

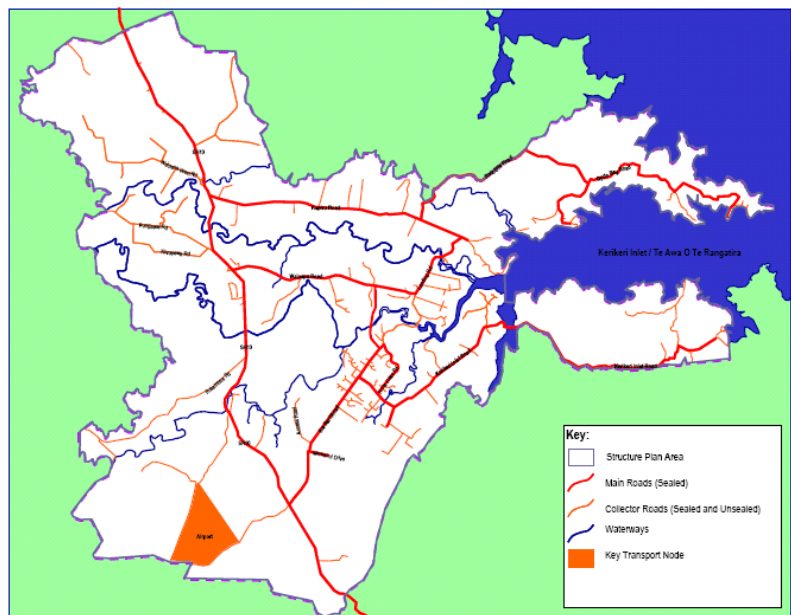


Community Relationships Category: Draft Kerikeri-Waipapa Structure Plan Consultation Process

*Nau mai haere mai piki mai
Whakatau mai kia koutou nga tangata katoa
Whakatau mai ki te roopu whiriwhiri ahuatanga mo tenei
rohe ki Kerikeri – Waipapa*

1. Introduction

The Far North District Council is responsible for an area of 7324 square kilometers of land, with many dispersed small urban settlements. With its unique coastline, the mild climate and physical beauty, some parts of the district are experiencing rapid growth. None more so than the Kerikeri – Waipapa study area. This is a large area of approximately 10 000ha on the east coast of the district, and encompasses an extensive rural catchment area surrounding a handful of smaller coastal settlements, along with the larger towns of Kerikeri and Waipapa.



The Structure Plan process was implemented to guide the future development of the study area (as shown above), with the focus in the first stage being on starting at the right place – with the community telling the Council what it wants in terms of development of the area over the next 20 or 30 years. This entry presents this first stage of the project (the visioning and draft stage) to demonstrate the successful outcome achieved.

2. The need for and expected benefits of the project and how it furthers the Council’s vision and strategic direction

The Structure Plan has been developed to provide an integrated and sustainable response to a number of needs and/or development pressures in the area, including:

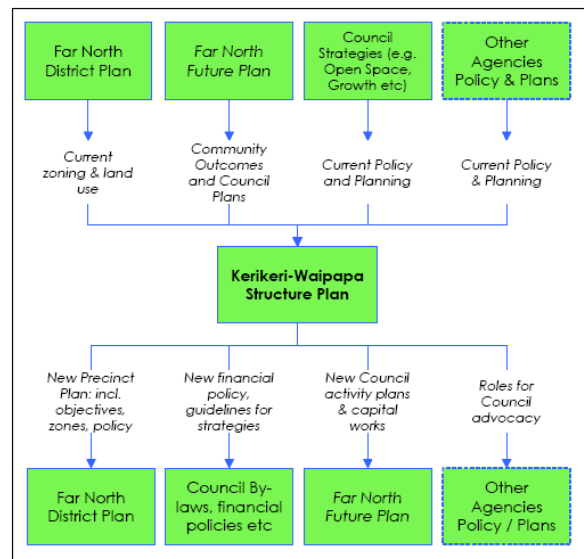
1. There is high population growth in the area. Over the next 20 years the population, and number of households in Kerikeri – Waipapa, is expected to double to approximately 15000 people in 2021. In addition, the ageing of the population will result in changing needs and aspirations.
2. There is unfulfilled demand for increased land for commercial, industrial and retail development.



