population.

Local governance reflects
communities of
interest.

4

REGIONAL STRENGTH



The region works together
on strategic issues that
no single community can
solve alone.

5

STEWARDSHIP



Infrastructure, finances
and public assets are
managed responsibly for
current and future
generations.

6

ACCOUNTABILITY



Responsibilities are
clearly defined so every
decision-maker is
accountable to the
communities they serve.

“

The purpose of regional government is not to centralise decisions.
It is to *centralise only those decisions that genuinely benefit* from being made regionally.

”

● Subsidiarity ● Local Democracy ● Regional Strength ● Stewardship ● Fair Representation ● Accountability



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WHO DECIDES WHAT?

Decisions should be made at the lowest practical level.
This guide shows how we apply that principle.

LOCAL DECISIONS

Made by Community Committees

These are the day-to-day decisions that are best made close to the people and places they affect.

Examples of decisions

Local parks and reserves	Streetscape and beautification
Libraries	Community grants
Community halls and facilities	Local place planning
Swimming pools	Walking and cycling within communities
Cemeteries	Local advocacy and community engagement
Local events and festivals	

Who decides?

Community Committees are elected by residents within their communities. They have delegated responsibilities and budgets to make decisions that genuinely meet local needs.

Local Boards support and coordinate across their district area, and ensure Community Committees have what they need to succeed.



Subsidiarity in action:
the right decision at the right level.

REGIONAL DECISIONS

Made by the Regional Government

These decisions involve the **whole region**, require scale, specialist expertise or consistency of approach.

Examples of decisions

- Regional transport planning and public transport
- Major arterial roads and state highway relationships
- Strategic spatial planning and growth management
- Water strategy and integrated water management*
- Environmental regulation and monitoring
- Economic development and regional promotion
- Regional emergency management and civil defence
- Major infrastructure investment and delivery
- Regional borrowing, treasury and financial strategy
- Regional procurement and shared services

The Regional Government ensures these decisions deliver better outcomes, reduce duplication and build regional strength.



KEY TAKEAWAY

Subsidiarity means respecting local decision-making and using regional government only where it genuinely adds value.



*Subject to legislative settings and national reforms.

LOCAL DECISIONS IN PRACTICE

Residents within each community elect their own Community Committee. They make local decisions within their delegated responsibilities and budgets.

EXAMPLE: TAUPŌ LOCAL BOARD AREA

MANGAKINO
COMMUNITY
COMMITTEE



TAUPŌ
COMMUNITY
COMMITTEE



TŪRANGI
COMMUNITY
COMMITTEE



RURAL COMMUNITIES
COMMITTEE



These committees focus on the issues that matter most in their communities.

Local Boards coordinate across the district and support their success.



THE TEST IS SIMPLE: If a decision primarily affects one community, it should normally be **made locally**.
If it affects the **whole region** or **benefits significantly** from **scale**, it should be **made regionally**.



Where boundaries or responsibilities are unclear, the default is local unless there is a strong reason to decide regionally.



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OUR GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE



