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“Pathways to Sustainability”

SmartGrowth in the Bay of Plenty Workshop Session - Urban Sustainability

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Introduction

The focus of this workshop is to compare and contrast alternative pathways towards sustainability in the context of managing urban growth and development.

The conference theme asks two questions:

- What is sustainability?;
- How do we achieve it?

The purpose of this paper is to explore how people in the western Bay of Plenty subregion have been answering these two questions through the development and implementation of the SmartGrowth Strategy and Implementation Plan.

Background

Why SmartGrowth?

Every week in the western Bay of Plenty subregion:

- 100 new people arrive from other parts of New Zealand in search of a great lifestyle in one of New Zealand’s nicest places to live.
- 52 people leave again, mostly because they can’t find a decent job (jobs pay 15% less than the national average) or afford to buy a house (house prices are 40% higher than the national average).
- 32 new houses get built, keeping a very large, thriving construction sector going;

- 54 more vehicles join the lengthening queues at every major intersection in the town.
- 45 more jobs are created, but many in low paid and low skilled work.

These are some of the indicators identified in 2001 that inspired leaders in the western Bay of Plenty to work hard toward having a vision for sustainability in their subregion.

The western Bay of Plenty subregion is part of the Bay of Plenty Region. It includes the Western Bay of Plenty District Council and Tauranga City Council.

The population of the western Bay of Plenty in 2001 was 130,000. This is predicted to rise to 218,000 by 2026 and 289,000 by 2051. But the population increase won't be just "more of the same".

Household structures are changing. While traditional families are likely to **double** in number by 2051, single- and two-person households will **treble**. And the population is aging.

In 2001, **5,000** people in the area were 80 years of age or older. By 2051, this may increase to **35,000**.

SmartGrowth grew out of community concerns about continued rapid population growth, and a perceived lack of effective planning to manage this growth. It wasn't that the Councils were doing nothing. In fact, they had over many years been spending very large amounts on research and planning projects to address growth pressures. But this work was swimming in a sea of other projects and programmes that meant there was virtually no recognition outside of the Councils that anything serious was being done.

Unfortunately, and more seriously, this was also being done without a shared understanding of the issues. In effect, there was tug of war going on for growth with the combined Councils forecasts for residential growth more than 20% higher than that projected for the subregion. Someone was going to miss out.

The reverse was true for employment land. This was always relegated to the too hard basket or thought to be someone else's problem, with the result that in 2001 the region was forecast to have no vacant industrial land at all available within 8 years, with spiralling land prices adding to the woes of attracting the right kind of business investment and decent jobs.

With so much uncertainty about how much and where growth and development might go, it was becoming impossible to make good decisions on how to manage infrastructure, particularly roads, with growth quickly outstripping remaining capacity.

What is SmartGrowth?

“SmartGrowth’ was initiated in the Western Bay of Plenty in 2001 in response these issues.

Described in paper

SmartGrowth is a collaborative, voluntary growth management organisation involving:

- Tauranga City Council
- Western Bay of Plenty District Council
- Environment Bay of Plenty
- Tangata Whenua
- Other growth management partners (called “StrategicPartners”)
- Government agencies, notably Transit NZ.

