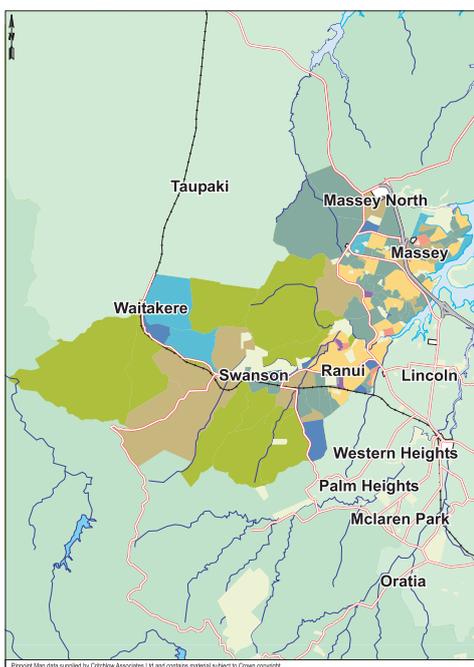


including Ranui, Waitakere and Massey



These suburbs straddle the boundary between urban streets, rolling pasture and the bushclad foothills of the Waitakere Ranges. This means that the suburban areas benefit from the close proximity of wide open and wild spaces, and those nestled in the country have easy access to urban amenities. A ride through Ranui shows wonderful splashes of colour: the beautiful Summerland Primary School or a green mural on the inside of a railway overpass. Waitakere township has all the charm of a country town. Massey North folk like to call their area Westgate, an area which is considered to be more modern, upmarket and urban than plain old Massey. More young adults are coming into “sleepytown” Swanson now, attracted by affordability, good schools, and the sense that it’s the gateway to the Waitakere Ranges and the western beaches.



For colour key, see page 230

Population Profile

Population	34,806
% Aged Under 15 Years	26.24
% Aged Over 65 Years	6.96
% European	52.91
% Maori	16.33
% Pacific Peoples	19.01
% Asian	9.95

Who Lives There?

Swanson’s community reflects the alternative lifestylers who live there – both the creative hippy types and those seeking a less-crowded alternative to the city. Some of them have moved from Titirangi in search of good value homes and more space. Ranui has a solid mix of Maori and Pacific Islanders, as well as a group of environmentally-aware people who live at the Earthsong Eco-Village. Waitakere is popular with larger families and their gaggle of farm animals and household pets, wanting a down-to-earth lifestyle for the children.

Typical Homes

Swanson has a mix of older weatherboard homes and newer brick and tile homes. Ranui has some newer brick and tile houses to complement the area's original weatherboard homes and the flush of group homes built during the 1960s.

In Waitakere, section sizes range from residential on 1012m², semi-rural on 1350m² and rural on large acreages, often sporting a relocated villa or cottage. Massey North, around the Westgate area, has the Rush Creek development built by Fletcher Homes and Universal Homes' Stonegate enclave. Royal Heights has some architecturally designed homes with views across the upper Waitemata Harbour.

Amenities

Schools ★★★

The mid to low decile area is well served by schools at all levels, especially primary schools (there are at least 10), most of which include intermediate years.

There is one secondary school – Massey High School – although teens who live in Swanson, Ranui or Waitakere township tend to travel by train or bus to Waitakere College in Henderson. Both secondary schools have enrolment zones. For a full list, see page 270.

Shops ★★★

There's retailing for every kind of lifestyle here. Swanson has its car boot, plant and produce

sales and craft market. Waitakere township has its dairy. Royal Heights' mall in Royal Rd includes the well-known Swiss butchery. The Westgate shopping centre is the retail focal point for Massey and surrounding communities.

Leisure ★★★

The Massey Leisure Centre is a fine example of the Waitakere City Council's artistic input into community facilities. Everything from the carpets to the palm mosaic, the clock, to the children's play sculpture benefited from the creative input of local artists commissioned by the council.

The Auckland Outdoor Health Club in Ranui is a private naturist (as in nudist) club set in park-like grounds – nettles removed. Golf courses include the Waitakere Golf Club, the Massey Golf Club and the Redwood Park Golf Club in Swanson. There are pony clubs in Massey and Waitakere townships. Massey also has archery and athletics clubs.

At the foot of the Waitakere Ranges is Crystal Mountain gallery which houses the country's largest selection of crystals and minerals from around the world, and has a café.

The Swanson Station Café is the top stop in Swanson for all commuters – by rail or by car. Top eateries in the Waitakere Ranges include the Waitakere Park Lodge and Devines. The highly-regarded Elevation Café and Restaurant has a deck with views over the rainforest and back to the city. There are several casual eateries in the Westgate shopping centre.



Real Estate

Trends

The biggest development here is the 160ha area behind the Westgate Shopping Centre with stage one completed and the land packages comprising stage two now on the market.

Once you're beyond suburbia, it is the subdivisability of lifestyle properties that is the key to the prices that properties command. A great deal of land within the green belt of the Waitakere Ranges is protected from subdivision. That means buyers around, say, Swanson will be paying, \$500,000 to \$600,000 for a 2ha block for its lifestyle appeal rather than for capital gain from development.

Swanson itself has small do-ups for \$285,000 (at the Ranui end), three/four bedroom family homes from \$350,000 to \$450,000 and bigger homes on 550-650m² plots for around \$500,000.

Massey's prices range from an entry level group house for \$275,000 to Royal Heights' supreme homes (with city views) for \$1million. The same money might also buy 2-4ha off Don Buck Rd, once again depending on subdivision potential. A word of warning however, although the idea of a lifestyle block may appeal, the land here is often too steep for grazing (and much of the bush is protected), so it's not the place for people who want a horse in the back garden.

Best Streets

Christian Rd, O'Neills Rd, Candia Rd in Swanson; White Heron Dr, Petrel Pl and Fernbird Pl in Royal Heights.

Smart Buy

If you have a hankering for the rural life but don't want to pay through the nose, the land around Waitakere township is for you. It's about as rural as you can get, as close to town as you'll ever want to be and you'll be among truly community-spirited people. And as Auckland spreads, land values can't help but grow.

At a Glance...

At a Glance...

House Prices

House (deduct \$50,000 for Ranui)

Bedrooms	 
Price	\$470,000+
Bedrooms	  
Price	\$500,000 - \$600,000
Bedrooms	   
Price	\$700,000 - \$900,000

2ha - 4ha lifestyle block

Price	\$1,150,000 - \$1,400,000
-------	---------------------------

Average Rents

Flat

Bedrooms	 
Price	\$370/wk

House

Bedrooms	  
Price	\$450/wk
Bedrooms	   
Price	\$520/wk

Travel Times

From Westgate:

CBD	peak 40 min off peak 25 min
-----	--------------------------------

Airport	45 min
---------	--------

North Shore via Upper Harbour Dr 20 min

Waitakere township is the last stop on the train line from the CBD. Buses run from Massey, Ranui and Swanson to the CBD.