HOW IT WORKS



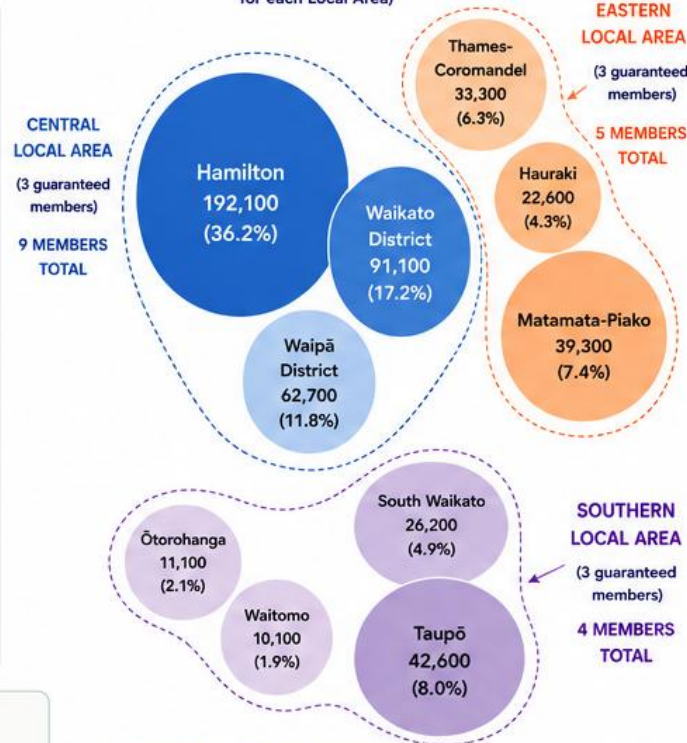
THREE LOCAL AREAS

Broad regions reflecting communities of interest.



POPULATION REPRESENTATION (BY LOCAL AREA)

Districts sized by population influence
(adjusted for 3 guaranteed members for each Local Area)



POPULATION BY DISTRICT (2024)

District	Population
Hamilton (City)	192,100
Waikato District	91,100
Waipā District	62,700
Thames-Coromandel District	33,300
Hauraki District	22,600
Matamata-Piako District	39,300
Taupō District	42,600
South Waikato District	26,200
Waitomo District	10,100
Ōtorohanga District	11,100
TOTAL WAIKATO REGION (10 Districts)	531,100

Source: Statistics New Zealand – Subnational Population Estimates (2024)

HOW THE 18 MEMBERS ARE ALLOCATED



POPULATION MATTERS

Regional representation should broadly reflect resident population.



COMMUNITIES MATTER

Every Local Area and Community Committee retains its own voice and identity.



BALANCE MATTERS

Effective democracy requires both fair representation and strong local voices.



FUTURE-PROOFING

Representation should be reviewed regularly as populations change.



MINIMUM GUARANTEE

Each Local Area is guaranteed 3 members on the Regional Council – ensuring a fair foundation for every area.



KEY TAKEAWAY

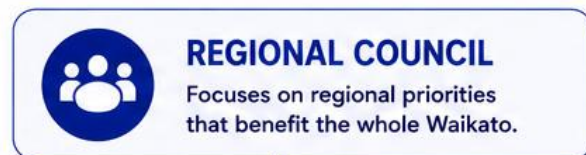
Residents elect Local Boards. Local Boards choose their representatives.
Every Local Area is guaranteed 3 members on the Regional Council.
Population determines the remaining 9 members for fair and balanced region-wide representation.



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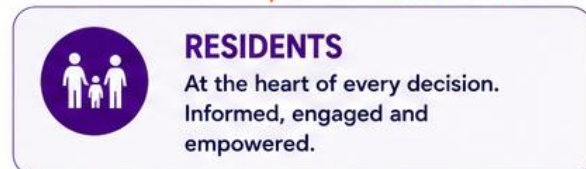
Sets regional direction, policy and funding



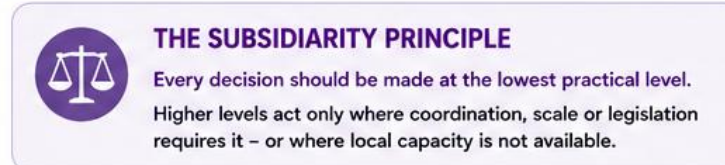
Delegates tasks, budgets and local priorities



Engages and works with residents



TYPICAL DECISIONS AT EACH LEVEL (EXAMPLES)	
REGIONAL COUNCIL	- Regional transport networks - Environmental management - Major infrastructure and investment - Economic development and strategy - Civil defence and emergency management - Regional spatial planning and coordination
LOCAL BOARDS	- Libraries, pools and recreation facilities - Parks, reserves and open spaces - Local roads and footpaths (where appropriate) - District planning and development - Community facilities and town centres - Local events and cultural initiatives - Oversight of community committees
COMMUNITY COMMITTEES	- Community grants and funding - Local halls, reserves and playgrounds - Streetscape, beautification and planting - Community events and celebrations - Local initiatives and neighbourhood projects - Identifying local issues and priorities



Where a regional decision materially affects a Local Area, the Regional Council will work in partnership with the relevant Local Board before making a final decision.

HOW DECISIONS FLOW

Authority is delegated downward.
Decisions are made at the lowest practical level.
Empowered communities. Effective region.