3. The 'Infrastructure' is at capacity, which is placing artificial constraints on growth and potentially adverse impacts on the environment (e.g. water quality).
4. There is increasing community interest in a managed response to growth. This is driven by the recognition that the qualities that attract people to live in Kerikeri-Waipapa will be lost if the projected growth is not planned for in a managed way. Also, the community is interested in the use of urban design protocols, regulation to protect the coastline, and increased land use management in the CBD (e.g. to create a more pedestrian-friendly environment).

The most important benefit of the project is the outcome of a community led first step in setting the direction, or vision, for the integrated and sustainable development of the Kerikeri-Waipapa area - it will become a community plan based on community aspirations rather than a "Council" plan. Secondary benefits include:

1. Increased community understanding of the future direction of growth and development in the area, including a greater understanding of the complexity of growth pressures and environmental, cultural and amenity values associated with the area.
2. When Council approves the Structure Plan the main benefit will be clarity for implementation - through land use changes (via the District Plan), Council's activities (via activity management plans and the Far North Future Plan) and advocacy.



This project furthers the overarching vision and strategic direction of the Council by addressing the community concerns regarding the current nature of development in the area, forming a template "process" to use in Structure Planning in other high growth areas in the district (and perhaps other councils) and by Council working towards achieving the District Community's outcomes, and Council outcomes, as detailed in Council's Far North Future Plan (the Long Term Council Community Plan - LTCCP).

3. Effective project management techniques

Council believes that the community is an integral part of the Structure Planning process. The project management techniques focused on providing a project management team and framework to the public so that they could network/communicate with others and access further information in a process designed and managed to deliver a community defined Draft Structure Plan.



The process commenced with the establishment of a Working Party consisting of Community Board, Council and Iwi representatives who made the final recommendations. Resource Consent consultants were brought in to facilitate the meetings and to ensure that the Structure Plan ideas and goals could be implemented later through Resource Management Act (RMA) processes, a wellbeing assessment consultant was charged with monitoring the process and testing the draft plan to see if it worked towards the four bottom lines; and a part



time project manager was employed to manage the project, and to build Council staff skills so that, in future, staff would be able to implement similar projects without external help.

The first public interaction was an Open Forum (October 2006), where the community shared ideas on their vision for the area, and the key outcomes (or strategic objectives) they wished to achieve. This was followed by a second phase of consultation, which included eight Focus Group meetings. Through this consultation, the community identified both the issues facing the area, and the opportunities/options for the future development of the Kerikeri-Waipapa area.

The next phase of consultation on the Draft Structure Plan included a second Open Forum (March 2007). This forum provided the community an opportunity to comment on the costs and benefits of the options being considered for the Structure Plan, and to choose a preferred option. This preferred option became the subject of the Draft Structure Plan, which was prepared for formal consultation through the Special Consultative Procedure (SCP) as defined in the Local Government Act (LGA 2002).



The final phase of consultation before the finalisation of the Draft Plan was a series of small group workshops or individual meetings with landowners and organisations, during the SCP (June/July 2007) to discuss the potential impacts of the Draft Plan on their activities; and bill boards and a static display at the library advertising the availability of the plan for submissions.

4. A participatory approach to communicating with and getting ‘buy-in’ from stakeholders associated with the project

As explained above, the crucial element for the Structure Plan was “buy-in” from the community. A planned sequence of steps over nine months used a variety of approaches to gain a strong participatory approach:

1. The development of a “contacts” database so that all people who wish to do so, have direct contact (via phone, email, website & letters) with the Structure Plan staff.
2. Media releases (and radio community notices) reported on each new step in the project.
3. Newsletters were delivered to households, cafes and the library in the study area at the beginning of each new phase – 3 were completed during this phase.
1. A Discussion Document was released at the beginning of the process to tell people why the project was happening, what process would be followed, and to encourage people to attend the first Open Forum.
2. Summary Reports on each round of meetings was sent to those that attended the meetings, those on the project registration list, and soft copies were posted on the project website (4 Summary Reports were written in total).
3. A Kerikeri - Waipapa Structure Plan Information Pack containing background information was provided to participants, and posted on the website, to ensure that participants would be prepared for the Focus Group meetings.
4. A drawing competition for children; and a txtng competition for youth, was held during the Christmas holidays.



