



Focus Groups
Urban Growth Strategy
Hutt City Council
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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This summary is based on seven focus groups with Hutt City residents conducted by **MMResearch™** in March 2013.

- **Living in Lower Hutt**
The single most often mentioned reason for living in Lower Hutt given by participants in all groups was the environment. This was further narrowed down to things like the Hutt River, the beaches, the harbour, parks and hills. Also mentioned in this context was the outdoors; participants clearly enjoy the outdoor assets Hutt City has to offer. Many also value the proximity to Wellington.
- **Economic growth first**
Several participants argued that Council's priority should be stimulating economic growth, rather than population growth. Population growth is a result of economic growth. A city grows, when it attracts more businesses and when existing businesses expand. This results in more jobs causing a downstream ripple effect. More jobs require more people, more services, more housing. In other words, building more houses as a growth strategy is putting the cart before the horse, they argue.
- **Is Council doing enough?**
"Is Council doing enough to attract new businesses and assist existing businesses to expand?" This was a question asked of all focus groups. By and large focus group participants felt that Council could do more to stimulate economic growth.
- **A Council-led economic growth initiative**
Participants see no reason why Council could not take the initiative in developing a growth strategy, provided that Council limits its involvement to a role of facilitation rather than doing. Council's involvement in the Queen's Drive parking building is still fresh in their collective memory. Most thought Council should not take on the role of developer or owner of housing estates. "Council regulates and develops policies and uses the appropriate mechanisms such as zoning, rating and building bylaws to encourage private sector developers".
- **Greenfield housing developments**
The concept of greenfield housing developments was greeted with mixed feelings. Some participants could not see the need for new housing developments as they argued that there was no undue pressure on current housing stock and they could not see the population rise so dramatically in the next few years that this could present a problem.

Few participants viewed the Kelson option as realistic. It was simply too far away from the city and there are no amenities in Kelson. They also argued that developing appropriate infrastructure would be difficult and costly. Others viewed it more positively and thought it could be a natural extension of the Kelson village.

Additional housing in Wainuiomata was viewed no more positively. Some participants bluntly stated that nobody wants to live in Wainuiomata. Others said that the Wainui population is static and asked themselves who the occupiers of these new houses would be as they did not think that people

from Lower Hutt would move to Wainuiomata. Even the group of Wainui residents had their doubts. They mentioned the land alongside the Parkway extension took a very long time to sell. Participants feared that additional land available for housing would also take a very long time to sell.

However, one thing most participants were united about is that new housing developments should be high quality designs and built to high standards. There was no appetite for low cost, cheap “concrete state housing estates” that could easily turn into unwanted ghettos.

- **A second access road between Wainuiomata and Naenae**

Of the seven groups, four were broadly in favour of the Wainuiomata to Naenae link being established. One of these four groups specified that this road was desirable without the proposed housing developments, but also noted that the Cross Valley Link may be a better investment for the Hutt Valley.

Not surprisingly, opinions were again quite polarized by the Access Road Proposal. Harbour Ward and Senior residents who felt that there would be limited demand for Wainuiomata based housing, struggled to see any wider value in such a significant investment in that community.

- **Low rise apartments**

The concept of developing low rise apartments was favourably received by most focus group participants. They felt strongly that these would have to be high quality developments and in this context several participants talked about architectural designs. As a consequence these types of apartments would attract high net worth people, professional couples or elderly people who wish to “live smaller” and seek a higher degree of security.

Low rise apartments near the CBD in Lower Hutt, particularly the southern end of High Street, possibly with a view over the Hutt River was considered a stylish living option and a desirable housing addition to Lower Hutt.

Participants were very concerned that Council take a holistic approach to these developments, taking into account “upstream and downstream” infrastructure, like water supply, drainage, sewerage, roads, transport and also car parking. Off road car parking is a must.

- **Making Places**

There is confusion about what Making Places is all about. Very few participants knew much about Making Places. Those who had heard about it thought it was just a beautification programme around The Dowse. Some participants were quite complimentary about the square in front of The Dowse, whereas others summed it up as a waste of money. By and large, participants were reluctant to see more money being spent on Making Places, mostly because they did not know enough about it. Perhaps if the intent of Making Places had been better communicated to the community, it would have been received more positively.

- **Intensification**

There were mixed reactions to the idea of financial incentives for high density residential developments. Participants could see benefits for some residents in smaller (possibly cheaper and/or low maintenance) sections. Infill housing is fairly controversial, but most participants would find it acceptable as long

as good design guidelines are enforced to ensure adequate levels of privacy, and sound proofing.

There was less discussion around multi-unit developments. Overall the consensus would appear to be that Hutt City requires a variety of housing to accommodate the needs of residents at different income levels and life stages.

- **Rezoning State Highway 2 and southern portion of Manor Park**

There were mixed feelings about rezoning the State Highway 2 / Korokoro entrance way to allow development of more than 12 metres and rezoning the southern portion of Manor Park for limited light industry. Some were for this in principle, largely because they thought it was “out of the way” and did not affect residential housing.