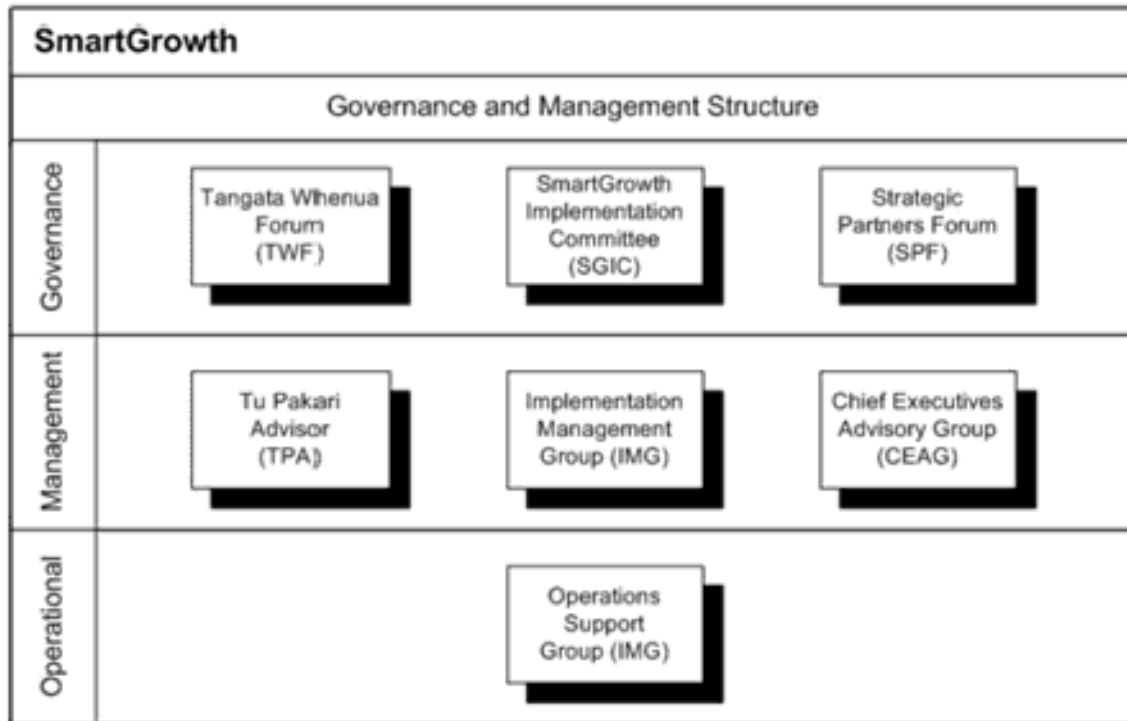
This organisation engages more than 100 decision makers and advisors at governance and management levels on a regular basis.

The SmartGrowth structure was formally established under the “Joint Committee” provisions of the LGA.

The success of SmartGrowth depends on the quality of the working relationships between the agencies responsible for implementation.

SmartGrowth as a concept is now embedded in the functions, structure, and culture of the participating organisations.

The following diagram shows the core structure for SmartGrowth in its implementation mode:



What is Sustainability - SmartGrowth's 50 Year Vision

Strategy Development Overview

Paper outlines overview of strategy development

Refer to slides 6,7 and 8 for examples of information base

The research phase of SmartGrowth investigated the demand (population and employment growth) and supply (capacity of land, natural resources, and services) sides of growth.

The research work provided a platform for developing a growth management vision and alternatives. Alternatives included low, medium and high intensity options. All alternatives were realistic and viable and stressed the importance of providing a balanced outcome of “live, work, play”.

Alternatives were assessed against sustainability criteria. A preferred alternative was selected based on a best fit with the SmartGrowth vision.

The preferred alternative was then developed in detail with an implementation plan that include actions, lead and support agencies, costs and timing.

Consultation with stakeholders, tangata whenua and the community took place at each phase of the project.

The approved Strategy and Implementation plan was published in May 2004.

Planning Horizon

A fifty year horizon was adopted for SmartGrowth. The fifty year horizon was adopted because it was seen as enabling consideration of future outcomes without the constraint of self-interest of a current generation.

Initially, there was concern and criticism of the fifty year outlook. Some felt that there could be no information of any real value to support decision making over such a long period.

However, this proved not to be the case, with good information available on long term trends in population growth and the likely pressure that this would bring to the subregion under different development scenarios.

Although a reasonable challenge at the time, fifty years should be viewed as a bare minimum for developing a growth management strategy promoting sustainability. Under the RMA, the meaning of sustainable management includes:

“Sustaining the potential of natural and physical resources ... to meet the reasonably foreseeable needs of future generations...”

