



Analysis of Public Feedback 2009

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SUMMARY OF THE PUBLIC FEEDBACK RECEIVED ON THE CONSULTATION OF SUSTAINABLE FUTURES 30/50

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In 2008, Whangarei District Council (WDC) initiated a Sub-regional Growth Strategy to provide a planning framework for long term growth and development. This Sub-regional Growth Strategy will be the “umbrella” document, which integrates planning approaches, priorities and initiatives and will decide how the district needs to address its future growth.

The Council held a series of consultations from January to March 2009 to present the Sub-regional Growth Strategy to community groups, resident and ratepayer associations, tangata whenua and the public. Media advertisements and press releases about the consultations were placed in the local newspapers. Brochures, posters and a feedback form were also posted on the Sustainable Futures 30/50 website and were also available at public libraries and at Council’s Customer Service Centres.

2.0 METHODOLOGY – ANALYSIS OF FEEDBACK

This submission report has been prepared in two parts as follows:

1. A statistical analysis of the responses to the questions on the questionnaire headed *Sustainable Futures 30/50 Have Your Say Feedback Form*.
2. A record of the main comments made in each submission, together with a general indication of the matters that attracted the most attention and debate.

Statistical Analysis

The statistical analysis has been carried out on the following basis.

- Each response has been regarded as a single response. In any tally of the support given to the Futures listed, all submissions have been accorded the same weight regardless of whether they are from a local authority, a large organisation or a single individual.
- Where a submitter did not complete a questionnaire but nonetheless indicated a clear preference for a particular option or options, the preference has been incorporated into the analysis. However, only the responses which clearly record a preference have been included in the statistical analysis.

Recording of Comments Made

All submissions have been read and the main issues raised have been recorded in a database.

3.0 COMMUNITY RESPONSES

Interested individuals, groups and organisations were encouraged to submit their views on the Growth Strategy. A total of 40 submissions were received. Five questions were asked on the feedback forms. The following sections analyse each question and the detailed breakdown of submissions are shown in Appendix 1.

3.1 What is your vision for the Whangarei District for the next 50 years?

Respondents were asked to indicate what their visions were for the district for the next 50 years. Common features in the submissions include:

- An environmentally conscious, sustainable future that recognises the district's natural character and unique landscape values;
- Controlled development of a vibrant economy and society that works with the environment and not against it;
- The district is an attractive place to live, work and visit;
- Encourage tourism development in the district by cleaning up the harbour, waterways and protecting the district's natural environments and significant landscapes;
- A healthy and safe society with good education and recreation facilities;
- The coastal villages should be contained within strong urban boundaries with no ribbon development allowed;
- A sensible growth pattern that only proceeds when there is enough infrastructure to support it;
- A GE-free district with truly sustainable farming and business practices; and,
- A socially integrated and welcoming, economically productive, safe and intelligent community.

3.2 What are the main issues facing the district and that you would like addressed by the Growth Strategy?

Common issues raised in these 40 written submissions were condensed into these key issue areas:

- Environment and Natural Hazards
- Land Use and Economy
- Community Facilities and Infrastructure
- Transport and Roading
- Governance

Under each key issue are examples of some of the comments received to give a perspective of what was written.

Environment and Natural Hazards

"Protection for the native bush, no developers chopping down trees."

"Inappropriate development on sensitive ecological areas."

"Valuable food productive land to be maintained."

"Protection of iconic landscapes, like the Ngunguru sandspit."

"The main issues over 50 years will be planning for climate change and how to mitigate the negative effects and taking advantage of the positive ones."

"Environmental sustainability of the Whangarei Harbour."

Overall, the majority of submissions discussed environmental matters in some way. The environment was covered by a broad range of key topic areas including loss of high class soils, water quality, loss of natural character, protection of significant landscapes, the district's GE-free status, and natural hazards such as flooding, sea level rise and climate change. One of the strongest messages to emerge from the submissions was the desire to protect the Whangarei Harbour. This has been mentioned by 13 submitters out of the total 40 submissions received. The community considers the Whangarei Harbour to be one of the most important assets of the district. It is about how to have a harbour that everyone in Whangarei can be proud of, and can benefit future generations. Submissions from environmental organisations included requests for maintaining the district's GE-free status, with a strong focus on sustainable primary production.

