

News Release

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\$1 billion industrial and affordable housing development to deliver major boost for North Waikato



Image: An artists' impression of the \$1 Billion development planned for Ohinewai

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The country's leading bed-maker and home of iconic Kiwi brand Sleepyhead, The Comfort Group has confirmed plans to create a unique manufacturing hub and community in Ohinewai, North Waikato creating 1500 new jobs and 1100 new homes over the next ten years.

The company announced today that it has purchased 176-hectares of land, adjoining the existing Ohinewai Village and 5km's north of Huntly, which it plans to transform into a mixed-use, planned community of up to 3,000 residents.

The project will be a major boost for the region ultimately attracting an estimated \$1 billion into the local district through investment in infrastructure, construction and development.

The Comfort Group, which includes the Sleepyhead, SleepMaker and Dunlop Foams brands, plans to relocate its two Auckland manufacturing sites over the next few years into a new 100,000m² state of the art factory it will build on the site, which will employ up to 1,000 people once complete.



Image: Craig Turner, Director of The Comfort Group

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Director of The Comfort Group, Craig Turner, said the company has wanted to invest to build a state-of-the-art manufacturing facility to combine all of its operations on one site for several years.

“We’re a family run, fourth generation business and for some time we’ve been thinking about how we can look beyond the needs of our business and help our employees, their families, and the wider community.

“The development of our new manufacturing site gives us an opportunity to do this and think about the issues of housing, transport, urban growth and regional economic development and how an “anchor” like our site could be the catalyst for a master-planned community.

“Our vision is to create a genuine community for people, in a beautiful setting who want an affordable, quality home, a stable job and a thriving community they can be part of.

“We’re also committed as the project develops to working with local education providers to provide education and skills training opportunities for residents and staff.

“As far as we know a development of this scale and type being driven by a private company is unique in New Zealand and we hope it will be an enduring legacy for many decades to come.”

The business released a concept from the draft master plan for the community development showing how the Estate would be anchored by the new 100,000m² Comfort Group manufacturing facility at the north-western corner of the site. The plan includes recreational reserves, community facilities, convenience retail, a market garden for residents’ use, and a café.

The plan will also attract other businesses and retail tenants to the development, with factory outlet stores and a service centre also part of the master-plan to create further jobs for the local community.

The project will ultimately deliver an industrial hub of 66 hectares, 33 hectares of new housing and 60 hectares of public open space.

A new rail siding will be built to transport The Comfort Group’s imported and exported products to and from ports in Auckland and Tauranga, and will also be available for use by other businesses based at the site.

Turner said the relocation of The Comfort Group’s current Auckland operations would be carefully staged to support its people to make the move, if they choose to.

Ohinewai sits just 40 minutes south of its current facility and through the process the group will provide transport for its staff.

“Creating a community is at the heart of this proposal. The development of the new manufacturing operations will be staged over a number of years to ensure amenities and homes for our people are available as we’re ready to start production in this new site,” he said.

The company has been engaging with the local council and Te Waka, the Waikato Regional Economic Development agency on the development opportunity. The company has lodged a submission to the review of the Waikato District Plan which seeks zoning.

The first stage of the project will see the construction of an 18,000 m² facility for the foam manufacturing and underlay division, of the business due for completion late 2020.

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FACT BOX

Sleepyhead Estate: Growing a community

Situated: Ohinewai, North Waikato

Land size: 176 Hectares

Number of new jobs: 1500

Investment to complete project: \$1 Billion

Industrial land: 66 hectares

New Homes: 1100

Hectares of open space: 60