If a “generation” is the “average time in which children grow up and have children of their own (usually reckoned as about 30 years” (Oxford Dictionary), and the RMA refers to the plural (i.e. at least two generations) this sets a minimum planning horizon of at least 60 years.

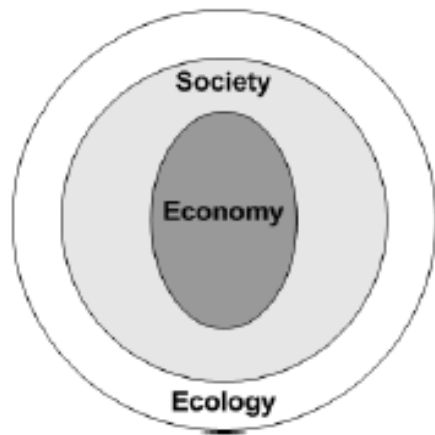
It is to be noted that some Tangata Whenua involved in the strategy supported a much longer planning horizon being adopted - at least 150 years - being the time it may take to reverse the damage inflicted since the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi and to restore the wellbeing of their people and resources.

Vision Statement

Refer to paper for sustainable development concept

The following general model was adopted as a “Sustainable Development Concept” for the Strategy, and the foundation for developing the vision statement:

Figure 7: Sustainable Development Concept.



Source: Prof John Craig, School of Environmental and Marine Sciences, University of Auckland.

Tangata whenua developed a parallel Sustainable Development Concept – the “Mauri Model” that reflected the Maori world view and enabled a complementary analysis of growth management issues. Comparisons are shown below.

| <u>Local Government Act 2002:</u> | <u>Mauri Model Equivalent:</u> |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| ➤ Economic | ➤ Individual |
| ➤ Social | ➤ Society |
| ➤ Cultural | ➤ Hapu |
| ➤ Environmental | ➤ Environment |

A fifty-year “vision statement” was formulated for managing growth. The vision statement is, in effect, an agreed statement of what “sustainable development” means to the western Bay of Plenty sub-region.

The sub-regional vision statement was formulated through a workshop process with SmartGrowth participants and the community. This was an informed debate, with all participants having an awareness and understanding of growth and the capacity of the sub-regions resources that came from the research phase of SmartGrowth.

The key aspects of the vision are as follows:

By the year 2050 the western Bay of Plenty will be a unique sub-region, which has:

- *Maintained and improved its natural and cultural environment.*
- *Enhanced the lifestyles of its communities and provided for the social needs of the people.*
- *Created a thriving sustainable economy*
- *Provided an efficient and affordable infrastructure.*
- *Implemented an efficient and integrated planning process for growth management.*

This overview could probably be applied to any region in New Zealand. However, the full vision statement includes a far more vivid and meaningful description of the subregion standing in 2051 and, importantly, the detailed outcomes required to achieve a vision that is unique to the western Bay of Plenty. The full vision statement is included in an attachment to this paper.

The detailed outcome statements had a very important and practical application to strategy development. They were used as criteria to assess the advantages and disadvantages of growth management alternatives. As a result, the alternative approach that was finally chosen for strategy implementation was acknowledged as being the best fit to the sub-region's definition of sustainability.

Communications and the SmartGrowth brand

The SmartGrowth brand was unashamedly adopted because it was lively, catchy and a proven success in creating interest in work that had previously been invisible to the public within the acronym laden swirl of Council strategic planning projects.

The original working title for SmartGrowth was the stodgy "Western Bay of Plenty Subregional Growth Management Strategy Study" (W.B.O.P.S.G.M.S.S).

Other predecessor work with equally appalling branding included the Western Bay of Plenty Urban Development Strategy Study (W.B.O.P.U.D.S.S.), Tauranga Urban Growth Strategy (T.U.G.S.), Vision 2020, Towards 2000....and so on.