Land Use and Economy

"Stop development of headlands and areas of high scenic value."

"The loss of its rural feel and houses are being built everywhere."

"Cap on the growth allowed in coastal villages."

"The Whangarei CBD is a mess and needs wise long term development taking advantage of the river, the town basin and the valley between two mountains."

"The proposed twin city option will not eventuate due to a lack of population drivers at Marsden Point/Ruakaka."

"Our historic land uses cannot be held up as a model for future land uses. We need to think differently."

"Industry must be encouraged to come and industrial land must be expanded outside the city boundaries whilst not encroaching on good agricultural land."

Submitters believed the "business as usual" approach should be abandoned; instead, a well-planned, sustainable, controlled and consolidated development is the way to go. Many submissions commented on the impacts of existing sporadic development, especially along the coast. This was one

of the biggest issues in the district. Some considered the need to restrict growth in coastal villages and urban expansion onto versatile farmland.

In terms of developments in the urban area, one submission referred to the need for a major beautifying overhaul around the CBD. There were also concerns about the current zoning regime around building density and the District Plan's restrictions on building height.

Community Facilities and Infrastructure

"Putting footpaths so school children and others can use the village safely."

"Infrastructure development. Clean up the harbour."

"Infrastructure must keep pace with development."

"Basic infrastructure, parking, electricity, communications such as broadband."

"Wastewater and stormwater disposal must exclude the use of waterways and coastal land."

"Effluent should really be the top priority – way above rugby stadium etc."

"The need to provide community work for the many disaffected, bored youth."

Most comments about community facilities referred to the need for facilities such as footpaths, walking and cycling facilities, schools, hospitals and recreational facilities as being important to well-being. Four out of ten submissions received from Parua Bay residents have requested footpaths to be extended so that people can use the village safely. A sense of community, as referred by some submitters, was also an important factor contributing to community building.

In terms of infrastructure, many submitters identified that infrastructure must keep pace with the growing population and development. The Council should therefore ensure existing and new infrastructure is planned in advance, well built and has an environmental focus. The submitters believed the management of wastewater and stormwater should be on the priority list ahead of other Council projects. Also local authorities should work to create more job opportunities for the community.

Transport and Rooding

"Public transport from Whangarei Heads to Parua Bay village."

"Rail link to Marsden Point should have been designated 35 years ago."

"A four lane road/city bypass must be provided for."

"Removing the huge parking areas in the inner city."

"Road/rail networks need to be thought out with changing land availability in mind."

Submissions identified the importance of integrated transport planning and land use planning. Other areas for comment related to improving the status of alternative transport modes, such as walking and cycling facilities. A large number of submissions wanted to see a greater focus on public transport. One suggestion was to shift car parks away from the inner city.

Some submissions detailed areas that Council should look into, such as the need to establish the rail link to Marsden Point, the need to have a car only ferry from Reotahi to Marsden Point, connect Ody Road to Pataua South Road, construct a harbour crossing at Pohe Island, and restricted truck access on coastal tourist roads.

Governance

"Continuing and constant communication with residents for full and frank discussions on all district matters."

"Increased interaction between WDC and NRC."

"Water management is the concern of the NRC. However, WDC could work along side the NRC to keep development away from sensitive areas around water catchments and water courses."

