

KaPai Kaiti

SUBMISSION ON URBAN DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

October 2007

KaPai Kaiti is a residents association for people who support the goal of making Kaiti an even better place to live. We have a membership of approximately 120 people and five Trustees. This submission has been prepared by three volunteers and endorsed by the Trustees.

1. INTRODUCTION

Kaiti seems to often be considered a problem. Not necessarily a problem to be solved – more like a negative drain on the resources of the region and something that would be better if it just didn't exist. Rather than making a net positive contribution to the region – from social, economic, cultural and environmental perspectives – a wide range of public opinion leaders have thought of Kaiti as a place that is best left to the underclass of poor, violent and uneducated.

Historical records from town planners demonstrate how the Kaiti community was planned to be this way – it was designed to provide the low-paid under-employed workforce required by the captains of industry. In days gone by it was the freezing works and Watties, today it is forestry, mill and field workers who leave early in the morning and return late at night to try and make ends meet from minimal wages and unhealthy working conditions.

How do we change this? If Council worked on its capability and capacity to engage meaningfully with the residents of Kaiti, a lot would change. Council would know what local residents are thinking, and how they desire to move forward, and Kaiti residents would feel like they are being heard, and thus would have more interest in owning the future and the challenges and opportunities facing the region in the next 30 years.

We suspect very few people in Kaiti have heard of, let alone read, the Council's documents about the Urban Development Strategy, subsequently they have not had a meaningful opportunity to submit their ideas and values for consideration. Developing new and better ways of making connections between the Council and Kaiti would be of huge value for both parties. If this doesn't happen, Kaiti will continue to be a problem rather than a positive for the city and the region, and everyone will lose – some much more than others.

2. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Gisborne District Council has significant deficits in both capacity and capability to effectively engage with the community. These gaps lead to a lack of meaningful participation in public planning and decision-making processes by the citizenry and raise serious questions about the legitimacy of the planning process and the likely success of any decisions made for the future.

GDC needs to build capacity to engage in mutually meaningful ways with all sectors of the community, particularly Tangata Whenua, Maori, Pacific peoples, young people and other residents who are not as confident or experienced with public policy, planning and decision-making processes.

45% of the Kaiti population are aged under 25 year and their involvement in urban planning and decision-making is essential. Not only will this encourage fresh thinking, but it will lay down a foundation for the retention and return of young people – it will also increase their sense of ownership of community plans and activities at this point and into the future.

Community workers are neighbourhood engagement experts – the Council could support community workers to help increase public participation in planning. Council could also employ people in positions who have a primary role of improving community engagement and participation. This would mean not just accessing established community groups and organisations like KaPai Kaiti but working on the larger issues of why Council needs to engage with the community, researching effective strategies for doing this in mutually meaningful ways and supporting other Council staff and stakeholders to undertake effective and sustainable engagement. Internally these positions have a role of monitoring Council practices, improving processes and protocols, externally it is about relationship-building with a diverse range of stakeholder groups and individuals.

3. COMMUNITY COHESION

KaPai Kaiti research over the past seven years demonstrates a high level of support in Kaiti for the establishment of shared community spaces (buildings and open spaces) that provide opportunities for the community to meet, spend time together doing positive, constructive and recreational activities. The research also indicates that such resources should be planned and established by Kaiti residents.

The current range of services available in Kaiti are utilised by its residents but, out of necessity, many travel outside the suburb to access services such as hospitals, high schools and tertiary providers. Residents have definite ideas about additional services that are needed and how these may be developed. Key social and economic indicators suggest that the ability of Kaiti residents to access existing services both within and outside of Kaiti is difficult.

Community cohesion within Kaiti is limited to a few community-building initiatives and lacks the range of events and activities it needs to flourish. Existing community facilities do not meet the community's needs or aspirations for shared, accessible and appropriate spaces.