WORKING TOGETHER ON MATTERS OF SHARED INTEREST

Many issues cross boundaries. We work in partnership.



REGIONAL COUNCIL



LOCAL BOARD



COMMUNITY COMMITTEE

Shared planning • Shared information • Shared outcomes

EXAMPLE: REGIONAL TRANSPORT PROJECT THROUGH A LOCAL COMMUNITY



REGIONAL COUNCIL

Sets strategy, secures funding, designs and builds the project.



LOCAL BOARD

Sets local priorities, ensures community consultation, integrates with local plans, and oversees local impacts.



COMMUNITY COMMITTEE

Contributes local knowledge, looks after landscaping, pedestrian links, amenities and ongoing local needs.

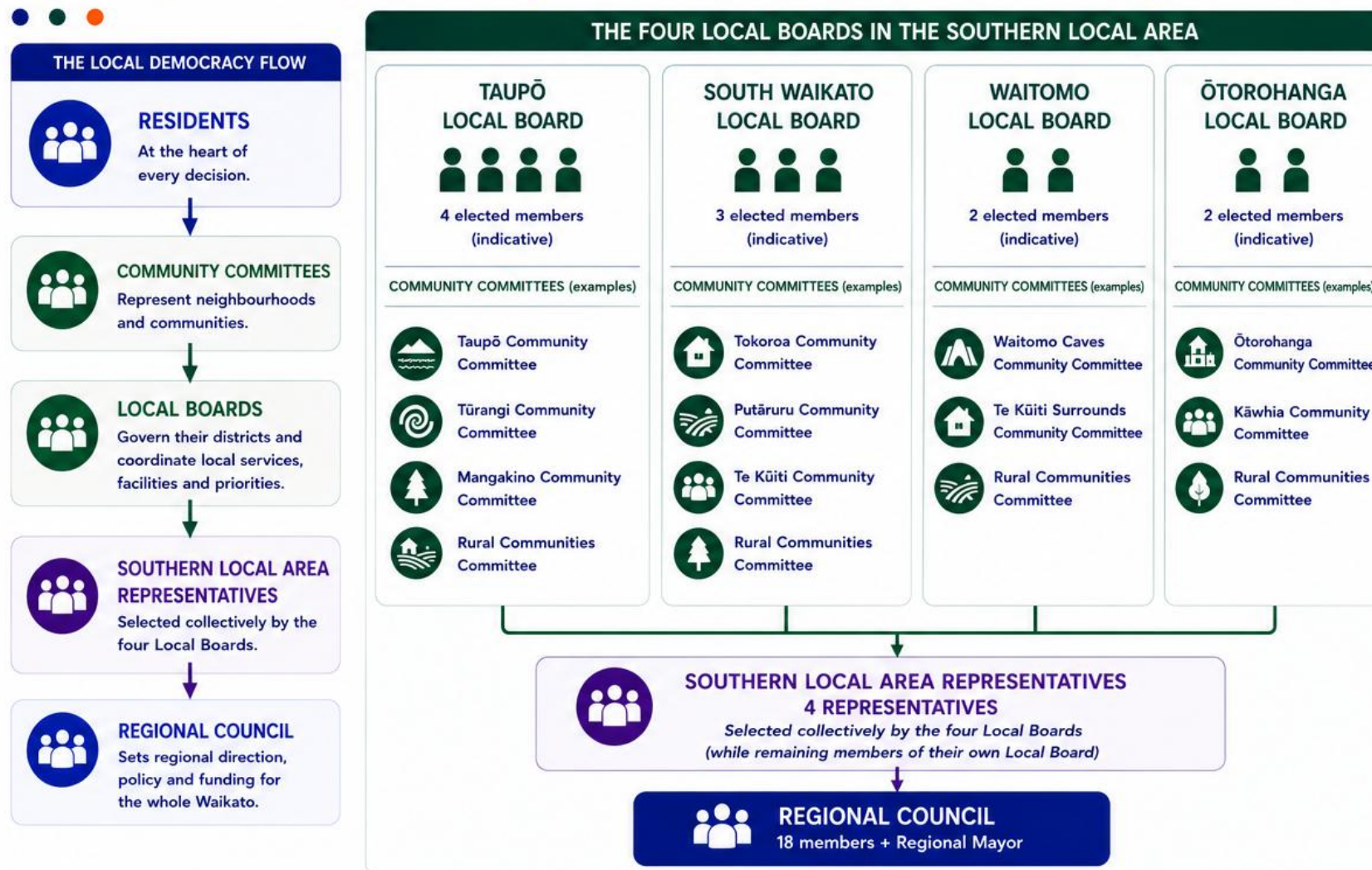


Different roles. Shared purpose.
Better decisions for our region.

