

BY SARAH MYHILL, POLICY ANALYST RESOURCE MANAGEMENT, WESTERN RAY OF PLENTY DISTRICT COUNCIL

# TE PUKE INTO THE FUTURE

A NEW ZEALAND-BASED  
EXAMPLE OF HOW A  
VISION BASED APPROACH  
TO STRATEGIC PLANNING  
CAN FEED THE STATUTORY  
PROCESS OF FACILITATING  
URBAN GROWTH THROUGH  
DISTRICT PLAN CHANGES.  
(CONTINUING THE THEME  
INITIATED BY DON LYON  
AND STEVE TAYLOR,  
"RESILIENCE IS THE KEY",  
*Planning Quarterly*,  
December 2003.)

**T**e Puke is a small rural town with a distinct character that has been shaped by the history of its land use. Known as the kiwifruit capital of the world, the town is surrounded by a belt of intensive horticultural activity that provides both the essence of its character and a potential constraint to its physical growth. Facing a number of challenges, the Te Puke community sought a plan that would clearly state the town's visions for the next twenty years.

Not the least of the issues to be addressed was that of State Highway 2 which bisects the town, running through its commercial heart. Plans for the Tauranga Eastern Arterial (Te Puke Bypass) also created uncertainty for the community. A further issue was the lack of available land for residential and industrial development.

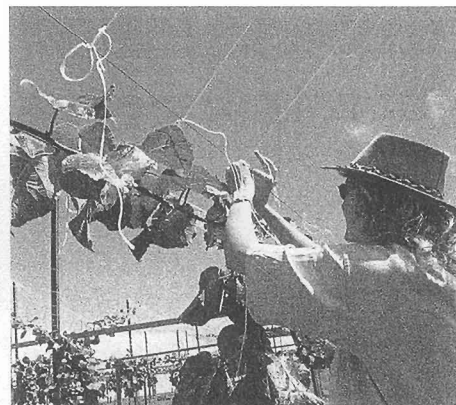
## TE PUKE'S POTENTIAL

Te Puke is perfectly positioned to play a pivotal role in the growth of the sub-region. Sitting between four centres (Mount Maunganui, Tauranga, Whakatane and Rotorua), it has a bright future as a distribution hub, providing its facilities and infrastructure are appropriately planned and enabled. As well as its bright future as a service centre, Te Puke has great potential as a unique business and retail centre. It is well placed to serve the Papamoa East area, earmarked for growth to the tune of 20,000 residents within the next twenty years.

## THE TE PUKE LONG TERM DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The Te Puke Long Term Development Plan outlines the vision the Te Puke community has for itself, and strategies and actions needed to achieve it. The Plan charts a course for the sustainable development of the town over the next twenty years. The Local Government Act 2002 has charged local government with a responsibility for sustainable development, requires community involvement and encourages a long term view. While the Act does not actually prescribe a process such as preparing the Long Term Development Plan, undertaking it helps Council fulfill its obligations under the LGA. The process of preparing the document (in its draft form at present) has seen Council staff and 120 members of a Community Forum working to get a result of which the town can really take ownership. The overall project has been co-ordinated by Council's Strategic Planning and Monitoring Department. The planning team includes administration staff, engineers, resource management and strategic planners, community development officers, economic development officers, reserves staff, Councillors and managers - all who have worked with the community and facilitated discussion so that the result is truly multi-dimensional.

The planning process began with both a hui at Hei Marae and a public launch in the Te Puke Memorial Hall last October. Since then, the



*Te Puke and surrounds (aerial) - note kiwifruit planting (top left) The Way Forward Logo Te Puke (below left) Today Training young kiwifruit vines (right)*



Community meeting



Te Puke main street (SH 2)

study team has held a multitude of meetings - 24 focus groups, four community forums. two hui with tangata whenua, two meetings with government/non-government organizations, one open day, and various other meetings with staff, Councillors and the Te Puke Community Board.

**VISIONS**

The community forum, through its five focus groups, - Community/Culture, Recreation and Leisure, Environment, Economic, and Land use - has developed both high level and detailed visions for the town, and then strategies for achieving them. Alongside each strategy, roles are assigned to various agencies and timetables set out for implementation. Throughout the project, the team is bearing in mind the need for the wider community to take ownership of the end result, given that a lot of the actions depend on the community for implementation. The timetabling component enables monitoring to take place.

High level visions so far include:

**Land Use -**

- "A balance of town and country"
- "A country town with a business heart"
- "Land use supports local business"
- "Te Puke is a globally connected service centre"

**Recreation and Leisure -**

"The people of Te Puke are happy, fit, and healthy"

**Community and Culture -**

"Te Puke is a town that is safe, secure and attractive. acknowledges its community and celebrates its success"

**Economy -**

"We are the food basket of the bay, now and in years to come"

"Te Puke is a clean and clever place to do business"

"Te Puke is a town where skills are valued, taught and put to good use"

"Te Puke provides a distinctive experience that brings people to town and tempts them to stay"

**Environment -**

"Te Puke connects the mountains with the sea"

"Te Puke is a place that brings the country to the town"

The draft Plan will now be released to the wider community throughout the eastern end of the District, with further open days and the opportunity for submissions and hearings.

**URBAN GROWTH STUDY**

Coming out of the initial consultation process, an Urban Growth Study has commenced. The study is investigating six areas identified by the community as fitting their vision for accommodating employment and population growth in the town over the next 20 years. Based on the outcome of the Development Plan submissions process, suitable areas will have structure plans prepared, and will be rezoned through a statutory Plan Change process. The structure plans will bring in wider issues identified by the community as being important - issues such as walkway and cycleway linkages, new roading links, and ecological linkages. Methods of encouraging appropriate infill development will also be investigated, with a brief to get innovative and think "outside the square".

This approach, combining a true strategic planning exercise with a pure resource management planning exercise, has ensured that the community's desires can be directly facilitated through the District Plan process, and any "fatal

flaws" are identified very early on in the piece. Therefore. the town can grow in a manner that has real support from the community.

**A UNIQUE PROCESS**

The overall process involved in preparing the Te Puke Long Term Development Plan is unique in four ways:

1. It is not a prescribed statutory process - that is, Council is not legally obliged to undertake it;
2. It is, in essence, written by the community for the community; and
3. The Plan is truly strategic in that it has considered community visions, as well as strategic planning, infrastructure requirements, environmental and resource management planning, economic, cultural, reserves and recreation policy, and community safety.
4. As well as having a true strategic vision, the process translates that high level work into 'on the ground' actions. It will result in a working document that will physically transform the town in a manner fitting the ideals of the community.

**PASSION**

A wise man once said "Planners need more passion!". From a Council staff perspective it has been particularly fulfilling to work with such a passionate community, addressing such a broad range of issues.

The process is not over yet - there is still a lot of work to be done through the submission, hearing and decision making processes. However, staff, councillors and the Te Puke community are, so far, united in their opinion that the process has been exciting, challenging and very rewarding. Roll on submission time!