

IT PAYS TO ADVERTISE

BY
ROBYN FISHER
SENIOR PLANNER
DISTRICT PLANNING
THE HUTT CITY COUNCIL

A carefully crafted and exhaustive campaign ensured that the public participated in the early stages of Lower Hutt City's district plan.

During initial planning for a new District Plan for Lower Hutt City the importance of successful public consultation and participation was recognised. This article looks at the components of a major public consultation and participation programme undertaken after the collection of an extensive data base and publication of a discussion document.

The first phase in the overall preparation of a new district plan for Lower Hutt City involved specific studies and the identification of the principal resource management issues facing the city. Several surveys were conducted, including a major survey of residential opinions and attitudes, carried out in September 1991. 800 people in eight sub-areas were interviewed face-to-face with

three overall objectives: to identify what residents perceived to be the critical resource management and planning issues; to compare the opinions held by planning staff and the council with those of residents; and to encourage citizen participation in the district plan formulation process and increase the awareness of resource management issues.

Several of the questions sought to have respondents identify the residential character and environment of their area. Further questions were asked on a diversity of matters such as home occupations, non-residential uses in residential areas, open space and reserves, residential development, residential development on hillsides, size and location of dwellings and issues in the specific

geographic area the respondent resided in. The full report on this survey was published as "The Lower Hutt City Residents Opinions and Attitudes Survey of Resource Management Issues".

Work from the first phase was published in a comprehensive discussion document titled "Future Resource Management for Lower Hutt". The document was structured to give as much background material as practicable and to identify the key resource management issue facing the city. To encourage discussion and response, the majority of chapters followed a format of an introduction, followed by a resource management issue phrased as a question, detail on the issues surrounding the question, and then presentation of a number of options. Many of the submissions made on the discussion document adopted this format and systematically answered all issues with a favoured option.

Because the discussion document contained a certain amount of technical detail, a series of 12 information sheets was prepared to highlight the major resource management issues with a graphical easy-to-read style.

For the five-month period between October 1992 and March 1993, team members from the district planning section were involved in a wide variety of techniques to gain input from the public. The programme was devised by team members in conjunction with advice from Dr Peter Phillips of Dialogue Consultants.

In arriving at the final choice of approach a number of alternatives were considered. At first the option was canvassed of having a mail drop of a single newsletter or series of newsletters to all households. This approach offered the opportunity to provide residents with detailed information and to be sure that most properties received the newsletters. However the cost was considerable and did not compare favourably with the cost of advertising in the city-wide newspaper and community newspapers. The support of the editors of local newspapers was further encouragement for the latter approach. Principles were established at the outset that continued throughout the programme. The most important were:

- to establish an identification logo and to use it on every occasion possible – in all

Sign of the times

How can we accommodate environmental quality and commercial profile?



Future Resource Management for Lower Hutt

Be sure to have your say.



THE HUTT
CITY COUNCIL



© 1993

CONSULTATION

newspaper advertising, on all displays, on all printed material, for our slide presentations and other material;

- to build on the information available to raise awareness in a gradual and planned way;
- to ensure continuity – pictures used in advertising were also repeated as slides and poster displays;
- to ensure that participation was accessible to as many sectors of the city's population as possible by using a diversity of techniques.

The main components of the programme were the use of newspapers, displays, target group meetings and public meetings.

NEWSPAPERS – ARTICLES & ADVERTISING

Newspapers throughout the city were used with excellent support from their editors. In the first instance *The Hutt News*, a community newspaper which is distributed free throughout Lower Hutt, was the focus. An advertising and editorial programme was established for a six-week period. The first week involved an article to raise awareness and impress upon readers the importance of becoming involved in the preparation of a new district plan. The editor willingly used graphics prepared by the council's graphics officer including flow charts and diagrams. The logo was introduced, and all subsequent articles included the logo. Where the article was not on the front page the logo was included in the index listing on the front page.

In each edition for the following five weeks, several photo advertisements appeared, supported by articles that explored in more detail the issues raised in the advertising: for example, when advertising involved the issue of different neighbouring land activities the article explored the relevant issues. Some of the initial studies were also the subject of articles. The discussion document was launched in *The Hutt News* with an interview with the mayor.

Support from the editors of all local community newspapers was then sought and received. Articles appeared highlighting the local issues of concern and encouraging participation. Both *The Hutt News* and the local community newspapers promoted attendance at public meetings. A copy of the submission form was printed in *The Hutt News*.

Articles and the public meeting schedule appeared in consecutive issues of a newsletter which is sent to ratepayers every two months.

DISPLAYS

Concurrently with the articles and advertising in *The Hutt News*, displays were established in the eight libraries, the four service centres, the Public Relations Office and the public counter area of the main

administration building. These ranged in style from small poster arrangements to larger display board panels, depending on the availability of space. The opportunity to address issues specific to certain geographical areas was taken. Copies of the discussion document, other supporting reports and copies of the information sheet series were readily available.