- ✓ Ensures local knowledge informs regional decisions
- ✓ Strengthens trust and collaboration
- ✓ Leads to better, more sustainable outcomes



Right decision. Right level. Right outcome. ● ● ● That's how Waikato Together works.



BOARD SIZES REFLECT POPULATION, WORKLOAD AND DISTRICT COMPLEXITY



REFLECTS POPULATION

Board sizes broadly reflect the population of each district within the Southern Local Area.



EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

Boards are small enough for effective discussion, better decisions and lower costs.



RIGHT LEVEL, RIGHT ROLE

Local Boards focus on strategy, budget, oversight and selecting regional representatives.



FAIR AND BALANCED

Ensures fair representation for all districts while recognising different populations and workloads.



ABOUT REPRESENTATION

Population is the primary factor in determining the number of Local Board members.

Other factors include:

- District size and dispersion
- Community diversity
- Workload and infrastructure
- Ensuring effective governance



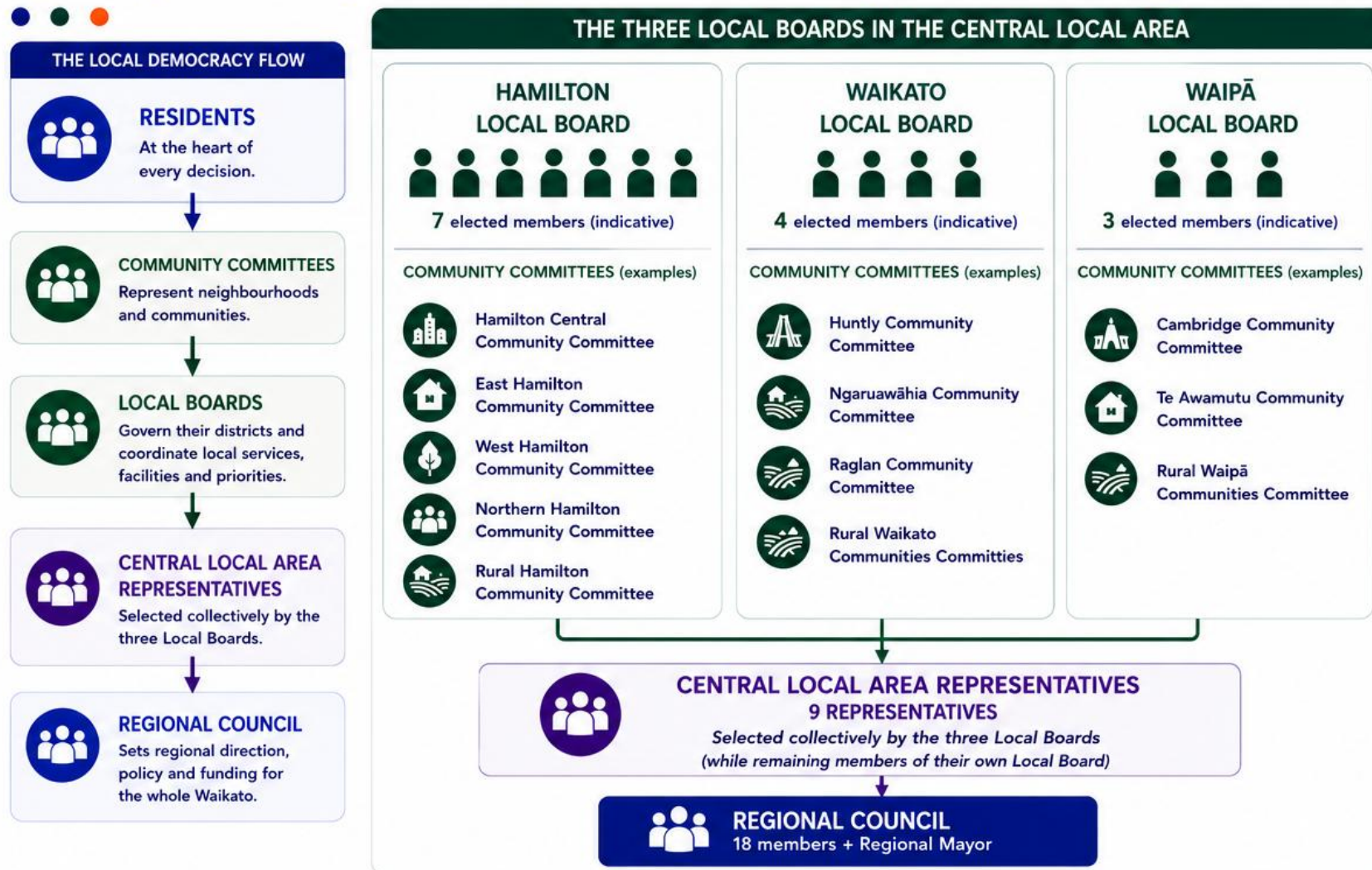
Numbers shown are indicative. Final numbers will be set in legislation following consultation.