New strategies are needed across the community to encourage greater levels of connectedness and discussion on issues impacting Kaiti residents. The overwhelming choice of research participants is for the development of a community space to:

- 1. Initiate greater community cohesion;*
- 2. Facilitate events, activities and services to the community; and*
- 3. Bring about whanaungatanga and pride amongst residents.¹*

65% of Kaiti residents consider it dangerous or very dangerous to walk in their neighbourhood after dark². Over 10 percent of residents cannot think of anyone that they trust enough to share personal information with and nearly one third do not have discussions as a family on a regular basis³.

High rates of violence and crime have been a feature of life in Kaiti for many years but these issues do not feature in existing Council plans. The urban development strategy presents an opportunity to consider carefully the implications of town planning on such issues and strategies to prevent similar concentrations of violence and crime in particular areas. Creating a built environment that encourages community

¹ KaPai Kaiti: [Kaiti Social Cohesion Project Report](#). 2006

² KaPai Kaiti: [Kaiti Health Survey](#). 2005

³ Ibid.

cohesion and ensures easy access to support services, educational institutions and workplaces should be a high priority for the Council. An example is the layout of Waikirikiri School. Thanks to a reactionary approach undertaken by planners in the 1960's, this kura is not on a level playing field with its contemporaries, the costs are far higher to alter the built environment around the school and there is no long term suitable and safe entrance way. The current and past Board of Trustees have worked on this and continue to try and address it.

Architectural design standards, social housing, affordable housing, mixed neighbourhoods, public transport, proximity of residential housing to recreational and work places are all important considerations in the process of planning healthy, safe and vibrant urban areas.

4. CULTURE & HERITAGE

Kaiti is directly adjacent to the Tūrangānui River, and to some of the major heritage sites of the region and the nation. Kaiti should be supported to reap the benefits of this proximity, with heritage and beautification projects spilling out into the suburb. This will not only improve the urban landscape of Kaiti, but will enable local residents to feel a greater connection to, and sense of ownership of, these heritage sites and the important past that they represent. Kaiti, both as a place and a population, should be part of future heritage and tourism opportunities that develop around the region's rich past.

At the moment, Gisborne does not make good use of these heritage sites (such as Cook's landing site), and a more intelligent, strategic and sensitive plan needs to be developed. Titirangi has a number of strengths, and the plan to replace exotics with native bush will make a big difference to the area. There are a number of areas of paddocks around Titirangi which could be reforested, and utilised as part of the Titirangi heritage and leisure zone. The Titirangi Management Plan needs regular review and increased public participation in its future development.

As noted elsewhere in this submission, access to the port area, the beach, and these historic sites is currently in need of major redevelopment. It is impossible at present to get from Kaiti Beach to Te Poho o Rawiri marae without having to leave behind footpaths or tracks and walk on the road. The walk from the wharf to Titirangi is nowhere near as beautiful as it should be. The Port company has plans to improve these walkways and additions through to Waikanae Beach. Kaiti residents, particularly neighbours adjacent to and in close proximity to these walkways, look forward to being part of the planning and development process.

In a general sense, serious questions should be asked about the port's development and destruction of the physical environment around Titirangi. While commodities such as logs are currently important for the economic well-being of Gisborne, it is clear that significant transformation of the local economy is required if we are to achieve prosperity in the future. The kinds of people who we need to attract to this community will be much more interested in landscape and history than loading and storage zones for pine trees. The Council is in danger of sacrificing long-term strategic assets for short-term profit. Consultation and community participation in the development of the port area is virtually non-existent, and this needs to change, especially as residents of Kaiti experience first-hand the effects of decisions made by the port and the Council.

Strategic Relationship Agreements similar to the Titirangi Accord should be developed between various stakeholder groups including GDC, EIL, Ngati Oneone and KaPai Kaiti that clarify the nature of the relationship, the principles upon which those relationships will be based and how we agree to communicate and work together – particularly when there are differing perspectives, positions and priorities.

Council have the opportunity to appoint Trustees to Eastland Community Trust and KaPai Kaiti would like to see GDC appoint some Trustees who (a) reflect the diversity of the Trust beneficiaries in terms of

age, cultural background and class; and (b) have significant experience in creating social dividends rather than purely financial value.