Others felt that money was better spent promoting existing under-utilised land holdings and vacant buildings in Seaview and other areas in Lower Hutt. Besides, newly created zones for industrial use would have the potential of “emptying out currently occupied buildings”.

- **Technology Valley**

In the context of stimulating the local economy, participants were of the opinion that Council should support existing businesses in expanding their operations and make more effort in attracting new businesses to the area. Some brought up the concept of Technology Valley and felt that Council could put more resources in creating a technology cluster in Lower Hutt capitalizing on the huge available intellectual talent in the sector. A technology cluster would inevitably cause down-stream spin-offs for the manufacturing and services sectors.

- **Conclusion**

Overall our impressions are that many strongly held opinions and beliefs arise from limited comprehension of the proposals, how they mesh together and the objectives and benefits that may accrue. Does HCC want to make a start on greenfield development to accommodate growth they expect to generate through other initiatives? Or are participants correct in assuming that it’s an “if you build it they will come” arrangement?

The Hutt City residents involved in the focus groups are passionate about living here - and they are adamant that any future developments must preserve the sense of space they value so highly. They are keen for HCC to insist on well-designed developments that enhance the existing community. Participants also want Council to consider the wider infrastructure implications of increased population in specific areas, e.g. on traffic flows.

Overall, participants desire Hutt City to remain comfortable for them, but to become a city of which they can be proud.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 Context

The vision Hutt City Council (HCC) has for the city takes a high-level view of the uniqueness of each neighbourhood. To develop a strategy for making this vision a reality the city needs to understand within each neighbourhood:

- people and communities
- the natural environment
- employment opportunities; and
- economic, cultural, social and environmental strengths

To achieve this vision requires growth – population growth and economic growth. Growth of any sort requires effort and stimulation. Pursuing higher growth is likely to require greater investment by Council, innovation in terms of attracting employment and opportunities, and partnerships with business.

Council now wishes to explore with the various communities within Hutt City what their thoughts are on a Council-lead growth strategy. To this end Council has asked **MMResearch™** to conduct a series of focus groups representing these communities in anticipation of a much wider community consultation that will take place around May of 2013. This consultation has now been brought forward to April 2013.

The communities subject to this research are identified as uniquely Wainuiomata (x1), Harbour Ward representing Petone and Eastbourne (x1), Lower Hutt General (x3), Business (x1) and Senior Citizens (x1). The number in brackets is the number of focus groups conducted for each of these communities – 7 groups in total.

2.2 Key Areas of Exploration

- People's views on affordability of housing, liveability in the city, the environment, perceived lack of growth and reasons. Why people live in Lower Hutt.
- General discussion about Lower Hutt, pro's and con's, comparisons with other cities, need for change.
- People's views on Council-lead growth strategy, is it appropriate for Council to take a leading role in growth and development, is Council capable of developing and implementing a growth strategy?
- What are the benefits of a Council-lead growth strategy, what are the "fish hooks," likes and dislikes? What needs to happen for such a strategy to be successful? The need for more information.

In addition to the above mentioned areas of exploration **MMResearch™** was provided with a list of specific initiatives for feedback from focus group participants. These areas included:

- Greenfield and Infrastructure
- High Quality low rise apartment developments
- Business and Intensification, and
- Business.

This filled up the "agenda" of the focus groups, (the topic guide), which meant that some areas could not be explored in the level of depth ideally required within the two-hour time limit.

2.3 Focus Groups

A focus group is a semi-structured group discussion facilitated by an experienced group moderator. Focus groups provide in-depth insight and understanding about motivations, drivers and perceptions on predetermined issues. Focus groups are useful for generating, defining and evaluating ideas, propositions, products and services.

Group discussions typically run for 1½ to 2 hours and comprise 6-8 participants drawn from the target audience. **MMResearch™** has a dedicated focus group interview room at its centrally located office in Bouverie Street, Petone. The target audience may best be described as Hutt City rate payers and residential tenants age 18 years+.

HCC made a contact list available of residents, who, in the past have agreed to take part in surveys. All residents on the contact list with a valid email address were asked via an online survey whether they would be prepared to participate in one of the focus groups and to select one of the pre-set dates that would suit them best. A random selection was made from those who confirmed in the affirmative and were available on the appropriate pre-set date. A confirmation email was sent by the **MMResearch™** office along with times of the focus group and a location map. Those who were not selected were also informed via an email thanking them for showing interest in the research. All respondents were also followed up by telephone to ensure that the right number of participants turned up on the agreed date.

Business owners were recruited from a contact list made available by HCC supplemented by **MMResearch™**'s own contact list of business owners.

In order to ensure that we had sufficient numbers in our focus groups, we over-recruited each group to cover for last minute drop-outs. In this case we recruited nine participants per group. All participants were given \$50 to cover any expenses incurred.