KEY TAKEAWAY

Residents elect Local Boards. Local Boards govern their districts.
Together they choose Southern representation on the Regional Council.





WHY THESE NUMBERS?



REFLECTS POPULATION

Board sizes broadly reflect the population of each district within the Central Local Area.



EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

Boards are large enough for diverse skills and perspectives, but small enough for focused discussion and quicker decisions.



RIGHT LEVEL, RIGHT ROLE

Local Boards focus on strategy, budget, oversight and selecting regional representatives.



FAIR AND BALANCED

Ensures fair representation for all districts while recognising Hamilton's larger population and greater workload.

ABOUT REPRESENTATION

Population is the primary factor in determining the number of Local Board members.



Other factors include:

- District size and dispersion
- Community diversity
- Workload and infrastructure
- Ensuring effective governance



Numbers shown are indicative.

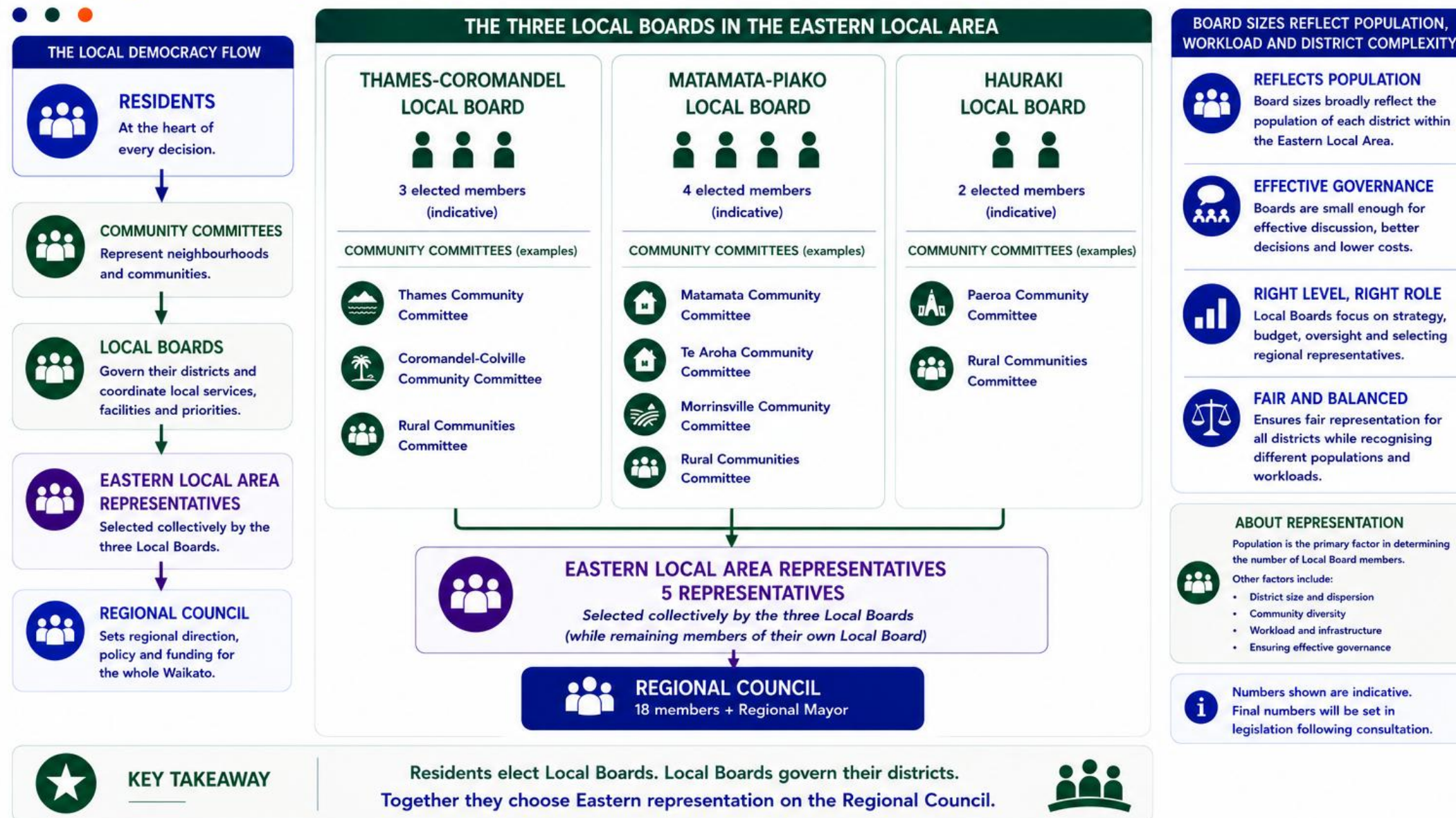
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KEY TAKEAWAY

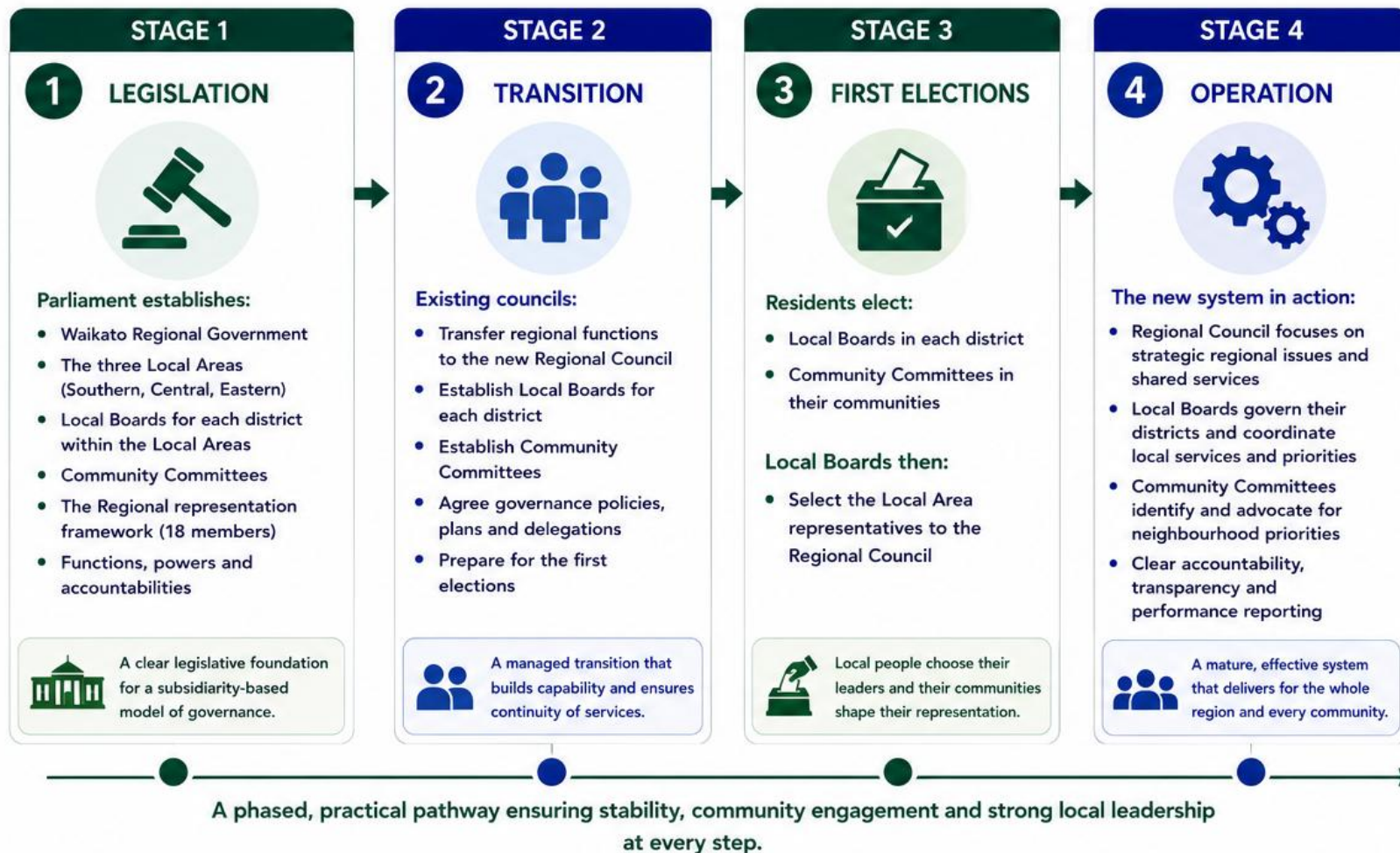
Residents elect Local Boards. Local Boards govern their districts.
Together they choose Central representation on the Regional Council.