As EIL grows and becomes a significant influence over the built environment and the infrastructure of the city, the community needs to be assured that the profit motive is kept in check against any social, cultural and/or environmental costs associated with the activities of the company.

5. HOUSING & URBAN RENEWAL

For a number of reasons, including environmental consequences, impact on the landscape, and social/civic identity, it is important that Gisborne not sprawl beyond its current boundaries. The dream of the quarter acre section is over, and Gisborne should lead the way in developing the sustainable alternative: sophisticated, architecturally credible medium-density housing with access to common gardens and recreational space close by. These complexes would be environmentally sustainable, excellent in their building standards and use of materials, and ground-breaking in their engagement with contemporary issues of urban design and social planning.

Kaiti is in a perfect location to make the most of this kind of development: close to town, with a mix of populations (elderly, single parent families, extended families, etc) which would suit medium-density complexes. A lot of Housing New Zealand housing stock is in need of renewal. Medium-density development would offer a great deal of potential for improving Kaiti, and its sense of pride and identity.

It is also important that Kaiti not be a ghetto of Housing New Zealand properties in the future. Residents need to be encouraged to buy their own home, and social housing investment (up to 20% of development value) should be a compulsory part of all new developments in the region. A better quality of developments in Kaiti would attract a diverse range of people to the area. By acting in this way, Council can prevent Gisborne becoming another horror like Tauranga, Hamilton or Papamoa, as well as making a positive difference to the Kaiti community.

It is also noticeable that Kaiti is not resourced in the same way as other suburbs in Gisborne with a higher socio-economic profile. We still have the bulk of powerlines above-ground; many of our footpaths and roads are in a poor state of repair; and we have few trees and public gardens which are attractive and well-designed. These decisions around infrastructure send clear messages to residents, and instill a sense that people who live here are second-class citizens.

Recommendations (from a submission to the Annual Plan that was not responded to) include:

1. That GDC develop Inclusionary Zoning requiring developers to include social housing and affordable housing equivalent to at least 20% of new developments of 5 or more houses for social and affordable housing.
2. That GDC remove any exclusionary regulations prohibiting affordable housing from being built in new developments.
3. That GDC develop a housing policy that makes an explicit commitment by GDC to do everything it can to ensure decent housing is affordable for all people living in the Gisborne District.

Inclusionary zoning has developed in the UK (PPG3), US (developer set-asides) and Canada as a tool to provide affordable housing partly driven by a belief that most zoning in those jurisdictions is exclusionary and implicitly (and sometimes explicitly) excludes certain types (low cost) of housing. Inclusionary zoning sees a certain proportion of new housing in a development set aside for low-income households. This can be site specific or in the locality or a cash-in-lieu payment.

A not-for-profit housing provider and manager (or other) will generally purchase the affordable housing units developed off the developer. In countries that apply inclusionary zoning, planning legislation is reasonably explicit in terms of the need for planning rules to achieve social objectives in their own right (e.g. Town and Country Planning Act 1990, S106 in the UK) and the justification requirements of planning rules, compared with New Zealand, are generally less complex. In Ireland, for example, local authorities require developers to set aside up to 20% of new developments of 5 or more houses for social and affordable housing. Each local authority has to include these provisions (i.e. commitment to providing a percentage of social and affordable housing) in its housing strategy, which form part of the development plan for its area.

Assuming such a planning framework (mandatory and explicit social objectives) is in place, a raft of issues would need to be addressed including affordability definition, restrictions on resale, eligibility criteria, the appropriate percentage of units to be 'affordable', development size threshold, developer acceptance and mechanisms to ensure affordability in perpetuity etc. Such an approach when used in the US and the UK often has a density bonus or Transferable Development Right (TDR) attached to facilitate the mandatory requirement.

Scale factors may mean that inclusionary zoning is not necessarily easily applied to small markets with small average development sizes, i.e. number of units per development.