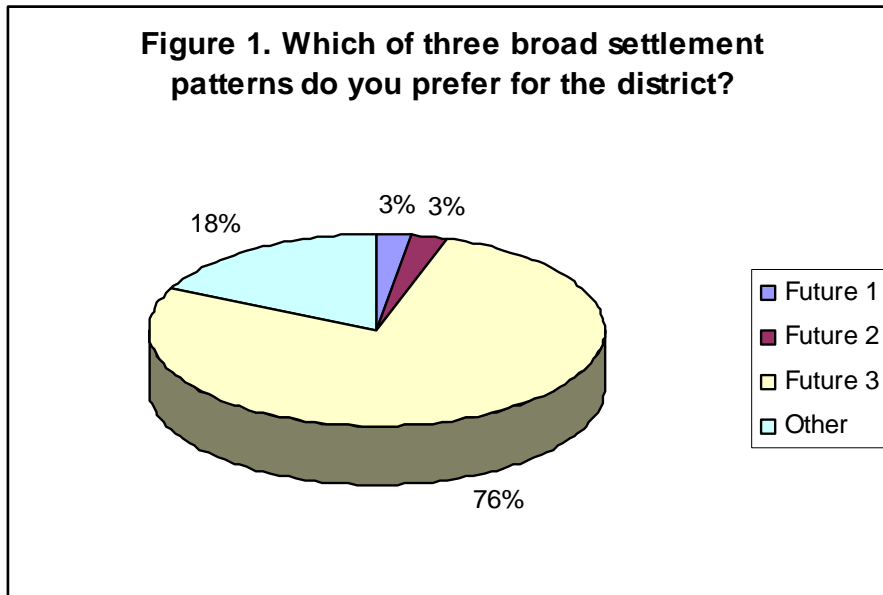
"Public consultation at all levels with the rights to make submission."

Respondents highlighted the necessity to have an open and transparent democratic dialogue between local authorities and the community. Moreover, concern was expressed that the WDC and NRC should engage in more collaborative partnerships on this initiative.

3.3 Which of the three (3) broad settlement patterns do you prefer for the district?

The three options discussed are: Future One, lightly regulated, market led development, or business as usual; Future Two, twin city/urban and coastal spread; Future Three, satellite town/rural and coastal villages.

Of the 40 respondents, 76% preferred Future Three, 3% preferred Future One, 3% preferred Future Two, and 18% have either made no preference or chose a combination of the three options.



Submitters preferred Future Three, as it appears to give more protection to coastal areas and has less environmental impact than other options. Whangarei City remains the commercial hub of Northland, providing government and local services for the region. Submitters felt that Future Three promotes a clustered and controlled development pattern. It requires less infrastructure than the other two. It offers greater protection to coastal areas and protects productive soils from inappropriate development.

One submitter who supported Future Two, felt that the development of Marsden Point/Ruakaka would solve future transport and sewerage problems. Other submitters felt that development of this area as a satellite town should be re-evaluated due to climate change.

One submitter who chose Future One as their preference, believes the market would always determine the growth pattern. However, some felt that Future One was not viable because costs and budget constraints will prevent the necessary supporting infrastructure. A submitter who has not indicated their preference, noted that none of the three settlement patterns would address the major destabilising external threats of peak oil and climate change.

Transpower has not clearly indicated what their preferred option is; however, if Maungatapere was identified as a potential future growth node for rural urban development as Future Two suggest, they believed this could result in encroachment of sensitive activities and consequential adverse effects on the existing infrastructure. Northpower has stated that they have capacity to support Futures Two and Three.

3.4 Is there another option you would prefer?

Other options were varied but many identified the need to protect the natural environment and the harbour. There were references to climate change and global warming as being seen as major issues in the future and that development should be planned accordingly. There were also references to infrastructure planning and that this should be planned within the proactive, orderly and efficient way as suggested in Future Three prior to population expansion.

One submitter who picked Future One as their first option, has also chosen Future Two as an alternative option. However, they believed Future Three was unlikely to happen “barring revolution or divine intervention”. One submitter recommended having a hybrid of Futures Two and Three.

3.5 Do you have any other comments or feedback on this initiative?

Further comments were made by submitters and they were summarised into the following areas:

- Environment and Natural Hazards
- Land Use and Economy
- Community Facilities and Infrastructure
- Transport and Roading
- Governance
- Culture
- Other

Environment and Natural Hazards

- Global warming has an effect on flooding.
- The CBD should be relocated to somewhere else due to climate change and flooding issues; alternative measures will have to be looked into if the CBD cannot be relocated.
- Prepare for extreme weather due to climate change.
- Growth and development projections must not be allowed to proceed at the expense of the environment which once destroyed has a high risk of being irreversible.
- Keep the district clean and green.
- Provide eco-friendly public and private buildings; and, require solar panels in design.

Land Use and Economy

- Industrial subdivision at Ruakaka should be tightened up.
- Identify and allow for commercial development to meet the future growth.
- GM land use prohibited in the Whangarei District Plan.
- Provide employment on the north side of the harbour.