From legislation to local leadership.

Local leadership. Local decisions. Strong communities.



THE BENEFITS



STRONGER LOCAL DEMOCRACY

Decisions made closer to home by people who understand local needs and priorities.



BETTER REGIONAL COORDINATION

Strategic planning and investment for issues that affect the whole Waikato.



LESS DUPLICATION

Clear roles and responsibilities reduce overlap, save costs and improve efficiency.



DECISIONS CLOSER TO COMMUNITIES

Community Committees give neighbourhoods a direct voice on local issues.



CLEAR ACCOUNTABILITY

Residents know who decides, who delivers and who to hold to account.



A model that empowers communities and builds a stronger, more prosperous Waikato for all.

“

Reform should strengthen communities while enabling the region to work together where it matters most.

”



THE ISSUE	TODAY – SEPARATE INSTITUTIONS Regional Council + 10 Territorial Councils	TRADITIONAL AMALGAMATION One Large Council	WAIKATO TOGETHER Balanced & Effective	WAIKATO TOGETHER DELIVERS
 GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE How decisions are made	One regional council (Waikato Regional Council) alongside ten territorial authorities working independently.	All governance and decision-making concentrated in one large organisation.	✓ One Regional Government (Regional Council) made up of Local Board representatives, with clear roles for local and regional responsibilities.	 STRONG LOCAL DEMOCRACY Communities have real influence over the decisions that affect their lives.
 LOCAL VOICE How well communities are represented and heard	Communities are represented through ten district and city councils and wards. Approaches and resources vary.	Local communities risk feeling more distant from decision-making and priorities may be lost.	✓ Strong local voice through Local Boards and Community Committees, ensuring communities shape decisions that affect them.	
 COST & EFFICIENCY How resources are used	Duplication of services, systems and processes across ten councils can lead to higher costs and inefficiencies.	May reduce duplication, but at the cost of higher bureaucracy and less local flexibility to meet diverse needs.	✓ Less duplication and smarter investment, with services tailored to local needs while delivering regional value.	 STRONGER REGION A unified regional voice and strategy to tackle shared challenges and seize opportunities.
 RESPONSIVENESS How close decisions are to communities	Decisions are often made at a distance from communities. Different councils respond at different speeds.	Decisions are further from people and less able to reflect local circumstances and local priorities.	✓ Decisions are made closer to communities by people who understand local priorities and conditions.	
 REGIONAL OUTCOMES How well the region works together	Regional council coordinates key regional functions, but some question whether it acts evenhandedly across the whole region.	Consistency may improve, but a one-size-fits-all approach may not suit the diversity of Waikato.	✓ Regional Council provides consistent leadership on shared regional challenges and opportunities, acting evenhandedly for the whole region.	 SMARTER USE OF RESOURCES Lower costs, less overlap and better outcomes for everyone.
 ACCOUNTABILITY Who is accountable and to whom	Separate elections and mandates for regional council and each territorial council can make accountability complex and unclear.	Harder for residents to know who is responsible or how to influence decisions in a very large system.	✓ Clear roles and accountability at every level. Residents know who decides what—and who to hold to account.	 FUTURE FOCUSED A flexible model that can adapt and grow with our region's needs.