Focus Group Participants

	n=	%
Gender		
Female	26	46%
Male	31	54%
Age group		
25 – 34 years	3	5%
35 – 44 years	6	11%
45 – 54 years	8	14%
55 – 64 years	13	23%
65 years and over	18	32%
Unknown	9	16%
Ethnic group		
Asian	1	2%
Maori	2	4%
Other ethnicity	3	5%
Pacific	1	2%
Prefer not to say	2	4%
Unknown	5	9%
Total	57	100%

	n=	%
Focus groups		
HC1	8	14%
HC2	9	16%
HC3	7	12%
Seniors	8	14%
Wainuiomata	9	16%
Harbour Ward	8	14%
Businesses	8	14%
Suburb		
Alicetown	6	11%
Avalon	1	2%
Belmont	2	4%
Boulcott	2	4%
Days Bay	1	2%
Eastbourne	2	4%
Eponi	2	4%
Harbour View	1	2%
Hutt Business	4	7%
Hutt Central	3	5%
Kelson	1	2%
Korokoro	1	2%
Lowry Bay	2	4%
Maungaraki	3	5%
Moera	1	2%
Naenae	2	4%
Normandale	2	4%
Petone	4	7%
Stokes Valley	1	2%
Taita	1	2%
Wainuiomata	9	16%
Waterloo	4	7%
Whitemans Valley	1	2%
Woburn	1	2%
Total	57	100%

3. KEY FINDINGS

In the research findings that follow, we have kept to the sequence of questioning in the interview guide, followed by a thematic analysis, based on participants' verbatim comments. These are shown in *blue italics*. At the end of each section we have summarised the findings with an overall conclusion.

Please note that in this report we have used Hutt City and Lower Hutt interchangeably.

3.1 Key Reasons for Living in Hutt City

Participants in all groups were asked by way of a "warm-up" question what specifically they liked about living in Hutt City. The group moderator asked them to write down the three key reasons for living in Lower Hutt. All reasons were transferred to the whiteboard and the most often mentioned reasons highlighted and briefly discussed.

The single most often mentioned reason by participants in all groups was the environment. This was further narrowed down to things like the Hutt River, the beaches, the harbour, parks and hills. Also mentioned in this context was the outdoors; participants clearly enjoy the outdoor assets Hutt City has to offer. This prompted one participant to proclaim that:

- > *HCC has turned its back on the river and the harbour and, as the jewels in the crown; they should be taken up in city development plan.*

Another reason for living in HC is its proximity to Wellington. Closely related to this is the affordable housing available in HC. Many participants work in Wellington and commute on a daily basis by car, bus or train. Living in Wellington would be too expensive; HC offers affordable land and housing.

- > *I wouldn't live anywhere else.*

Some even went as far as to say that they would change jobs, if a suitable job was available in HC.

Travelling to Wellington for other reasons than work – shopping, Te Papa, dining out, the stadium, the theatre and other cultural activities – was no big deal. As far as they were concerned they had the best of both worlds – an excellent living environment in HC with all leisure and pleasure activities on their doorstep.

Not surprisingly, the group with senior citizens mentioned the proximity to excellent amenities in HC, particularly medical centres, pharmacies, hospitals and specialist care as well as retirement housing. This featured strongly on their radar screen.

Participants with school aged children mentioned good schools and learning institutions in the Hutt Valley.

Participants in the Wainuiomata group mentioned the friendly community and community spirit and the quiet living away from the rat race as an important reason for living in Wainuiomata.

Interestingly, participants from Eastbourne also valued the outdoors, the harbour and the beaches and the environment in general, but they added

that they would not want to live in Lower Hutt proper. Their observations about the environment related to the environment of Eastbourne and the bays.

3.2 Is Hutt City Falling Behind?

We introduced the topic of growth and asked participants whether they thought that Hutt City was falling behind in growth. Several participants made the distinction between economic growth (new businesses, more jobs) and population growth. Population growth, they argued, is a result of economic growth. A city grows, when it attracts more businesses and when existing businesses expand. This results in more jobs causing a downstream ripple effect. More jobs require more people, more services, more housing. In other words, building more houses as a growth strategy is putting the cart before the horse, they argue.

- > *Despite many big businesses leaving or closing over the last decade, there are many new businesses starting up, mostly smaller ones. Council should do more to attract business and only then start worrying about housing. Business first, housing to follow.*
- > *Attracting new industries is important, and that's where I hope Council puts more energy.*
- > *You can't expect to attract people here if there's no work.*
- > *So just to clarify, we're talking about growth solely in the economic sense or are we talking about growth in the population sense, because I don't think growth in the population sense is particularly helpful, whereas growth in the economic sense probably is.*
- > *I agree with [previous speaker]. I don't think that population per se is going to be a good thing at all and I do not agree that population growth and economic growth are closely tied together - you can have population growth and places get poorer as well. You need business to be attracted to the area.*

It is not a foregone conclusion that everybody wants growth or that lack of growth necessarily leads to decline. A handful of participants argued that they are quite happy with the way things are and growth of any kind is not a priority for them. Here's a brief exchange on the subject of population growth:

- > *Female 1: I don't think we need population growth.*
- > *Male 1: No, we don't necessarily want population growth, we want a stable population.*
- > *Female 2: Want people to come in [to HC to work] and go away at night, thanks.*
- > *Male 1: We want work places and enterprises within the Hutt Valley.*
- > *Female 3: A slim number of the people who feed into Wellington actually live in the Hutt anyway.*

3.3 Is Council active enough in stimulating growth?

So is Council doing enough to attract new businesses and assist existing businesses to expand? The general feeling is NO.

