

# 2004 NEW ZEALAND POST MANAGEMENT EXCELLENCE AWARDS

**Category:** *The New Zealand Post Community Relationships Award*

**Project:** *Strategy Development and Implementation*  
*Making Connections – A Strategy for Manukau’s Parks 2002-2010*

**From:** *Manukau City Council*

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## Introduction

Manukau City Council considers that the development and implementation of *Making Connections – A Strategy for Manukau’s Parks 2002 – 2010* is an example of the leading edge management practice sought by SOLGM. Specifically it is an example of a strategy that does what strategies are supposed to do, but all too often can fail to do. It creates a vision of the future, it gives clear direction towards achieving the vision, and it provides a series of actions that drive strategy implementation on a daily basis. The strategy recognises those things that are important to the community and encapsulates them in a clear, concise and accessible document. The strategy will be improved and developed further through regular reviews, but it should remain relevant to the city of Manukau for many years to come.

## Judging Criteria

1. *The need for and expected benefits of the project and how it furthers the council’s vision and strategic direction (15pts)*

Since its formation in 1966, Manukau City Council has acquired an extensive network of parks. Although Council remained highly responsive to the demands of a growing population in a rapidly developing and diverse city, the parks network largely evolved without a strategic plan in place. With the city now reaching the level of maturity defined in *Tomorrow’s Manukau\**, it was appropriate that the parks network was subject to strategic consideration. *Making Connections* was designed with that purpose in mind.

*Making Connections* is the strategic plan for Manukau City Council’s parks for the next 10 years and beyond. The purpose of the plan is to provide a clear direction for the future provision and development of the parks network.

*Making Connections* was developed at the same time as *Tomorrow’s Manukau* resulting considerable benefits, not least strong strategic alignment. The outcomes sought from *Tomorrow’s Manukau* are delivered through *Making Connections*.

The city’s parks are now benefiting from having a strategic plan in place which guides and justifies decision making.

(\**Tomorrow’s Manukau* is the strategic vision for the City of Manukau).

2. *Effective project management techniques (15pts)*

A project team of 5 members began work in 2001. Team members came from a mix of policy, planning and operational backgrounds within Manukau City Council. Project budget was limited to the cost of external workshop facilitators (when required) and the final publishing costs of the document. Team members worked to a series of project deadlines agreed as part of their normal work programme. No external consultants were used in the project.

Initial workshop sessions were used to identify and agree upon:

- the purpose of the strategy
- the scope of the strategy
- the key influences on the strategy

Critically the team then set about identifying those things that people valued about parks. These values were to underpin the strategy.

Each team member was then tasked with exploring each value in detail and reporting back to the team.

A framework was designed to guide strategy development. It could be likened to a quality control commitment to:

- Research: to understand and acknowledge what's gone before
- Simple: to keep it precise and use plain language
- Action: to ensure actions arise that will actually change things
- Funding: to be clear on any cost implications
- Alignment: to demonstrate how the strategy will inform other documents
- Review: to keep the strategy alive

The team leader's role was to co-ordinate and collate the individual work streams into the final document.

3. *A participatory approach to communication with and getting buy-in from stakeholders associated with the project (15pts)*

A wealth of customer research and consultation has been undertaken by Manukau City Council on parks matters over many years (refer page 5). This information provided a very clear picture of what Manukau citizens valued about their parks and how they used them. This information provided a sound foundation for the project and it was used to develop a draft strategy. In other words the draft strategy reflected what was already known to be of importance to residents in the city.

The draft strategy was then discussed at a workshop session with each of the city's seven community boards. These workshops proved most valuable in testing city-wide goals against local interests.

The draft document was then sent to a number of other stakeholders for comment. These included special interest groups and ratepayer organisations (refer page 5).

Overall these contributions were positive and supportive at the same time as making a number of recommended changes that made the document more complete and robust as a result.

A school art competition was also organised as part of the project with the aim of gaining an insight into the aspirations of teenagers for parks in the future.

Council's special relationship with Tangata Whenua is acknowledged through a dedicated Goal within the strategy that commits to actions of known importance to local iwi.

