



What's happened so far?

During February and March, about 40 focus meetings were held with stakeholders in phase two of community engagement.

Council staff talked to people ranging from central government agencies, regional council, ratepayers' associations and some key non-government organisations such as the Chamber of Commerce, Federated Farmers, Fonterra and forestry owners.

Major consulting firms and developers in the district were also able to table their issues. Their take on the review was of particular interest, as their work and business routinely brings them into contact with the existing district plan, the district plans of other territorial authorities, and council procedures.

During April and May, a series of six Marae hui (Phase 3) were conducted to give Maori an opportunity to raise issues of importance to them about the district plan. Hui were held at Hinemoa Point, Ngongotaha, Whakarewarewa, Ohinemutu, Mourea and Rotoiti. A presentation about the district plan and the review was presented by council staff, followed by an opportunity for attendees to ask questions or raise issues.



What are people talking about?

People were asked about issues that concerned them, with no requirement that the issue be related explicitly to the district plan. Four themes emerged from the discussions – **corporate governance, infrastructure, land use and subdivision**, with a range of issues such as roading and waste management highlighted. One of the main issues raised by developers and non-government organisations was the expectation that council facilitate a process for identifying the vision for the district's future. A corporate decision will need to be made as to what role the district plan will play in setting this vision.

Issues raised about **land use** included:

- The implications/relationship of land use and lake water quality,
- Specific planning zones,
- The district plan's structure and format,
- The future of the Central Business District (CBD), and
- The need/adequacy of open spaces in the district.

Issues raised about **subdivision** included:

- Transferrable development rights (TDRs) and the potential for this tool to be applied in Rotorua,
- The advantages and disadvantages of urban infill, and
- Issues that concern rural zones (boundary adjustments, the 15 usable hectare rule, lifestyle lots).

The hui were used to highlight issues directly affecting land use in the immediate vicinity of Marae as well as 'bigger picture' land use issues, such as multiple-owned Maori land, papakainga and lake water quality. Some of the key messages were:

- *There is a desire to improve development prospects for Maori.*
- *The current district plan has restricted development.*
- *Free up land around the district to provide more development opportunities.*
- *Set objectives for future land use.*
- *All Maori land should be regarded as having heritage value.*
- *Council needs to be more responsive, listen and act.*
- *Housing is integral to good health and development of the community.*

Top 10 issues from all consultation

Council has analysed all of the issues from the first three phases of consultation to come up with a 'Top 10' for the district, and these are summarised below in priority order:

- 1 Lake water quality
- 2 Subdivision
- 3 CBD
- 4 District plan format
- 5 Roading
- 6 Amenity/recreation
- 7 Growth
- 8 Natural/cultural heritage
- 9 Tourism
- 10 Zones

Council has considered this feedback in drafting the first chapter of the next district plan, which will provide a snapshot of the district and the significant resource management issues it faces.

Projects on the go...

Phase 4 consultation

Council will follow up the Marae hui with targeted consultation with a range of Maori organisations and authorities - both within the district and those whose rohe overlap the district boundaries. It is anticipated that these meetings will take place throughout July/August.

Land Use Futures Board

One of the most significant issues facing Rotorua is lake water quality. How the next district plan responds to this will be a major focus. The Fresh Ideas team is participating in workshops convened by the Land Use Futures Board - which has been recently established to look at practical ways to reduce the impact of farming and other activities on Rotorua lakes water quality. The board's representatives are from the district council, regional council and a cross-section of the different landowners. Recent discussions have focused on the range of land use options that could be available if current practices were to change, and the type of district plan response that would be required to facilitate these changes.

Structure Plans

The Eastern and Western Basin Structure Plans were released for comment in May 2008.

Most feedback has been from landowners in or close to affected areas. There has also been feedback from organisations such as Transit NZ, Historic Places Trust, Lake Water Quality Society, Mokoia Community Association and Progress Ngongotaha. Most of the landowner submissions were supportive of proposed changes, particularly where these would give further development options for rural land caught by regional council restrictions. However, some were critical of where one changes were proposed.

The next step is to integrate the two structure plans using the feedback, while also considering overarching matters such as Traffic Impact Assessment.

Designations

Council has recently contacted all authorities who have designations in the district. Formal notification of a review of designations is about to be released.

Landscape Assessments

The finishing touches are being put on the technical reports for the Rotorua basin, northern lakes and southern lakes projects. The reports will be made available to the general public once the council is satisfied that directly affected landowners have had the opportunity to discuss and comment on the key findings. Work is planned to 'standardise' the research that has been done previously for the Tarawera lakes (Lakes A), so a comprehensive and consistent body of landscape research is available for all parts of the district.

New chapters

Now that most of the community feedback is in, work has commenced on the next district plan. Following feedback from elected members, these will be progressively released to the public for informal comment throughout the second half of the year.

Best of the Best Awards

Rotorua District Council has picked up the 2008 local government communications managers' supreme award for the Fresh Ideas campaign. The 'Best of the Best' awards are presented each year at the New Zealand Society of Local Government Managers' annual communication forum, recognising projects that demonstrate excellence in community engagement and effective communication of local authority messages.

RDC's entry was voted top by communications managers representing councils from throughout the country at the annual forum in Queenstown in June.

Planning services manager Tracey May said getting the communications right during the first phases of this project was a key aim to ensure Rotorua will ultimately have a district plan that is easily understood and widely accepted.

"The plan should then be able to provide practical guidelines that support quality sustainable growth for the district while preserving the values that are important to us all. This award clearly suggests we are well and truly on track to achieving this," she said.



Helping the future

The Fresh Ideas team is working with year 12 and 13 Rotorua Girls High School students, who have been studying land use for their NCEA assessments.

One group is investigating signage in Rotorua's CBD - a major issue for the next district plan. Another group is investigating human impacts on the Utuhina Stream. The third group is looking at the impacts of commercialisation of residential areas near major roads. The results from these studies are a valuable form of community engagement and will be used during the district plan review process.

New fact sheets will soon be on the website www.fresh-ideas.co.nz, reflecting some of the key issues raised in consultation.

For more information please see our website, email info@fresh-ideas.co.nz or phone **07 348 4199**.