The US and UK experience shows that when a market is buoyant and developers can afford to proceed, the volume of affordable housing delivered can be significant but the converse also applies. A similar conclusion can be reached in terms of the inclusionary zoning approach pursued in Vancouver, Canada where developers of major projects have been required since the late 1980s to set aside 20% of sites for non-market housing. It is hugely dependent upon developers being able to generate a 'market' profit, which is easier under buoyant market conditions. A report in 2002 looking at the UK experience around inclusionary zoning concluded that while a large number of affordable units are developed annually who actually bears the cost of their development is difficult to establish as is whether the units are genuinely additional. Others argue, however, that there is no alternative means of producing new build affordable housing. At a fundamental level inclusionary zoning would seem to depend upon a planning process, which creates a land value premium.

Removing any exclusionary restrictions entails a reform of zoning requirements, subdivision regulations and building codes to eliminate exclusionary provisions. A review of the US literature, which looked at exclusionary regulatory regimes, suggested that getting rid of such exclusionary regulations works. In New Zealand, developers would argue that exclusionary measures provide the amenity demanded by purchasers.

A common benchmark of housing affordability is those households experiencing 'housing stress' which are in the lower 40% of the household income distribution and pay more than 30% of their gross income on housing costs, whether renting, buying or existing homeowners.

A distinction is increasingly being made between housing affordability issues for those accessing social housing, (i.e. generally households in the lowest household income quintile) and those identified as part of the 'intermediate' housing market where households are neither poor enough for social rented housing nor rich enough to buy or rent affordably in the open market.

Several interrelated factors contribute to the affordability of housing:

- Income (ability to pay and save);
- House prices and rents (level of payment required);
- Financial factors (cost and availability of credit);

- Demographic factors (household formation rate and migration inflows);
- Employment and labour market conditions (ability to participate);
- Supply factors (zoning, labour & resource availability and costs).

Rents and house prices in New Zealand have increased over the last twenty years at a faster rate than household incomes. Consequently, there has been an escalation of household housing costs as a percentage income. The growing disparity between house prices, rents and low to medium household incomes is not confined to New Zealand and has occurred in most OECD countries.

Affordability across a range of measures has reduced for would-be homeowners and, most significantly, for renters in New Zealand.

6. ECONOMY

The assumption that growth is necessarily good should be explored in any planning process. GDP can increase because more people are dying, more habitats are being destroyed and more tourists are creating more pollution.

The fundamentally self-centred nature of the capitalist system and ‘growth fetish’ drives a substantial proportion of business and economic decision-making. As the dominant paradigm of our age, selfishness and self-interest have been turned into virtues and distort the value base that has traditionally created societies that function on the basis of cooperation, power sharing and sustainable lifestyles.

Alternatives are possible but need supportive environments in which to flourish. Support for food and housing cooperatives, incentives to increase self-sufficiency and organic agriculture/horticulture and locally owned financial institutions are all opportunities the Council could be exploring and encouraging in an effort to move with the community into a more sustainable and secure future.

Another important move is taking the Gisborne economy from an emphasis on high volume, low value primary commodity production to the ‘weightless economy’ based on knowledge-based, high value goods and services.

Again, having a robust education sector at all levels, a culturally rich and confident community and a built environment based on sound principles of sustainability and affordability will make it more attractive for highly skilled entrepreneurs and scientists to enjoy the lifestyle this city has to offer. A wireless broadband and mobile technology strategy for the city should be a high priority along with much better access to affordable distance learning opportunities that allow students to study without leaving the district.

7. TRANSPORT

The region has a major issue with transport. Experts predict that within 20 years the scarcity of oil will mean that even one car is considered a luxury. While cars are, and will be, important to the regional transport strategy (whatever they run on), Council should be considering public transport and alternative transport possibilities, and acting now to ensure they can be implemented when required (or financially sustainable) in the future. Kaiti is relatively close to the CBD, which means that it has excellent potential for sophisticated development, without relying on extensive transportation (as development on the edges of the city will require) and low-tech transport such as walking and bi-cycling.