Community Facilities and Infrastructure

- Infrastructure must be developed prior to population expansion. This should be developed within the proactive, orderly and efficient category as suggested in Future Three.
- A refuse transfer station is needed at Parua Bay.

Transport and Rooding

- Change the speed limit through Parua Bay village to 50km per hour.
- Open a third bridge from Parua Bay to Whangarei City.
- Provide better public transport and alternative transport modes.

Governance

- Increased co-operation between NRC and WDC.
- Increased integrated planning activities between Whangarei District Council and network utility providers.

Culture

- Cultural development should be managed carefully. Care to be taken to consult with Maori about land use and respect for the waterways.
- The history of places is very important. This is how people can know the special significant areas of Maori and protect them along with looking after the environment.

Other

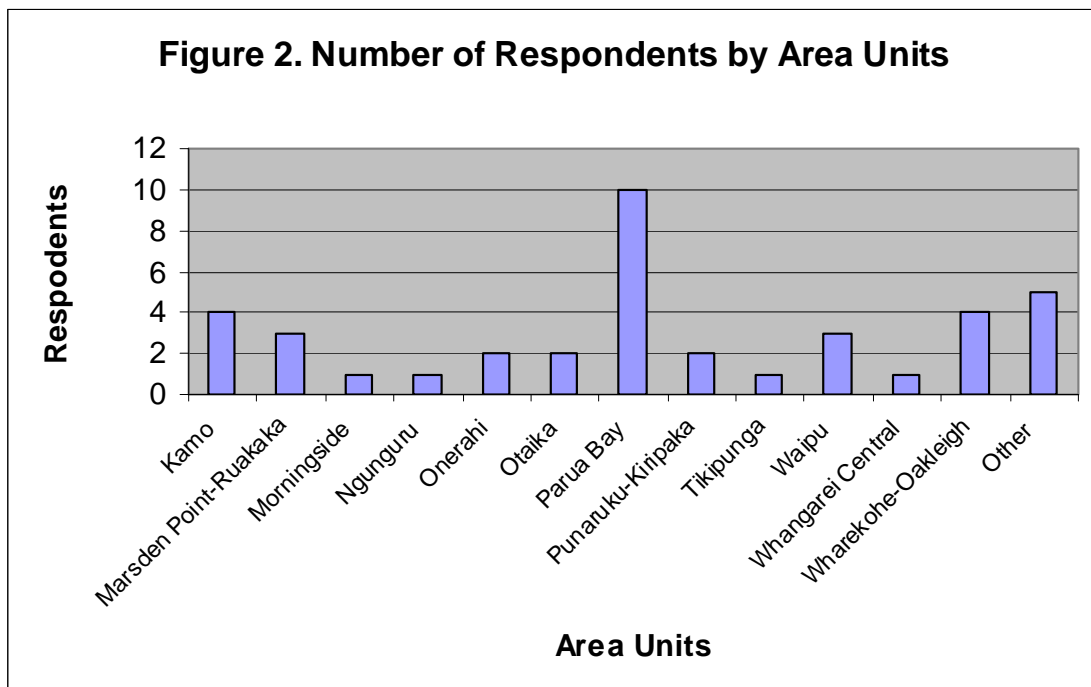
- The potential growth of Marsden Point/Ruakaka is the main factor which differentiates these three future proposals. Future Two will not develop and the district requires more planning than Future One.

Overall, positive feedback was received on the growth strategy, in trying to plan for the future. The initiative has been described as a “well presented, balanced and logical approach” and the Futures Planning Team should “keep up the good work, trying to get the best deals for the district”. However, concern was expressed in the way that the council ran the publicity campaign on this initiative. One submitter commented that this should be a community-driven plan. More notices and publicity should be provided to the public as to the need for their input on this. Another submitter said this initiative needed to be used throughout Northland. However, one submitter considered this consultation to be a public relations exercise rather than a genuine attempt to engage the community and another submitter believed the market will always determine the growth pattern and hence no long term regional strategy has ever been implemented.