5. A summary of the Draft was sent to every ratepayer in the study area to ensure that all land owners were aware of the plan and the possible impacts on their properties.
6. Individual and “small interest group” meetings with community members and groups to explain the potential impacts of the draft plan on their activities/interests were held over two days, two weeks apart to ensure that potential submitters had access to all the information they required.
7. Three billboards advertising the project and encouraging people to “have your say” were erected during the SCP.
8. An SCP submission process resulting in 360 submissions from a population base of under approximately 8000 people.

All information made available to the public is posted on the website:

<http://www.fndc.govt.nz/structureplanning/index.asp>



5. Innovation and originality in the specific award category area

A number of “firsts” have been achieved by this project. In particular:

1. There was very little conceptual input from the Council into forming the Structure Plan vision. Council provided the supporting information and the organisation of the process, but the rest of the plan expresses the ideas identified by those participating in the process (the data base contains over 260 active participants).
2. This is a first time that the community planning approach encapsulated in the LGA has been knitted together with the goals and needs of the RMA, so that the outcome is a set of actions that can be simultaneously used in both the LTCCP and the District Plan.
3. This is the first time in New Zealand, to our knowledge, that a Structure Plan has set out to explicitly build relationships with other delivery organisations, be they government or private, with the goal of improving the integrated future planning of the area - encompassing energy, health, education, housing, economic development, police, environmental, heritage, Iwi, transport, civil defence and emergency agencies, to name a few.
4. This project has used a very comprehensive & innovative communication process to ensure the transfer of information and ideas - an extensive website, step by step documentation of the process, small group and large group meeting forums used (focus groups, open forums, open house displays) newsletters, displays at farmers markets & the local library, an active registered participants database for networking, and youth competitions - all used to try and get everyone involved in, and empowered by knowledge of, the process.



6. Successful results - financial and non-financial

All 4 potential options for the Structure Plan direction were costed out in terms of Council costs/benefits and long term community costs/benefits - social/cultural/environmental/economic). This enabled active discussion in the community as to the pros and cons of the different options, and what the outcome of each option would be in 30 or so year's time (and where the costs/benefits would lie at that time). The option chosen, although it appears at first glance to be the most expensive (in terms of Council's, and the ratepayer's costs) will be the cheapest in terms of the long term community costs (it will establish a more effective/efficient framework and housing densities than the other options). We don't know of any other group of ratepayers that have willingly chosen the potentially most expensive option (in terms of immediate effects on rates) because they recognise that, in the long term, it will become the most affordable model to use!

There were a large number of submitters on the draft - with a total of 360 (compared to the Annual Plan, which for the whole District achieved 310 submissions). Even more surprising, in terms of the submission analysis, is that there are a number of supportive submissions, with most objections pertaining to potential specific property effects, while supporting the plan in general. Most importantly, the submissions made demonstrate the community learning which has occurred as a result of the process. This will be invaluable to the community and Council in future planning endeavours - as the community will be empowered to understand the conflicting community group pressures on Council, the LGA and RMA planning processes, and the factors that have to be considered in the Council decision making process.

7. That the project was a 'good, sensible and right thing to do'

A Structure Plan project was vital for the best possible development outcomes for the area and the District at large. Ad hoc development in the area was spoiling the very characteristics of the area which prompted the widespread popularity and growth in the first place.

The participative model chosen, where the community led the visioning phase of the project, was the right thing to do to achieve community ownership of the plan, and a greater community understanding of the tensions explicit in any decision making pertaining to a geographical area where most of the land is in private ownership. It was the right thing to do because traditional planning projects had been rejected by the community on three previous occasions, and another attempt by the Council using the same decision making process (a paternalistic process removed from the local community) would not have been accepted.



The most important achievement is that the Council agreed to go through the process prepared to accept the "community plan", and with the knowledge that this Structure Plan is just the beginning of a large number of changes that will have to occur once the plan is finalised - both within the Council (in the way it delivers its activities; and the way in which the activities are delivered), and in the way the Council works with other delivery agents in the study area to achieve seamless integrated and sustainable development.

Appendix: A copy of the Draft Kerikeri - Waipapa Structure Plan, dated June 2007