SmartGrowth has been picked up locally and has a high degree of public recognition. At first the local print media cynically attempted to undermine the brand by creating its own, reporting on SmartGrowth project progress as "The Way Forward".

Locally, the SmartGrowth brand is now synonymous with values of collaboration, consistency, and comprehensive long term thinking. The brand has now extended to include SmartEconomy, SmartLivingPlaces, SmartSpace, and the unfortunate SmartArts.

While there are critics of some aspects of the strategy, the general community concern about the failure to plan have now been addressed.

SmartGrowth Implementation

Implementation Plan

The implementation plan for SmartGrowth anchors sustainability into a wide range of policies and plans across three partner Councils and other agencies tasked with managing growth. One of key successes has been to achieve a high level of agreement on the future outlook for the subregion enabling more effective decision making, particularly for infrastructure provision and funding.

Although the BOP model of “SmartGrowth” applies the key principles behind the global brand, there are unique attributes that reflect uniquely local circumstances. This includes adaptation of the principles to a provincial, rural setting, and an acknowledged role for tangata whenua in both resource protection and development.

Many of the implementation actions are not new. The concept of setting urban limits and promoting urban consolidation as a first order strategy for natural resource protection has been promoted in regional and district plans for many years. However, the reality of implementation had never been adequately tested. Nor had the consequences of failure been considered.

Achievability

Discuss two examples

The implementation actions are a balance between vision and achievability. Two examples illustrate this point.

While consolidation and intensification are seen as fundamentally consistent with sustainability outcomes, the strategy anticipates 75% of population growth occurring in comprehensively planned new Greenfield areas, and only 20% through redevelopment and intensification of existing areas. This is seen as a realistic expectation for a small provincial city.

Many of the existing areas in the City are relatively recent with less opportunity and likelihood for redevelopment. The risks of overstating the potential for redevelopment in existing areas are great. Non-achievement would force a significant shift in settlement pattern with major consequences for infrastructure.

A strong theme from community consultation was a call for a vastly improved public transport system, including provision of regular bus services and commuter rail as a way of avoiding or stalling much of the massive anticipated future investment in road infrastructure.

Although most decision makers wanted to take this preference forward, expert advice was that the likely uptake would be quite limited (est 8% of commuter trips at best by 2051) due to the size and geography of the urban areas, and that little or no difference would be made to road investment needs, at best 2-3 years deferral over expenditure 50 years.

Decision makers felt this was too pessimistic and failed to recognise the changing shape of the population (aging) and pressures such as rising fuel costs. A “stretch target” of 20% of commuter trips by public transport by 2051 was adopted, and has been incorporated into transport planning.

On the other hand, decision makers accepted that a commuter rail system was not likely to be viable with a relatively small urban population, but have highlighted the need to protect the rail corridor for potential commuter use post 2051.

Non-Regulatory Methods

A shared understanding of the nature and consequences of growth and development in the BOP has been a major benefit of the Strategy. This has shaped perceptions of what the future may bring and influenced the market and agencies toward more sustainable outcomes with less reliance on regulatory intervention. This influence may prove to be as important as any regulatory measures that emanate from the strategy.

Developers now understand that building an endless stream of detached family homes will not meet projected future needs of the community. There has been an obvious response in the local area, with an observable shift toward apartment style living in a well designed setting already on the ground, and many plans in the pipeline.

A strong trend has also emerged with the private sector picking up opportunities signalled in the strategy for comprehensive planning of new urban development. A number of the most significant development components of the strategy are being implemented by private plan changes and/or with close collaboration between Councils and land developers.

Examples of recent private plan changes initiated within the SmartGrowth framework are:

- Pyes Pa West – 9000 population growth area
- Rangiuru – 150 ha industrial employment area
- Tauriko – 170 ha industrial employment area

These initiatives represent a large direct cost saving to the public and the improved timeliness from these processes is a very positive outcome for investment.

