

I will not address each point in your draft report, but rather, some general comments on housing affordability which I trust will be helpful.

I am an elected member, a Tauranga City Councillor, and have been so for the last four years.

My feedback is my own personal comments and does not reflect what other elected members may or may not agree with.

Tauranga City was one of the fastest growing cities in New Zealand and subdivisions sprung up all around the city while infrastructure lagged behind. We have been in catch-up mode for the last few years.

With the recession hitting Tauranga in 2007 onwards and the dramatic slow-down in growth Tauranga City is faced with planned infrastructure commitments (like the Southern Pipeline project for wastewater a project of some \$106.1M 2009 dollars), stormwater projects etc. Development contributions are not coming in at the rate they were prior to 2007 and our debt has dramatically increased in the past five years (most debt being capitalized (including salaries) which is coming back to bite Tauranga City Council.

Recently debt allocated to development contributions had to be changed over to rate payer funding due to the dramatic slow-down in growth.

“Smartgrowth Strategy” is Tauranga City Council’s guiding philosophy (rightly or wrongly).

Tauranga District Council Plan has been reviewed (now called Tauranga City Plan) and is in the final stages of appeals. I was part of the 3 year process ie a commissioner on the panel listening to submissions and part of the decision-making process.

One of the sticking points for many developers in Tauranga is “Smartgrowth” urban limits of 15 lots per hectare being achieved in new urban growth areas.

The developers believe this urban limit is constraining growth as the market should lead ie demand dictates size of section and house rather than regulation. Constraints, I believe, add to the costs of building an “affordable” home.

Our City Plan is a large document to read, is technically challenging for lay people to read and has the addition of “urban design” requirements in many parts of the City Plan.

Developers feedback to elected members is frustration at the length of time to obtain Resource Consents and the challenges of meeting “urban design requirements”. This equates to time delays and also extra costs to comply with regulations and bylaws.

I believe there is an opportunity for developers to carry out new infrastructure in a more cost-effective manner rather than Council building it(Councils always seem to pay a premium for infrastructure etc). I remember a developer saying that a fitting that our Council costed for the Southern pipeline was around 5 times the amount that he would pay. You have to ask why does this happen?

Is there an opportunity for Councils to have better procurement procedures?

If developers can show our Council that they can open a new subdivision in a sustainable manner that does not impact on Council's debt envelope ie Council does not need to fund, then I believe there should be an opportunity to do so.

Residential intensification may not be the "magic wand" to solve transportation issues but rather may create more by traffic being constrained into more concentrated areas. The social implications overseas show that residential intensification is not the panacea to housing issues. New Zealand is a unique country and cannot be compared to many overseas countries.

When Tauranga City Council consulted with the community on proposed intensification at Greerton and Arataki this was met with strong opposition from the local community.

Dealing with sewerage on site, eco-friendly water collection and stormwater systems could be an opportunity for developers to reduce costs.

I hope my comments are helpful and I would be happy to speak to my submission.

Regards
Catherine Stewart
Tauranga City Councillor