

MEDIA RELEASE

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## New Plymouth District Council wins national placemaking award

New Plymouth District Council has won the Beca Award for Excellence in Placemaking at the 2026 LGFA Taituarā Local Government Excellence Awards for Destination Kāwaroa.

The award recognises projects and programmes that create vibrant, inclusive places and contribute to stronger local economies, cultures and community wellbeing. This includes initiatives that enhance public spaces, support local identity or improve how people experience their communities.

Destination Kāwaroa was delivered through a partnership between New Plymouth District Council, Ngāti Te Whiti, the Taranaki Foundation and New Plymouth Partners.

The project has transformed Kāwaroa Park on New Plymouth’s foreshore into an intergenerational learning and play space that celebrates the rich cultural, environmental and historical significance of the site.

Co-designed with mana whenua and shaped through extensive community involvement, Destination Kāwaroa combines play, learning, accessibility and cultural storytelling in a way that is both inclusive and uniquely Taranaki. Since opening in 2025, the space has become a thriving community hub, welcoming up to 2,000 visitors a day and creating lasting connections between people, place and culture.

The judges said the project demonstrated the value of placing people at the centre of planning and design.

“Destination Kawaroa reminds us that placemaking puts people at the centre of the planning and design,” the judges said.

“Broad community engagement has clearly been reflected in the design of this destination playground. This was one of the entries that provided us with one of the clearer demonstrations of overall success, and further, demonstrated how it kept costs down throughout the project.”



The judges also awarded a Highly Commended in this category to Horowhenua District Council for Building a Sense of Place for Former Refugee Whānau in Horowhenua.

The initiative brought together iwi, community organisations, government agencies and council to support former refugee whānau from Colombia and Venezuela as they settled in the district. Through initiatives including Muaūpoko-led house blessings, cultural celebrations, youth development programmes and civic participation activities, the project has strengthened belonging while enriching the social and cultural fabric of the Horowhenua district.

### **About the LGFA Taituarā Local Government Excellence Awards**

The LGFA Taituarā Local Government Excellence Awards showcase and celebrate outstanding programmes, projects, partnerships and initiatives from across New Zealand's local government sector. The awards recognise excellence, innovation and leadership that deliver positive outcomes for communities and create learnings that can be shared across the sector. The awards are hosted annually by Taituarā – Local Government Professionals Aotearoa.

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