- > *I don't think that Council necessarily has got the vision or the resources to attract industry or whatever. I think that the driving force must come from entrepreneurs that really want to set up businesses and those businesses are of sufficient significance and size that become the new driver for the valley.*

Council could and should do more to assist existing businesses to expand and to take advantage of the enormous “people talent” available in the Hutt Valley. This is what a female participant said about the opinion of her late husband who was a chartered engineer working with DSIR and in the science sector in the Hutt Valley.

- > *He feels that neither the Government nor the Council really get it about what a wonderful bunch of people we've got over there, and inventing fantastic things, high tech things – world beating things. But the Government doesn't get it and the Council doesn't get it. They're under-funded. Those people need a hand-up, and it would bring people to live here; it would bring people to spend here. My husband was just blown away about how clever those people were and what they could do and what is possible and working in horrible old prefabs ...*
- > *I believe the Council should concentrate on what we've already got, on the industries that are already here, and what do they need to expand. Promoting and getting new industry coming in – that's a secondary. Concentrate on what we've got and build on what we've got. It's already there.*
- > *I wonder how many of you know the largely private initiative of the Technology Valley that is amalgamating the talents that you have mentioned under government sponsorship and assistance. And I think that this is where the Council needs to have the intelligence and thrust to provide the gateway – not be the driver – but drive the gateway assistance to ensure that those initiatives are aided.*

So how do participants feel about HCC taking the initiative in stimulating growth in the valley? Across the board this was favourably received, but not without some reservations.

Memories of Council involvement in the Queens Drive parking building still linger and participants would not want to see Council taking on the role of developers. Council can facilitate, but should steer clear from becoming developers, owners or builders. The Harbour Ward group aptly summarised the sentiments about Council's role in this respect.

- > *Council could be a facilitator for growth and development, as long as Council does not become the owner of housing developments. Rezoning certain areas and developing infrastructure was as far as Council should go.*
- > *It is Council's role to regulate, not to develop, not to build.*
- > *I think there needs to be a facilitator who can actually corral the right people to get things moving. And maybe when they elect a Council, we need a Councillor whose job is economic development solely. Their role on the Council is to be the facilitator, to get the economic development going.*

A letter to the Editor of the Hutt News of 16 April 2013 summed up the sentiments of many focus group participants when she wrote:

- > *It is not the Council's role to buy and develop land, but to make appropriate policies through such mechanisms as zoning, rating and building bylaws to encourage private sector developers.*

As mentioned above, according to some participants in the focus groups, Council involvement (in stimulating growth) should be limited to facilitation; making it possible and easy for businesses to establish themselves, being business-friendly. Aspects of facilitation include zoning and rezoning and also to improve infra-structure. High speed broadband was singled out as an important infrastructure issue that requires an urgent solution.

- > *But I do take on the point; it would be very interesting to know exactly: what is the zoning of the Seaview area and the other areas that, because of vacancy, are underutilised at the moment and what we could do more efficiently with those places.*
- > *Maybe zoning, but they shouldn't have these sub-companies like the one that handles the houses [Urban Plus] and the infrastructure at the moment on properties where they're losing money heavily.*
- > *What is their job, which is the zoning and the administration of the zoning so that if somebody wants to build something ...*

Rezoning was mentioned, because several participants felt that there was no need to make more land available for industrial developments and that unused existing land could be re-zoned for these developments.

- > *I think, as I think we've already said, there's no need to make more land available. It's a question of looking at what is already here – a lot of it is derelict, unused and misused, and tidying it up.*

Improvements to infra-structure were hotly debated.

- > *Well, I think we get an awful lot of business, it starts here but it doesn't stay here and a lot of the time I think it's an infrastructure issue. I see a lot of high tech companies that come out from IRL, they're spin-off companies and some of them are still out there on the Gracefield site, but those that try and get right out find that they don't have the infrastructure here and so they look for other places.*
- > *The companies that I'm aware of, it was mostly around their access to a really good high speed broadband network. They can go down to town [Wellington] and get on the fibre network down there, but getting onto the fibre network that's around in the central city down here [Hutt City] was really hard and very expensive.*
- > *Yeah, but if you don't have your infrastructure working sound enough there, in time to come it's going to fail, no matter you going ahead with all the developments and things.*
- > *What do they mean by "growth" because every now and then there's this whole push to get more population into the Hutt. But that concerns me because they're not building more of all the things that a growing population needs like parks, the pools and everything, they're being held as the status quo, whereas if you get more population you need more amenity.*

One sentiment that came through very strongly is that if Council became involved in stimulating growth, it should be done properly with a lot of thought given to downstream consequences. There was general agreement about all the growth initiatives discussed, provided that they are done well and sufficient thought is given to the downstream effects such as infra-structure, (more about this later).

- > *We're quite concerned that these developments should be done properly and that Council should be aware of "ripple effect". Make sure that all scenarios are thought through including downstream consequences.*
- > *We want Council to really do their homework and research the feasibility of these options [housing developments] before presenting them to the public (geo-technical aspects, Maori consultation). And we believe it is vital to have architectural design that preserves the environmental aspects we all value and makes a city everyone will be proud of.*

This participant summed up the opinions of many others in the focus groups.