In our own office in Tauranga, we regularly check the SmartGrowth plan when considering potential work and when providing advice to clients on risks and opportunities.

Future Challenges

The Strategy has been in the implementation stage for nearly three years.

The Strategy is currently being reviewed and updated to reflect the large number of initiatives that have occurred since adoption. The public submission process on the review will be likely to generate significant interest now that the community are aware of its degree of influence across many areas.

Although SmartGrowth is seen as a good example of effective engagement by tangata whenua, there is concern about the relative lack of progress in taking forward actions that provide direct benefit to Maori.

Collaborative approaches require a high level of input to sustain. Governance and management commitment across the partner organisations is very high. There is challenge in maintaining collaboration at operational levels where the awareness and understanding of the issues may not be as strong.

Conclusion

The Smartgrowth Strategy has generally been a success in achieving its intended outcomes of achieving a shift toward a more sustainable urban growth management.

Although it is a conventional model of planning and relies on regulatory methods for implementation, there are also strong influences on outcomes brought about by the sharing of good quality information on likely future scenarios and issues for growth and development.

SmartGrowth provides a reliable land use framework for decision making on major infrastructure provision and funding that is a essential for local and central

government.

3. Vision Statement

The Vision Statement guides the management of future growth. It answers three fundamental questions.

What sort of community do we want?

What things are important to achieving this?

How will we determine whether those achievements are being met?

In 50 years time ...

The western Bay of Plenty is a place where people can contribute to and enjoy a quality of life that meets their needs and aspirations. It provides lifestyle choices from surf to mountaintops which support and reflect the natural attributes of the area. There is a strong community feeling accompanied by spirit and pride.

Indigenous ecosystems (including estuaries, forest, wetlands, dunelands, streams and key ecological linkages) and species are highly valued and are an integral part of the landscape. Key habitats are in good condition, with healthy functioning ecological processes, and they are managed on a sustainable basis. Tauranga Harbour, the coastline, and other key ecological features have retained high levels of naturalness. There is ongoing enhancement of indigenous biodiversity.

The area continues to be a popular place for people to move to, attracted by the mild climate and coastal setting. The area defines itself by its impressive recreation and leisure opportunities. Residents and visitors alike have easy access to the Tauranga harbour and ocean beaches, and enjoy their natural features. There is an abundance of marine life, and the fishing and diving are good.

Wide-ranging work opportunities are provided throughout the area. Agriculture and horticulture continue to make a significant contribution to the economic health of the region, with the area being internationally recognised as a centre of excellence for related training and research.

Marine resources are also a significant source of wealth, including aquaculture and related food processing. A range of well-located and serviced business parks has supported investment and employment. The Port of Tauranga is New Zealand's major export gateway. New housing, health and education services, and community facilities have been provided in a way that meets the needs of an increasingly diverse and an ageing population.

Urban areas are attractive, pleasant to live in, and have used land resources efficiently. People can move about the area freely and safely. The open space and walking and cycle networks allow people to remain physically active and healthy throughout their lives. There is the

opportunity to enjoy the view of important landscapes and natural features. Development has been managed in a way that maintains the environment.

Tangata Whenua are using and enjoying their land and other resources in a manner that has sustained hapu communities. Culturally important sites and areas have been protected from development and are a heritage resource prized by the wider community. Tangata Whenua are active and valued contributors to resource management and development decision-making.

Sub-Regional Vision Statement

By the year 2050 the western Bay of Plenty will be a unique sub-region, which has:

- Maintained and improved its natural and cultural environment.
- Enhanced the lifestyles of its communities and provided for the social needs of the people.
- Created a thriving sustainable economy.
- Provided an efficient and affordable infrastructure.
- Implemented an efficient and integrated planning process for growth management.

These five key aspects of the vision are achieved through the outcomes noted below each point.

