

# Shared ideas for shared pathways



**Client:** Whanganui District Council

**Location:** Whangauni

**Completion Date:** November 2015

As well as being home to the Whanganui River, Whanganui prides itself on its charming parks, reserves, and walkways. The Whanganui District Council created the Urban Shared Pathways project to encourage the community to enjoy the beauty of Whanganui by foot, bicycle, scooter and skateboard.

The urban shared pathways have been designed to provide safer routes for cycling and walking as well as improving urban links to schools, work places, the city centre, and recreational areas. These pathways will also be decorated with vibrant designs making them fun and lively places to visit.

The Council wanted to give the community a voice on the designs of both shared pathways, the City to North Mole route running along the banks of the Whanganui River and Te Tuaiwi which provides a link through the town centre. Opus' job was to create a public tool that is visually stimulating, captures all aspects of the shared pathway proposal, and ultimately encourages community engagement in the project.

Using Story Maps, a web mapping application that enables a story to be told using geo tagged images, Opus designed a virtual tour for the proposed new pathways. The public can access the virtual tour on the Council's website to see a visual impression of what the pathways will look like along with images, videos, artist's impressions and a voiceover of the pathway from lead designer Craig Pocock.

Because these shared pathways are designed for the public, involving the community in the process

**"...involving the community in the process is a great way to gain insight and feedback..."**

is a great way to gain insight and feedback and also encourages engagement with the District Council. The virtual tour allows the community to view the proposed designs for the pathways in an interactive way and then share their thoughts and ask questions via an online survey.

Opus' local office in Whanganui engaged with the research team at Opus Research to develop a novel engagement approach that made use of our staff's planning and social science expertise. Public feedback towards the proposed pathways was positive and constructive, giving the Councillors confidence in their decision making and designs. Opus' collaboration with the Council has been nominated for two local government awards for engagement, and promoted as part of Whanganui's selection as one of seven international intelligent communities in 2016.

Claire Pascoe, Senior Cycling Advisor in the NZTA's Urban Cycleways Project team, has endorsed this approach, featuring it in NZTA's latest quarterly report and their monthly e-newsletter to around 1000 cycling stakeholders across NZ.

[opus.co.nz/projects/story-maps](https://opus.co.nz/projects/story-maps)