- > *Their job from a stimulus point of view is to set the ground rules and maybe provide the referee. But the rest of us are the players and the spectators and they shouldn't be getting involved in the playing or the spectating part of it.*

The discussion about industry growth and whether HCC has a role in stimulating this kind of growth lead to some observations about housing in the Hutt Valley and available space for industry development. Several participants could not accept that HC had a shortage on housing.

- > *Why develop housing if there is no shortage? Who is going to live there?*
- > *There really isn't a lot of housing pressure in the Valley and to be running around creating that sort of [housing] development at this stage sort of to me seems they're putting the cart before the horse.*

Similar sentiments were expressed about creating new space for industrial developments.

- > *In addition, aren't there empty buildings and warehouses in the Seaview area as well sitting there?*
- > *So many buildings are empty. Why are you looking at progressing other areas like Manor Park and golf clubs and taking the land off them if you haven't got them [existing empty buildings] filled up now?*
- > *Seaview still has the zoning that they put there in about the 1930s and '40s when they encouraged the motor vehicle industry to arrive. The motor vehicle industry disappeared in the 1970s yet it's still got the same zoning. There are acres of land down there in Seaview and Gracefield, acres and acres of it, and they're stacking logs and scrap metal on it. To me, the Council has no idea what they're doing.*
- > *Look at High Street, how many buildings or how many spaces are empty. For lease, for lease, for lease. That's not a good look. If you walk down there as a local person you think, "What's going on here?" It doesn't look like it's moving forward and you need a bit of growth. You need the people and you need business opportunities.*

Groups couldn't help themselves by going off a tangent from time to time and what was interesting is that just about all focus group participants had strong feelings about Council's involvement in the Queensgate development and the demise of High Street. While slightly off the subject, it is worth reporting on this. In short, many participants blame the Council for the demise of High Street. They are particularly upset by the fact that car parking at Queensgate is free while shoppers "get stung with parking tickets when parking in High Street".

- > *Well that's once again the consequence of very poor planning by the Hutt City Council. They decided that they were going to use ratepayer's money to subsidise Queensgate, which is a huge multinational company, it didn't need the bloody money and that's just killed Lower Hutt.*

Here follows a typical discussion about Queensgate and how participants feel about Council's involvement in the development thereof. However, Queensgate also has its fans.

- > *Female 1: At the time when they went to do that, a lot of people were against it and there was a lot of debate about it and the Council decided to back it anyway.*
- > *Male 1: Well it doesn't work in the sense that it's killed the rest of the centre.*

- > *Female 2: It doesn't work in terms of community, it doesn't sort of like feed out into the other shops - it doesn't feed out into High Street. In fact you can probably often go to Queensgate and do your shop there, if you can't get it there, you don't get it or you wait till you go somewhere else.*
- > *Female 1: I think a lot people come from town to shop at Queensgate.*
- > *Female 3: Yeah, I quite like Queensgate.*
- > *Male 2: You do?*
- > *Female 1: I see a lot of people that I know from Wellington.*
- > *Female 3: I can go into one place and get it.*
- > *Male 2: I hate it.*
- > *Female 3: I don't have to walk for miles around little shops that sell random stuff that I don't care about.*
- > *Female 2: But I remember when High Street, there used to be all those shops on High Street-*
- > *Female 1: And they were busy.*
- > *Female 2: They were busy, there was a shop called EMI Records and there were a couple of seats outside it and there was always people milling around and it was always busy and then Queensgate came along. Gone.*
- > *Female 1: But that's just progress isn't it, like when Queensgate started, there was Queensgate 1 and there was Queensgate 2 and then you had that lovely little courtyard in between which was quite nice, you could see the fresh air and all that and then all of a sudden it all merged into the one big thing, but that is progress. It's lovely having Petone but this is the thing, it's nice to have this and that and that - we don't want to have everywhere a Petone or everywhere a Queensgate - it's nice to have a few combinations.*

There was also an interesting discussion that follows on from the observations of Female 1 above about possible developments in Petone.

- > *Male 1: Exactly the same thing with Petone. The western end of Petone they want to put a big multi-storey shopping complex.*
- > *Female 1: No, they can't let them do that.*
- > *Male 1: I know, but that's what they want they want to do.*
- > *Female 2: It will be horrific.*
- > *Female 3: Where's that come from?*
- > *Male 1: I don't know where it's come from.*
- > *Female 4: They've been talking about that for a while.*
- > *Male 1: There's been a big petition against it, but they're still thinking that way.*
- > *Female 2: But if they have shopping then people will come.*
- > *Female 1: Yeah, the nice thing about Jackson Street is you start at one end and you walk to the other and then you cross the road and you walk back. There's cafes on either side and it's, I don't know, shopping the old fashioned way.*
- > *Female 3: And the shops are all different to those that are in Queensgate.*
- > *Female 4: And they're all different, yeah.*

Here's another discussion on the same subject from one of the general groups.