Waikato Together builds on what we have, fixes what doesn't work, and delivers a better balance.
Local leadership where it matters. Regional leadership where it counts.





STRONG COMMUNITIES

Communities shape the places they know best.



BETTER DEMOCRACY

Residents know who represents them and who makes decisions.



SMARTER GOVERNMENT

Clear responsibilities reduce duplication and improve accountability.



SHARED PROSPERITY

Communities succeed together while retaining their own identity.

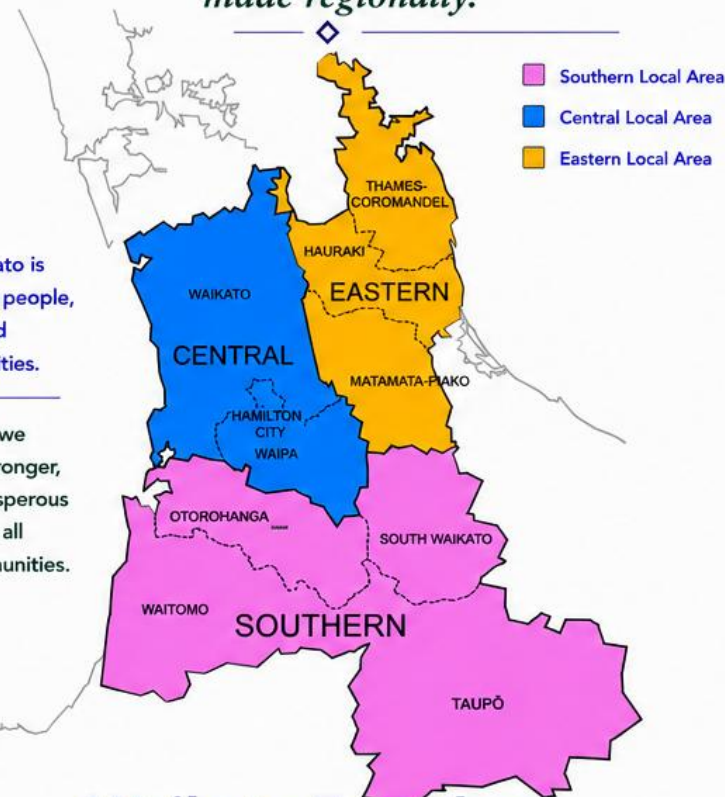


FUTURE FOCUSED

A flexible model that can adapt and grow with our region's needs.



“ The purpose of regional government is not to centralise decisions. It is to centralise only those decisions that genuinely benefit from being made regionally. ”



The Waikato is diverse in people, places and opportunities.

Together we build a stronger, more prosperous future for all our communities.



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Regional Strength. | Local Democracy. | Shared Prosperity.



REGIONAL STRENGTH

The Waikato speaks with one regional voice where it matters.



CONNECTED INFRASTRUCTURE

Smart investment in transport and services connects our people and powers our economy. Inland train/truck port development.



SUSTAINABLE TOMORROW

We protect our natural environment and manage resources responsibly for future generations.



OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL

We create the conditions for education, innovation and local enterprise to thrive.



PROUD PLACES VIBRANT COMMUNITIES

Our towns and rural communities are great places to live, work and raise a family.



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