4.0 OTHER FEATURES OF THE FEEDBACK

The following are some of the features of the feedback:

- More submissions have come from Parua Bay than from any other single area unit, representing 26% of the total number of submissions received.
- Three submissions referred to maintaining the district's GE-free status, and all of them were from Maungakaramea.
- A number of submissions have been received from community groups and ratepayer and residents associations, namely Waipu Ratepayers and Residents Association, Whangaruru Coastal Community Group, Whangarei Heads Citizens Association, Bream Bay Action Group Inc, Maungakaramea Recreation Society Inc, Maungakaramea Landcare Group and GE Free Northland. They are preferred Future Three as the settlement pattern for the district.



5.0 CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall, there was a positive response to the Sustainable Futures 30/50 Whangarei District Growth Strategy. A number of key findings have emerged from the analysis of the feedback.

The strongest of these are:

- The community preferred Future Three, which received 76% support.
- Protecting the Whangarei Harbour was the most important single issue. This was mentioned by a third of all submissions.
- The second most important issue was to ensure that existing and new infrastructure (sewerage, stormwater, roading) is planned in advance so it can cope with current and future developments.

- Finding ways of preserving the high class soils from non-agricultural land uses were also important.
- Planning for neighbourhood parks and schools, accessibly by foot, is one way of promoting stronger, more tightly-knit communities.
- Global warming and climate change have to be taken into account in future land use planning; and, the Whangarei's CBD may need to be relocated to somewhere else due to potential natural hazards.

The feedback from the consultation places greatest emphasis upon resolving the issues that matter most to people (e.g. protecting the natural character of the district, improving soft and hard infrastructure, extending footpaths in coastal villages, creating job opportunities and encouraging economic development). The "business as usual" approach does not work and the council should focus on a more strategic planning approach with a strong focus on environmental protection and sustainable development.

6.0 APPENDIX 1 - SUMMARY OF STATEMENTS FROM PUBLIC FEEDBACK

City Centre Development

- Long term the CBD must move south along the state highway.
- If CBD cannot be shifted other measures will have to be looked into.

Community Facilities and Amenities

- Opportunities for everyone to have good health care, education and leisure.
- Green space and recreational areas for the children of the district.

Concentrate Development/Stop Urban Sprawl

- Massive urban sprawl will result in the loss of the natural character of the area.

Leadership/Partnership

- This approach needs to be used throughout Northland.
- WDC could work along side the NRC to keep development away from sensitive areas around water catchments and water courses.
- It is the role of government to protect the interests of the community against antisocial behaviour.

Environmental Quality/Sustainability

- Maintenance of a healthy environment, i.e. the harbour.
- Keep NZ clean and beautiful.
- Growth and development projections must not be allowed to proceed at the expense of the environment which once wrecked has a high risk of being irreversible.
- No development will be economic if it is not strongly grounded in sustainable environmental policy.
- More regard to development effects on environment.

Economy/Job Opportunities

- Provide employment on the north side of the harbour.

Future Land Uses/Developments

- Development must occur within boundaries to preserve scenic values.
- Strip development should not be allowed in coastal areas.
- Needs room for small industries.
- Identify and allow for commercial development to meet the future growth.
- Tighten up on industrial subdivision at Ruakaka.
- Maybe provide a small industrial estate in Onerahi.

- GMO land use prohibited.
- More intensive residential subdivision in existing urban areas.
- Urban/industrial development located out of Bream Bay. Maybe opposite Portland on SH 1 between Mangapai turnoff and Maungakamea turnoff.
- It would be more sensible to locate a new urban/industrial area opposite SH1 from Portland on that poor agricultural land there.

Natural Hazards

- The risk of coastal inundation due to major sea level rise threatening Ruakaka.
- Prepare for extreme weather due to climate change.
- Global warming has an effect on flooding.
- Proposed development of Ruakaka/Marsden Point as a satellite town needs to be re-evaluated due to climate change.

Infrastructure

- Open the third bridge.
- Re-site the rubbish transfer station well away from Parua Bay village area.
- Infrastructure must keep pace with development.
- A refuse transfer station is needed at Parua Bay.
- Infrastructure must be developed prior to population expansion.
- Infrastructure should be developed within the proactive, orderly and efficient category as suggested in Future 3.

