

WHY DO APARTMENTS STRUGGLE WITH WASTE?

Collaborating to shift waste behaviour in apartment living

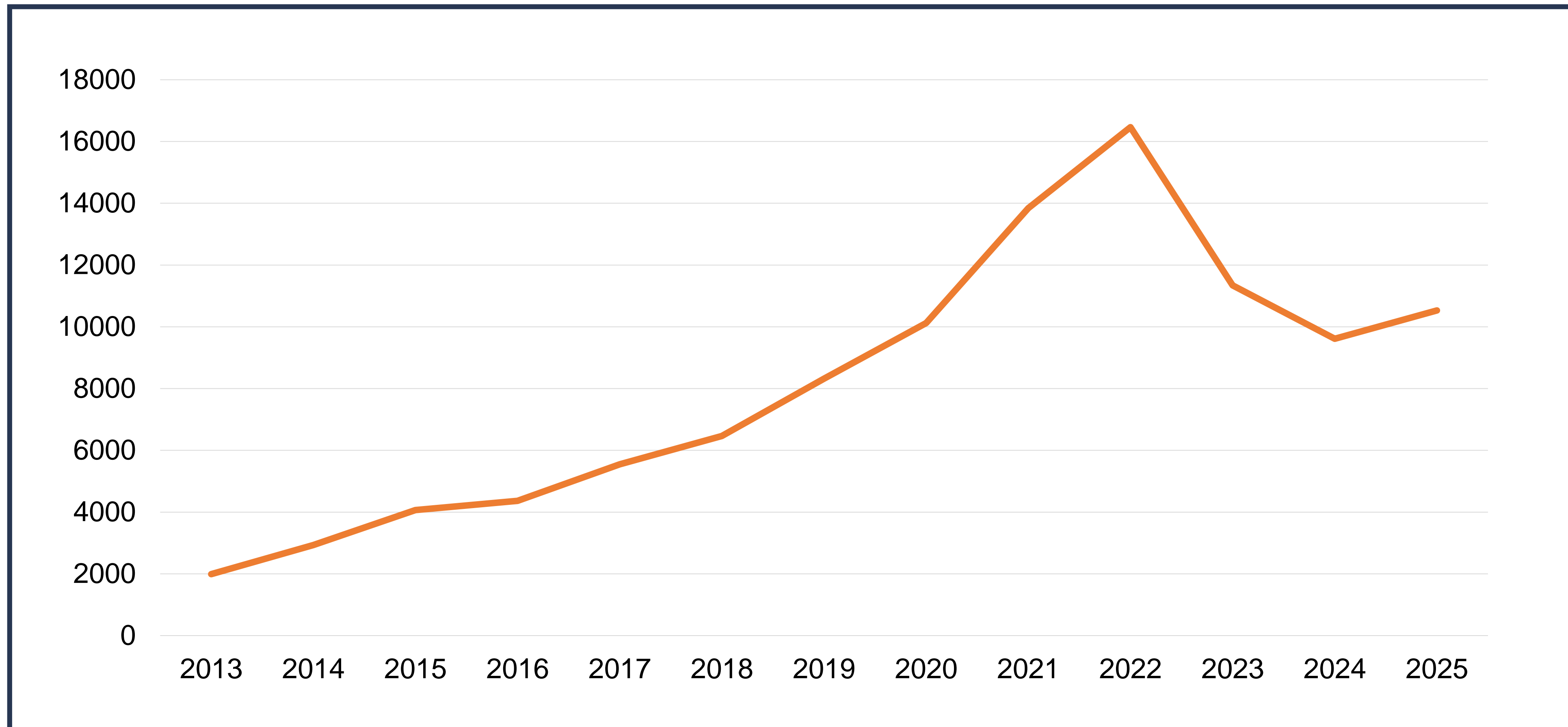
Baruk Jacob
Director – Relational Design
CounterFactual

Amber Tharakan
Programme Advisor
Auckland Council



THE CONTEXT – AUCKLAND IS CHANGING, FAST

Graph: Multi-unit dwellings (MUDs) consented over time



THE CONTEXT – PROPOSED PLAN CHANGE 120

The proposed plan change to the Auckland Unitary Plan aims to:

- Better manage development for natural hazards across the region, and
- Amend regional and district plan rules that will **enable further intensification of housing** mainly around rapid transit stops, along many major bus routes and around centres.