Displays were held at two of the major shopping centres, each for several days including the late night and all day Saturday. Team members were present to talk to shoppers and many very worthwhile comments were made. These were all recorded in a log book and it was of equal weight that such oral submissions were emphasised equal to written submissions. Included in the display boards were some of the pictorial material used in *The Hutt News*, posters on the district planning process and posters relating to specific issues relevant to the area. People took away the various information sheets available and many were prompted to visit libraries to read the discussion document.

TARGET GROUP AND PUBLIC MEETINGS

In late 1992 a series of target group meetings was held. One type was for key people in each of the five wards, and the ▶

Opposite and this page:
Examples of advertising used by Hutt City Council to foster public participation.



See you at
Queensgate

November
12, 13, 14

Be sure to have your say.



HRA 0532

Side by side

How do we manage the areas where residential and industrial activities meet?



Future Resource Management for Lower Hutt

Be sure to have your say.



HRA 0281



◀ other was for identified interest groups.

Ward councillors, community board and community committee members, residents' associations, local business associations and other planning based organisations were invited to the ward-based meetings. The meetings had two main purposes to highlight the key components of preparing a district plan under the Resource Management Act 1991; and to stress the importance of networking within their communities to encourage others to participate and, in particular, come to the public meetings.

The concept of empowering the key people was an important part of the strategy to build up interest and encourage attendance at the public meetings. This has been assessed to have been a very worthwhile approach. The responsibility to network was taken seriously. This was reflected in the number of people who attended the public meetings, many of whom may not have been there if there had just been a public notice in *The Hutt News*.

The identified interest group meetings involved organisations, businesses and individuals involved with environmental groups, heritage groups, consultants in related professions (architects, surveyors, landscaping) and those identified as regularly making enquiries on the current planning documents. The meetings gave a great deal of feedback and led to submissions on the discussion document on a wide range of topics.

During February a series of 10 public meetings was held throughout the city. These were advertised widely in *The Hutt News* and in the relevant local community papers. People who attended the earlier ward-based meetings played a key role in



Use of logo ensures continuity of advertising.

promoting the public meetings by publicising them in their own newsletters and in some cases sending out "personal" invitations. The meetings played an important role in raising the awareness of the purposes and principles of the RMA, the process being followed and the desirability of being involved from an early stage.

Team members have spoken at other meetings, seeking input from groups who were not well represented at earlier meetings, such as the youth and older people of the city.

At meetings, a slide show was used to give a visual overview and short commentary of the resource management issues facing the city. The particular slides used were reviewed for every meeting to be sure that the examples were relevant to the expected audience and location. Some of the slides repeated the photographs already used in the advertising or posters. The use of slides at the beginning of the meetings gave an interesting introduction which promoted discussion. Approximately one-third of each meeting was used for the slide presentation, and two-thirds for discussion in a two-hour

meeting time. At almost all the meetings the questions and comments arising from the slides prompted discussion that evolved as issues were raised. It was rarely necessary for team members to raise issues. A record of the meetings was kept in the log book, and comments made were treated as submissions.

CONCLUSION

While considerable resources were put into the early phase of public consultation and participation, the response has been extensive and has given a worthwhile base. Many of the submissions have been detailed. Many voluntary organisations have obviously put considerable effort into the preparation of submissions. At every target group and public meeting, worthwhile questions, discussions and opinions were expressed. It has been noticeable that a number of groups in the community who had previously been involved with particular issues have become involved in a much broader range of issues, both at a strategic level and area or site-specific level.

The council receives regular enquiries requesting when the next opportunity will be for involvement in the process.

Lower Hutt people have responded well to the opportunity to become involved in the development of a new district plan under the philosophy of the RMA.

The views expressed in this article are my own and not necessarily those of The Hutt City Council. Other members of the District Planning Section are Ernie Albuquerque (manager), Heather Clegg, Richard Harkness, Sara Ritchie, Larry Mahn. The council's graphic officer is Kim Grinlinton.

LA4 Landscape Architects

LA4 is a specialist landscape architect practice with a commitment to the highest levels of professionalism in all areas of landscape planning and design. We offer a nationwide capability with recent projects stretching as far afield as the Solomon Islands and Malaysia. The company's principals and personnel have up to 25 years individual experience in the landscape field, augmented by qualifications in a range of related disciplines – the sciences, geography, town planning and horticulture. As a result, LA4 has a broad range of capabilities, with particular expertise in:

- landscape & visual impact assessment
- landscape studies to assist with policy development
- site planning & subdivision design
- commercial development design
- urban design & planning
- open space design & recreation development
- landscape management & restoration

PHONE 0-9-358 0904, PO BOX 5669, AUCKLAND