Integrated Plan and Decision Making

- Continuing and constant communication with residents for full and frank discussions on all district matters.
- Increased cooperation between NRC and WDC.
- Northpower recommends increased integrated planning activities between Northpower and WDC.

Limited Population Growth/Development Growth

- Growth is not always desirable.
- Cap on the growth allowed in coastal villages.

Cultural/Maori

- Care to be taken to consult with Maori about land use and respect for the waterways.
- Keep NZ for kiwis.
- The history of places is very important. This is how we can know the special significant areas of Maori and protect them along with looking after the environment.

Natural Environment/Environmental Character

- Stop development of headlands and areas of high scenic value. The loss of its rural feel and houses are being built everywhere.
- Loss of natural character.
- Protection of iconic landscapes.
- Protect native bush.

Peak Oil /Energy/Climate Change

- A rapid rise in fuel costs in real terms inhibiting freedom of personal mobility.
- None of the three plans address the major destabilising external threats of peak oil and climate change.
- We have to consider climate change and sea level rise.

Protect Agricultural Land

- Stop all new non-agricultural land use and make agricultural use more sustainable.
- We still need plenty of room for farming.
- Protecting valuable horticultural/agricultural soils.
- Protection of first class soils for farming.
- Already waste too much land for non-productive 'lifestyle' subdivision that should be retained in agriculture and food production.
- We need to protect our best soils. Once rural land is subdivided for residential uses is highly unlikely that it will ever be available for food production again.

Rail

- Railway system could be developed in place of a bus system.

Retain Character of the Community

- Maintenance of the "small village" atmospheres.

Transport/Cycling/Parking

- Public transport from Whangarei Heads to Paua Bay village. Putting footpaths so school children and others can use the village safely.
- Change the speed limit through Parua Bay village to 50k.
- Footpaths in coastal villages provided.
- Build a bypass in Onerahi.
- Need better public transport.
- Provide good public transport.

Growth Strategy Process

- Keep up the good work trying to get the best deals you can for our city.
- More notices and publicity should be provided to the public as to the need for their input on this. This should be a community-drive plan. Notices need to be posted around CBD and suburbs of this need.
- The Advocate welcomes the chance to give the WDC space to remind the public to provide their thoughts and ideas.
- We consider this survey to be a public relations exercise rather than a genuine attempt to engage the communities.
- A well presented, balanced and logical approach 30/50 futures well done.

Growth Strategy Options

- Specialising in complementary respective services and the coastal settlement option are not mutually exclusive.
- A large satellite town/city near Marsden Point area would increase industry and give further opportunity for pollution of our harbour.
- Growth Strategy must recognise and provide for an adequate level of protection for the National Grid from 3rd party subdivision activities/development by guiding growth away from the lines and providing buffer corridors on any relevant plans and maps so the expectation of land use change in close proximity to the lines is not created.
- Whangarei City must remain the commercial hub of Northland, housing the largest population and providing government and local services for the region.
- Future Two requires a large number of population and Future One is not viable because of cost and budget constraints will prevent the necessary supporting infrastructure.

Water Quality/Harbour Protection

- Stop the inflow of stormwater into the sewerage system.
- Clean up the harbour.
- Keeping harbour clean.
- New development will put pressure on the safeguarding of pollution in the harbour.
- Healthy rivers and streams.
- Polluted water has the potential to create sickness not just in organisms but also sickness of entire natural systems.
- Maintain water quality and to ensure flows are maintained to ensure that aquatic and estuary systems remain healthy.

Urban Design

- Require solar panels on public and private new buildings.
- Should have eco-friendly public and private buildings, solar panels in design.

Others

- Extension of the “village community” model proposed for the suburban areas of Greater Whangarei to the entire district.
- The market will always determine the growth pattern. No long term regional strategy has ever been implemented.
- Phase out the taggers that deface property by channelling the energies in a different direction.
- Our present crisis – financial and environmental is the result of the unregulated greed of the market, commercial (and recently) the banking sections.
- Keep a strong hold on developers.
- Control over land sales to non-resident overseas owners should be brought under strict control.
- Need to have a stronger emphasis beyond mere engineering solutions and look towards fostering ownership for options within the community.