(November 2025)



THE PROBLEM

"All education efforts such as letter drops, flyers, installing signage, etc, at this complex were unsuccessful."

"Three letters were delivered to residents in December 2025. As far as I'm aware there is still continuous weekly bin misuse."

"There is dreadful contamination at this address, absolutely anything and everything non-recyclable is found in these bins."



THE OPPORTUNITY

Engage MUDs differently from standalone houses around waste issues.



SCOPE OF WORK

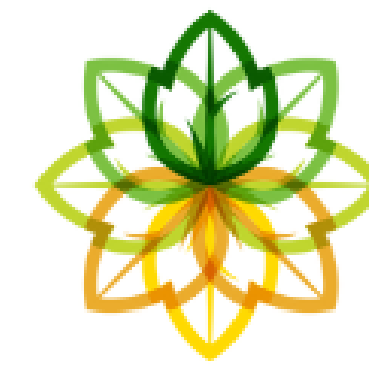
- 4 apartment buildings in north and west Auckland
- In all buildings:
 - Reduce contamination rates in shared recycling bins
- Where applicable:
 - Reduce contamination rates in shared food scraps bins
 - Address barriers to the effective use of food scraps service



A COLLABORATIVE APPROACH



COUN+ER
FAC+UAL



Kaipātiki Project
share in nature's revival



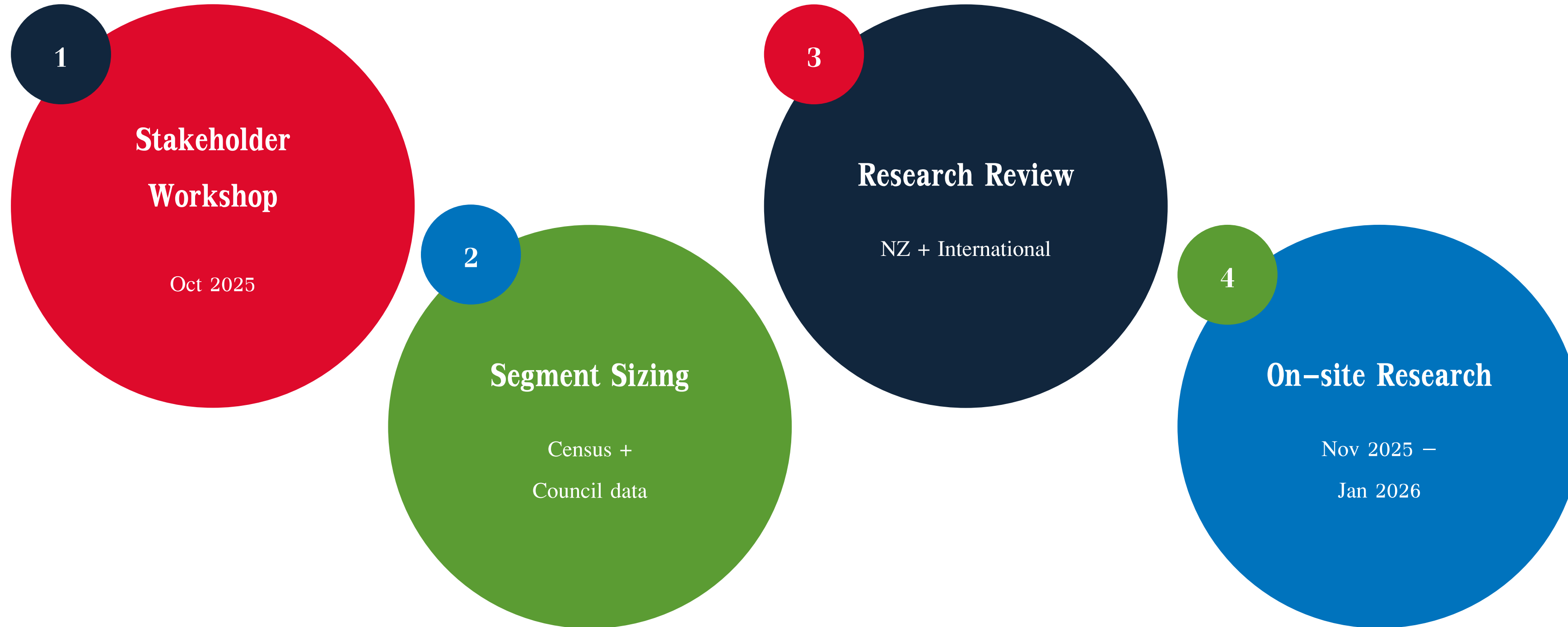
COUN+ER
FAC+UAL



Mā te mahi tahi
Driving impact through **collaboration**



THE APPROACH



MOVING IN

“Rubbish and recycling goes downstairs. You'll figure it out.”



APARTMENT LIFE

"You can't do the food scraps because... it's such a small area. How can you do that?"



THE WASTE ROOM

“I just watched what others do.”



CONTAMINATION APPEARS

“Why can't people get it right?!”



WASTE ISN'T COLLECTED

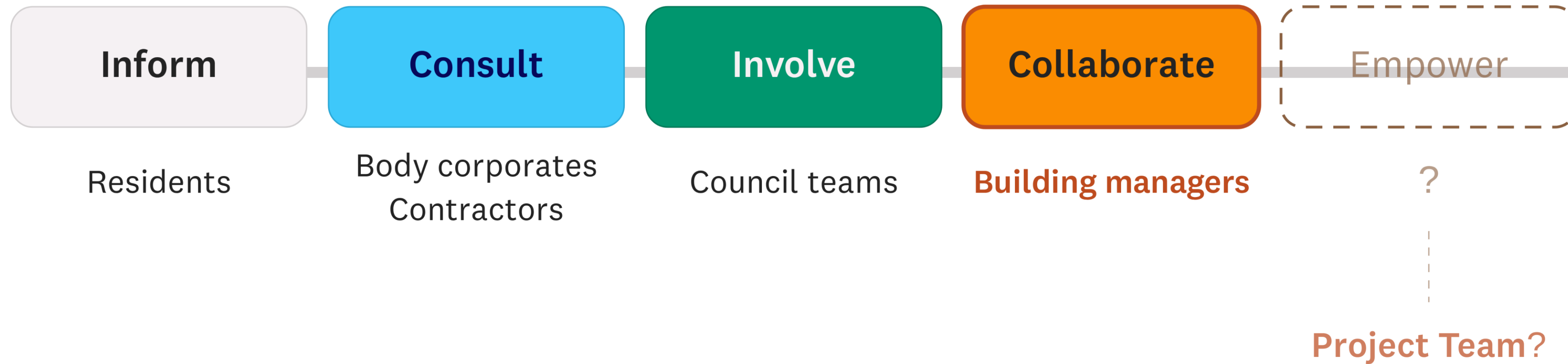
"This is sent to us so much... different photos every time. And still, they still do that."



