

## ASHBURTON AS 6th MOST DESIRED DISTRICT FOR BUSINESS

LABOUR FORCE PLAN IDENTIFIES ASHBURTON AS 6th MOST DESIRED DISTRICT FOR BUSINESS, 12th IN QUALITY OF LIFE ASHBURTON, 30 October 2018 -

A report commissioned by the Ashburton District Council into the district's labour force has identified Ashburton as the 6th most desired district for business, and the 12th for quality of life out of 66 districts.

The New Zealand Institute of Economic Research (NZIER) Ashburton Labour Force Plan was received at the Council meeting on Tuesday 30 October.

The report's finding showed that businesses attracted to the region drive stronger employment demand than what the district labour force can supply, and recommends that improving quality of living in Ashburton, promoting the Ashburton story, and training the future workforce, will help close the gap between labour demand and supply, potentially adding at least \$16 million to the local economy.

"The Ashburton District provides a unique combination of quality of business and quality of life for residents," explained Mayor Donna Favel. "Our agricultural sector and the associated services sectors has helped build our prosperous economy, despite being distant from major population centres," she said.

While Ashburton's comparative advantage is its business strength, making Ashburton as desirable a place to live and work in, will help increase the quality of life in Ashburton, the report referenced. Continuing to build on the positive reputation for welcoming migrants will also help attract more migrants to the district, increasing the labour pool and supply.

The report included a plan to address labour shortages in the district, which Council has referred to the Chief Executive, Hamish Riach, to implement as appropriate.

"A reoccurring theme of the Ashburton Labour Force Plan is the importance of telling the Ashburton story," commented Chief Executive Hamish Riach. "From an economic development perspective, Ashburton District has plenty to offer, with very low unemployment, affordable housing, good schools, excellent amenities and lifestyle. There is an urgent and on-going need to attract people to the region," he said.

At the core of the proposed Ashburton Labour Force Plan is for the district to position itself as the most attractive rural labour market in New Zealand, in partnership with and support from three key stakeholder groups: the Ashburton District Council, Ashburton businesses, and Central Government.

While the role of the Ashburton District Council would involve place-making (or a multi-faceted approach to the planning, design and management of public spaces) and improving the vibrancy of Ashburton, the Council will also need to work with Central Government to improve on immigration policy and labour legislation to help ease the constraints that affect the localised needs. The business community can help by developing career pathways for employees, and ensuring a stronger pipeline of high-skilled workers. Flexible working conditions may also widen the pool of available workers, the report stated.

“As we plan for our future, we recognise that in order to compete with other regions in attracting and keeping a skilled labour force, we need to focus on continuing to make Ashburton a great place to live,” Mayor Donna Favel concluded.

The full Ashburton Labour Force Plan is available on the Council’s website, [ashburtondc.govt.nz](http://ashburtondc.govt.nz).