- > *Male 1: And apparently already there's a resource consent for where the old Colgate Palmolive building is, which is now Storage One, of developing that into a mall.*
- > *Female 1: Another mall?*
- > *Male 2: A mall!*
- > *Female 2: A mall!*
- > *Female 3: A mall! No!*
- > *Female 4: That will kill Petone. It's so lovely the way it is. Why spoil it? Why kill it?*
- > *Male 1: It's going to kill it. We don't need to build new malls.*
- > *Female 1: It's terrible.*
- > *Female 3: We don't want another mall.*

In summary, participants like living in Lower Hutt. They like the environment, particularly the river, the harbour and its beaches, the parks and the surrounding hills. They also like Lower Hutt because land and housing is more affordable compared to Wellington. While many Hutt Valley people work in Wellington, they come home to a large section (compared to Wellington) and the house they live in would be many thousands of dollars more expensive in Wellington. Commuting between Lower Hutt and Wellington is not an issue. They have the choice of driving in, using the bus or train. Having Wellington on their doorstep for non work related activities, i.e. leisure and pleasure is a very attractive feature of living in Lower Hutt.

The debate on growth moved in opposing directions; there were those who saw growth as vitally important for future sustainability, yet others were quite happy to keep things the way they are. Their argument was simple; let Wellington, Porirua and the Kapiti coast grow and leave Lower Hutt sitting in the middle and provide quality living. These people like their quarter acre section with a large property, perhaps a swimming pool at an affordable price. They don't mind working in Wellington as commuting to and from is not very onerous.

Those who saw growth as desirable and inevitable for future sustainability wondered if Council were right in pursuing an *Urban Growth Strategy*. They argued that population growth is a result of economic growth. Population growth cannot be a strategy in itself, but is a logical result of a stimulated economy. Hence, Council could find ways of stimulating the economy and this would result in more jobs which in turn would attract more people to live and work in Hutt City.

Participants were very clear that Council's role would be one of facilitation and not "doing". Council should not become the developer, the builder, the owner of real estate. Council makes it possible for developers to do what they do best; Council does the zoning or rezoning if required, they make sure the infrastructure is modern and up to scratch. Inadequate infrastructure makes companies look elsewhere to establish themselves.

As an aside, participants talked passionately about Queensgate, mostly in a not so positive sense. However, Queensgate also has its supporters. Talk of another mall in Petone was received with disbelief as most participants blame the demise of High Street in Lower Hutt on Queensgate. Building a mall in (west) Petone would surely cause the downfall of Jackson Street. Without exception, all participants considered Jackson Street a real asset to Petone and Lower Hutt and they would not like to see it dying a slow death in trying to compete with another mall.

4. URBAN GROWTH STRATEGY

4.1 Greenfield and Infrastructure

Focus Group discussions relating to Greenfield and Infrastructure covered off the following proposed initiatives from HCC.

Proposed initiatives

- Rezoning 130 hectares in Kelson and Wainuiomata to allow residential development
- Partnering with developers to provide key infrastructure for greenfield development including roads and water infrastructure in Upper Kelson
- A second Wainuiomata access road connection to the Upper Fitzherbert area (including extension and upgrade of Wise Street)
- Developing a structure plan to guide housing development in the Upper Fitzherbert area
- Limit Council's up-front cost recovery for greenfield infrastructure through development contributions to 50%
- Establishing a targeted rate of \$50 (GST exc) per annum on Wainuiomata properties to help fund the second Wainuiomata access road

4.2 Residential Development: (Wainuiomata / Kelson)

- Rezoning 130 hectares in Kelson and Wainuiomata to allow residential development
- roads and water infrastructure in Upper Kelson

The discussion around the Greenfield Development Proposal tended to polarize opinions. Many supported the proposal, but others raised questions as to whether such expansion was necessary. Participants did not only question whether there was sufficient population growth, but also whether renewal projects closer to the centre might be a better option.

- > *Female 1: For my part, given the projections about the population not growing, I'm just going to take a very extreme view here and say, "We don't need greenfield developments.*
- > *Male 1: Is there a shortage of housing in Wainuiomata is the thing isn't it, are people likely to sell their houses easy?*
- > *Male 2: I don't think there's really assurance for housing there.*
- > *Male 3: No, I don't think there is either.*
- > *Male 1: I think they see it as an area where they can attract people to.*
- > *Female 1: There's a piece of track there where they could easily build on.*
- > *Male 1: Who might come and like you say, taking jobs in the Hutt.*
- > *Male 2: Or you're going to have big employers to employ those people.*

Others, while supportive of the proposal, felt that simply building the housing would not in itself attract additional population. "Who is going to live in all these housing developments if there isn't the business to support them?" was a question asked by many. Council needs to support business – stop businesses from leaving, and to attract new businesses.

- > *Female 1: Unless the economic development is improved, why would people want to invest money by developing something in Lower Hutt, in a stagnant area? It doesn't sound like a very good business investment to me, unless it's a more vibrant place to come to.*
- > *Male 2: Yeah, exactly. You open all this land and build more houses, but who's going to buy them, who's going to live there?*
- > *Female 1: And who wants to put the money upfront to do it if you don't have shops and people and cafes and things.*
- > *Male 3: It's about jobs.*

One group reached the consensus that Council is going about “growth development” in the wrong way; attract business first before starting to spend money on housing developments and infrastructure. Use existing facilities first. Council needs a clear vision and leadership to take the city into the future. Very keen on “Technology Valley”. “We have the best brains in the region; we need to capitalise on this”. (More about this later.)