WHAT TE AROHA CAN'T SEE



WHAT WE LEARNED ABOUT COLLABORATION



Increasing participation →

Source: IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation, 2024



WHAT'S NEXT – OPPORTUNITY SPACES

1 Provide the tools
e.g. food scraps caddies, bin liners

2 Target key moments
e.g. moving in, moving out

3 Improve waste rooms
Space, signage, monitoring

4 Regular engagement
Ongoing feedback for residents

5 Targeted feedback
Common issues, shared responsibility

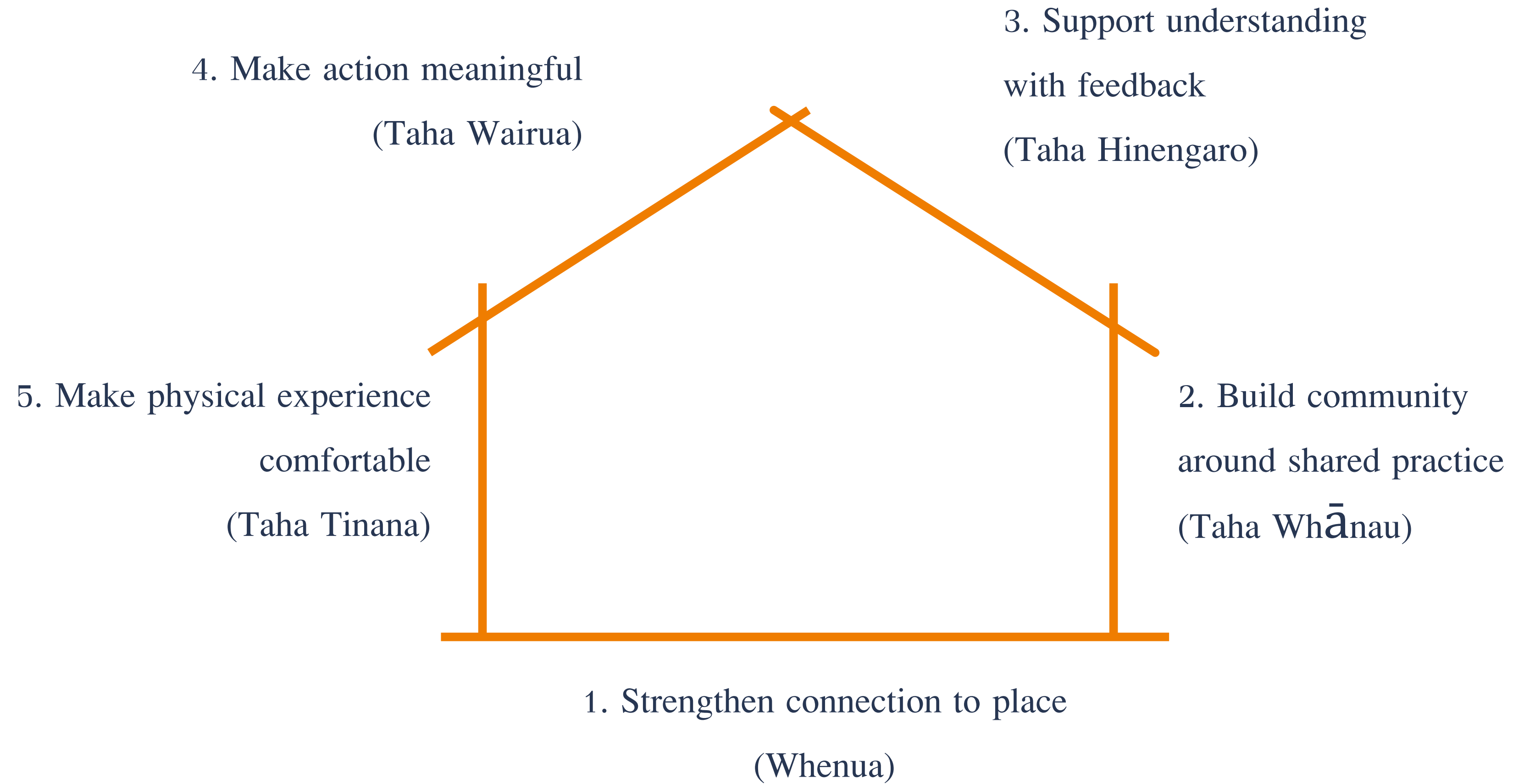
6 Resolve contamination
Empty rejected bins quickly

7 Move-in induction
Information for new residents

8 Connect meaning
Why does this matter?



WHAT'S NEXT - DESIGN PRINCIPLES



BARUK JACOB

Director – Relational Design

CounterFactual

baruk@counterfactual.co.nz

AMBER THARAKAN

Programme Advisor

Auckland Council Waste Solutions

amber.tharakan@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz



Mā te mahi tahi
Driving impact through collaboration