Maintained and improved the natural and cultural environment

There is no further degradation of the environment, indigenous biodiversity is no longer under threat, and there is active enhancement and improvement.

The indigenous and statutory right of Tangata Whenua to exercise kaitiakitanga over taonga, which includes the retention of land in Tangata Whenua ownership, is supported

The outstanding landforms of the Tauranga Harbour, Mauao, and the Kaimai and Mamaku Ranges are maintained and enhanced.

The quality of the sub-region's water resources (including harbours, estuaries, rivers, streams and aquifers) is improved.

The quality and quantity of the sub-region's fisheries, indigenous plants and animals are improved.

A successful balance between the use, development and protection of the coastal landscape has been achieved.

Cultural heritage resources have been protected and enhanced.

The visual integrity of important landscape features has been protected, including ridgelines and other key landforms.

These outcomes are addressed under the following Implementation Method; Natural Environment and Biodiversity; Open Coast; Harbours; Land; Fresh Water; Air; Energy; Landscape; Hazards and Heritage Places.

Enhanced the lifestyles of its communities and provided for the social needs of the people

Urban design has supported live, work and play associations through mixed land uses.

Settlements have a distinct character and identity that provide a sense of place.

As the "heart of the sub-region", the city centre of Tauranga is a vibrant area which has an emphasis on specialty shopping, entertainment, cultural facilities, inner-city residential living and sufficient employment to ensure that there is a strong relationship between work and living.

Other town centres continue as service and social and cultural focal points, and new communities include accessible centres providing a range of retail, service, and recreation facilities.

The versatility of rural land and the opportunity to enjoy the rural way of life is maintained.

Tangata Whenua use and enjoy their ancestral taonga.

There are places, spaces, and occasions for people to meet their needs.

The community provides for a diversity of peoples.

Housing (including papakainga housing) meets both lifestyle and lifecycle needs.

People are healthy, have access to a range of education needs and feel safe in their communities.

These outcomes are addressed in the following Implementation Methods: Regional Settlement Strategy, sub-regional settlement pattern, Residential Development; Rural Issues; Aggregates and Mineral Resources, Business; City and Town Centres; Tangata Whenua; SmartSpace (Open Space, sports and Leisure); Education; Health; Community Development and Affordable Housing.

Created a thriving sustainable economy

Horticulture and agriculture are significant components of the sub-regional economy.

Strong on-going growth in the labour force is recognised through employment choice.

Industry and other economic activities are clean and based on responsible environmental practices.

The community provides for the education and skill development of its population.

These outcomes are addressed in the following Implementation Methods: Economic Development and Employment.

Provided an Efficient, Affordable, Integrated and Sustainable Infrastructure

New settlements start when existing settlements reach their capacity.

Accessibility is improved by a transport system that reduces car dependence.

The rate of growth within each settlement has not exceeded its ability to absorb the development.

A diverse range of innovative, safe, efficient and effective infrastructure solutions including technology are used.

Innovative funding methods bridge the gap between cost and affordability.

These outcomes are addressed in the following Implementation Methods: Transport; Water Supply; Wastewater; Stormwater; Solid Waste; Utilities and Infrastructure.

Implemented an efficient and integrated planning process for growth management

The community has full opportunity to participate and is participating in key decision-making processes in a partnership relationship.

Policies and actions of the SmartGrowth partners have reinforced the outcomes agreed to and sought.

Partnerships between Tangata Whenua, the Crown and local authorities provide for the practical exercise of kaitiakitanga.

The level of regulation reflects the level of effects being managed.

Organisations providing services co-operate and co-ordinate their planning.

Key assumptions and growth triggers are anticipated and regularly monitored.

Community health indicators have been accepted as indicators of successful growth management.

These outcomes are addressed in the following Implementation Methods: Governance; Community Engagement; Funding; Monitoring and Review; Resourcing; Risk Management; Development and Integration of Plans and Policies.