- > *I firmly believe there needs to be somebody significant taken on board by the Council to look into this idea of attracting high technology to the Hutt Valley. But don't leave it to the Council to do it. They need to find somebody who's got the mindset and the brain power to have a vision and enthusiastic and competent to actually research this. Because I see that as being a huge way of helping this whole area.*

Some polarising viewpoints were expressed specifically in respect of Kelson and Wainuiomata. Some were against or had reservations.

- > *If you want to develop land the furthest possible distance from amenities, facilities and everything else, upper Fitzherbert Road's got to be it and the upper Kelson's area is even worse on top of a hill.*
- > *I don't necessarily have a problem with rezoning if there is the demand there. It's like you're saying. Go ahead and rezone it but it might end up exactly like you said: 20 years down the track nobody actually wants to develop it and live there.*
- > *The higher you get up the hill [in Kelson] the more difficult it is to get water up there and at least Wainuiomata is flat.*

Others thought greenfield developments in Kelson and Wainuiomata were a good idea.

- > *Male 1: I think the Kelson one is just a natural expansion of the suburb. It's the way most of those hill suburbs just steadily grow over the years. I don't have a problem with that one at all and if it links through to Liverton*
- > *Male 2: I quite agree. I think the Kelson idea is probably a goer, but I'm not too sure about this Wainui side of it at all. There seems to be too much controversy involved there and the cost of it to the council seems to be something that shouldn't be considered either.*

In the case of Wainuiomata, some participants found it difficult to accept that there might be any demand for additional housing in Wainuiomata.

- > *Female 1: Wainuiomata is not growing though, is it? People don't want to live there anymore.*
- > *Female 2: Particularly Wainuiomata, they don't want to live there now. There was a stage where you'd think, that's a waste of money. No, people did have to want to live there when they had young families and it was affordable da da da.*

Now nobody's that desperate anymore. They don't want to live there. People are not gonna come to Lower Hutt and live over there.

- > *Male 1: Unless they punch a tunnel through it.*

Even the Wainuiomata group expressed reservations about potential demand in the valley. Here follows a brief discussion about unsold land holdings in Wainuiomata.

- > *Female 1: I just wonder how popular it would be [building additional houses in the Fitzherbert area] because weren't they for ages trying to sell that land that's alongside the Parkway extension and that didn't sell and then they've got that other bit ...*
- > *Male 1: I think it's just been sold.*
- > *Female 2: So in other words what long-term cover are we going to get if it doesn't take off like a firecracker?*
- > *Female 1: Yeah, because then it just becomes a drain on the existing population.*
- > *Male 2: Of all these houses with no one living in.*

Still others found the proposed locations favourable in that they are tucked away out of view and the developments would not become an eyesore. However there was concern that this might lead to commuter suburbs and there would be a need for good transport.

In the Wainuiomata group there was quite a debate about the size of new sections to be developed. Some felt that families value the larger, better value for money sections available in Wainuiomata, but they could also see a need for cheaper housing. Most agreed that smaller sections would be cheaper, and could appeal to older residents, but families would still need to be accommodated.

Design quality was a theme common to most groups with participants adamant that they want to see well designed housing – not lots of concrete box “state housing”. The consensus was that good design (form, function, eco-efficient and sustainable) is an essential element of any development supported by Council. These sentiments applied to all development types, greenfield, low rise and infill.

- > *Female 1: Have caveats on design. It has to be good quality.*
- > *Female 2: It has to be good.*
- > *Female 1: I don't know if that's the right word, but a caveat on design.*
- > *Male 2: You want a caveat on design.*
- > *Female 1: So that there is a standard of design and they cannot build below that. So, basically the Council is setting the standard for the housing so the developers just have to abide by that.*

4.3 Second Wainuiomata Access Road

Of the seven groups four were broadly in favour of the Wainuiomata to Naenae link being established. One of these four group specified that this road was desirable without the proposed housing developments, but also noted that the cross valley link may be a better investment for the Hutt Valley. One of the Lower Hutt General groups did not directly express a view on the access road proposal.

Not surprisingly, opinions were again quite polarized by the Access Road Proposal. Harbour Ward and Senior residents who felt that there would be limited demand for Wainuiomata based housing struggled to see any wider value in such a significant investment in that community.

- > *Female: Really it's a waste of discussion time on this topic about building more houses in Wainuiomata.*
- > *Male: Yeah, you've got to have the demand for it. If the Council was going to spend any money on roading, my personal view is to build a Cross Valley Link that's been planned for a hundred years and get traffic off The Esplanade. Because the city's biggest asset is the harbour, you can say what you like, but you can't get near the harbour because it's covered with trucks all day and night, I know plenty about the transport industry I work in it, so I'd be urging them to reconsider spending the money on unwanted housing and second access road to Wainui.*

Interestingly some participants, notably some in the Wainuiomata group, questioned, "Who would want to drive to Naenae?"