We support the vision of a city linked by green corridors which connect Kaiti to other parts of the city, and to heritage/leisure destinations. Gisborne is ideally suited to the use of transport like bikes, and

walking, and this should be encouraged as it is sustainable, good for health, and attractive for tourists and future residents. Gisborne could consider a scheme similar to Copenhagen and Amsterdam, where free bikes are available for hire and short-term use. It has only been through the concerted and sustained efforts of politicians, planners and traffic engineers that these places have progressively become cities of bicycles in last 20 years.

At the moment, Kaiti is awkwardly connected to the CBD, and to Kaiti Beach and other historical sites around the port. This needs to be changed, and will not only transform this suburb but enhance visitor experiences.

8. ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

The Council needs to make a real commitment to ecological sustainability. This is a critical issue, not only in terms of this region's (ab)use of resources, but in terms of our ability to brand and market ourselves competitively. It should be a fundamental factor in the thinking and planning of the Council, rather than something that is imposed later in the planning process.

In particular, the Council should:

- impose high standards on building and development (alternative energy, insulation, double glazing, water recycling, etc.)
- aim to make Gisborne a 'green region' that has a negative carbon footprint, zero waste and truly sustainable development practices
- be clear about how the region intends to plan for and manage the impact of rising oceans and a much drier East Coast over the next 50 years
- ensure industry practices, trade waste and related measures meet the highest international standards – if we have sustainable industry our products will be worth much more
- clarify the mechanisms and performance measures it uses to assess levels of sustainability and the impact and effectiveness of change management processes implemented within Council and the wider community

9. PUBLIC-PRIVATE ISSUES

Kaiti would be well served by the Council reviewing its responsibilities and bylaws around private enterprises that also have significant public utility value.

Two examples:

- Kaiti Mall is an important amenity for the local community. It is seen as a meeting place, a destination, an important part of the social fabric. Yet the owners of this mall have invested very little in its maintenance and development. This impacts on the way Kaiti Mall can be used by the public, and the sense of civic identity local residents have as a result of standards.
- The Port is a very important part of the Kaiti community. It sits within our suburb, and occupies land which is of extreme local and national significance. Yet quite often the Port makes decisions without any reference to Kaiti residents and has limited capability to engage in a respectful and meaningful way with residents affected by activities and developments on Port land and arterial routes leading to the Port. Kaiti (and the wider region) depends on the Port, and wishes to forge a relationship with the company so that future plans will be of benefit to all parties.

In both these cases, Council needs to put in place better policies and protocols that acknowledge the special interest that the public have in certain sites and companies, so that these commercial enterprises contribute to the well-being of the community, rather than lowering standards and pride.

10. BRAND TURANGA / GISBORNE

We have a wonderful opportunity to brand Turanganui-a-Kiwa / Gisborne in a variety of ways that will make it an attractive destination for tourists, and a great place to live.

The primary platform should be environmental sustainability. Gisborne and the wider region should be world famous as a place committed to green design, sustainable energy, and the smallest possible carbon footprint. And actually do it really well – rather than the bare minimum. This will not only work from a tourist point of view (encouraging people to feel good about visiting here) but it will support and aid our manufacturers in national and international markets (consumers are becoming increasingly committed to sustainability as a factor in their purchases).

Another major platform should be what might be called ‘Gisborne culture’. This is made up of many different factors: the friendliness and relaxed attitude of locals (saying hello to strangers, etc); the outdoor oriented lifestyle; small town size (with sophisticated recreational options); relationships between Māori and Pākehā; connection to the rich environmental and cultural heritage of the region. While ‘Gisborne culture’ is already well-established, Council should lead initiatives to change those aspects of our society (such as racism, discrimination and social inequality) that prevent us from fully realising the positive and healthy aspects of our unique character. We must ensure that Council guidelines (such as urban design and planning) protect the best of this culture by enforcing appropriate development (e.g. no strip malls, few big box retailers) and help break down the negative aspects of local culture (e.g. increasing income disparity, historical amnesia and cultural homogeneity).

We wish to be heard on this submission.

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