4. *Innovation and originality in the specific award category area (25pts)*

A number of factors contributed to the innovation and originality of the project, including: the advantages that came from developing the strategy concurrently with *Tomorrow's Manukau*: the use of extensive *existing* community research to underpin values, goals and actions: its cost neutral approach: and its action plan that prioritises each action and puts a timeline against it.

However, the most significant point of difference probably came from naming the strategy *Making Connections*. As the central theme of the strategy emerged, so too did the title of the document. The action of 'making connections' was a clear message that came through as being important to Manukau residents.

*Making Connections* refers too:

- The making of physical connections (or links) between parks across the city to provide walkways and green corridors
- The role of parks in making cultural connections between the diverse communities in Manukau City
- The opportunity parks offer for people to make connections with the natural environment.

The term *Making Connections* has now become synonymous with parks activity in Manukau City and is summarised the vision statement:

*"Parks that provide a sense of connection by linking the environmental and cultural diversity of Manukau City".*

5. *Successful results in both financial and non-financial terms (15pts)*

The strategy does not make new demands on funding. Rather it focuses existing funding into strategic priority areas. This cost neutral approach was key to its adoption by Council who were keen to ensure that the strategy's adoption did not commit Council to significant levels of additional expenditure.

The real strength of *Making Connections*, however, is in its implementation which has been achieved by ensuring that all parks activity aligns to, and is driven by, the strategy. This high level of alignment can be demonstrated thus:

*Tomorrow's Manukau* and *Making Connections* represent the strategic planning documents for parks. In turn *Making Connections* is the key influence on the tactical planning documents, namely Asset Management Plans and Reserve Management Plans. This planning is translated into action on the ground by operational and business plans that implement the strategy via Annual Plans and Service Level Agreements. Specifically, the work programme of Manukau Parks (the service delivery arm of Council) is now directly linked to the goals of the strategy. All parks

operational and capital works programmes, and all new or proposed work programmes, are now linked to the actions of the strategy.

A review of key progress against the actions is reported to Council annually (the first year report 2003 is attached). The second annual report (November 2004) will reveal a greater level of implementation as the strategy gains momentum.

Equally important has been the way that many external organisations have embraced the strategy as a vehicle to further their objectives in the community. Examples include The Friends of Mangemangeroa Reserve, The Friends of Puhinui Stream, Te Araroa – The Long Pathway and The Musick Point Preservation Society.

6. *The project was a 'good, sensible and right thing to do' (15pts)*

For an activity like the provision of parks, with a high community profile and an annual budget of over \$25m (behind only roading, water and wastewater services), the development of a strategy to provide a clear vision and direction has to be a good, sensible and right thing to do. The decision making process for Council with regard to parks can now be referenced against a strong strategic plan that reflects community expectations and preferences.

The results so far have been encouraging but the overriding lesson, yet again, has been that the development of a strategy is only part of the task, the real challenge lies in its implementation and keeping the vision alive.

**Attachments**

- 10 paper copies of the entry
- One electronic (disk) copy of the entry
- A2 poster of the project
- *Making Connections – A Strategy for Manukau's Parks into the Future 2002 – 2010*
- Annual Report to Committee 2003

**Contact**

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### **List of Customer Research and Consultation**

1. Annual Manukau Citizens Perception Surveys 1999 – 2003
2. Manukau Parks Customer Surveys 1999 – 2003
3. Parks Branding Focus Group 2001
4. Manukau Parks Public Consultation Programme 1993
5. Beach & Foreshore Users Survey 1993
6. Valuing the Benefits of Parks Study 1997
7. Understanding Park Use in Manukau 1998
8. Manukau Neighbourhood Parks Research 1995

### **List of Contributing Stakeholders**

1. Bucklands and Eastern Beaches Ratepayers and Residents Association
2. Maraetai Ratepayers and Residents Association
3. Te Araroa Trust
4. Manukau District Pony Clubs
5. Royal Forest & Bird Protection Society
6. Tamaki Estuary Protection Society
7. Friends of Mangemangeroa
8. Geological Society of New Zealand
9. Sports Management Ltd
10. Auckland Regional Council
11. Manukau City Community Boards