- > *Male 1: I honestly can't see who would go to the Hutt via Naenae.*
- > *Female 1: I wondered that too, yeah, it seems a long route anywhere doesn't it?*
- > *Female 2: Who's taking the long way round?*
- > *Male 1: Yeah, because you're winding all the way over to Fitzherbert and all the way over there, then over there [pointing to the tabled map].*
- > *Male 2: It's going to give you an alternative access, for sure.*
- > *Female 2: But is it a good way to go?*

This in turn led to discussion about "The Tunnel" and why that was not to be developed.

- > *Male 1: In Wainuiomata we've been campaigning for many years to get a second access.*
- > *Male 2: Or a tunnel.*
- > *Male 1: Or a tunnel, yeah.*
- > *Female 1: Yeah, what happened to the tunnel?*
- > *Male 3: Why not a tunnel under that hill there?*
- > *Female 1: Or the existing tunnel.*
- > *Facilitator: Would you prefer a tunnel?*
- > *Male 2: Yeah, I think it's a much better idea.*
- > *Male 1: This plan opens up the extra land for extra housing which is a bonus for the Council because the Council then have so many more ratepayers*

Nevertheless, there was quite a lot of support for the concept of the second access road, and the benefits it might bring to Wainuiomata. Here follows a

discussion by the proponents in the Wainuiomata group of a second access road.

- > *Female 1: So I do see a second egress from Wainuiomata or a second access would be really good. Just better access, especially from this end is much better because it's always clogged up over there. It would relieve the pressure on the Hill Road quite a lot.*
- > *Female 2: Yeah, it's a horrible hill to drive over back and forth all the time.*
- > *Male 1: A lot of local residents, they want another road, another way in and out too.*
- > *Female 1: Well I think the second road in Wainuiomata is quite a good idea, but I don't know that it needs to have the housing alongside it.*
- > *Male 1: Perhaps to make it worthwhile.*
- > *Male 2: Yeah, because it gets people again out of Wainuiomata, it gives them access further up the valley doesn't it, they don't have to come out down here, they can come out there [pointing to the map] and they can get closer to the services, I think New World has just shut down in Wainuiomata because it hasn't got the you know, enough business, I suppose.-*
- > *Male 3: You can also come straight onto the motorway too if you're going to Waddington Drive.*
- > *Male 2: So I think it is good, if you take it out of its isolation and look at how it can not only benefit Wainuiomata, but it also can benefit the northern end as well.*

That said, support for the concept was often tempered by reservations in respect of the cost - who would pay? and the benefit to the wider Lower Hutt community.

- > *Facilitator: Okay, so in general a positive feeling about that?*
- > *Female 2: Generally a positive feeling, but if the Council's looking for, I don't know, economic growth, I'm just trying to think is how would they pay for it?*
- > *Female 1: I still think we need business to come in.*
- > *Female 2: How is that going to benefit the wider Valley? That [the second access road] will benefit the community of Wainuiomata, which is a very large community.*
- > *Female 2: But is that going to then suck the life out Wainuiomata because it's going to be easy for the people of Wainuiomata to come into the Hutt Valley? What effect will that have on local business?*

4.4 Targeted Rates to fund Wainuiomata to Naenae link

Council proposes a targeted rate of \$50 (GST exc) per annum on Wainuiomata properties to help fund the second Wainuiomata access road.

Views on this topic were quite divergent. Some (particularly Wainuiomata) residents felt that a targeted rates contribution to the development of the access road was an outrage and that the cost should be borne over the whole ratepayer base.

- > *Female 1: I was just going to say, opening an extra road between Wainuiomata and the Hutt Valley sounds fantastic. I don't know that there necessarily needs to be a loading on the ratepayers of Wainuiomata. Why couldn't it be funded maybe partly by that and partly by a toll road, I believe that we can do that.*
- > *Male 1: To hell with that. This should be paid by all Lower Hutt rate payers, not just Wainui rate payers. I can guarantee that that the \$50 will never be released off the rates in Wainuiomata.*
- > *Facilitator: The \$50 is only a contribution to the total cost.*
- > *Male 2: I would think the targeted rate should be spread over the whole of Hutt City, not only Wainuiomata because everybody would benefit from increased population.*
- > *Female 1: It does seem a bit unfair doesn't it?*

An informal straw poll in the Wainui group suggested that most participants felt that Wainui rate payers should not be singled out to make a contribution to the cost of building the second access road. It should be equally distributed over all rate payers.

Participants in the Harbour Ward group felt that the proposed \$50 targeted rates contribution was token and that Wainuiomata residents should bear a larger portion of the financial burden.

- > *Male 1: Those numbers are nonsense.*
- > *Male 2: \$50 a year is \$200,000 out of Wainuiomata. They're talking a \$50 million roadway at \$200,000 a year. They're just dreaming.*
- > *Facilitator: They're not necessarily saying that they should pay entirely. This is a contribution.*
- > *Male 2: Yeah, but \$200,000 a year for a \$50 million project, it doesn't even pay for the afternoon tea!*

One participant noted the state of the economy and financial pressures already faced by ratepayers as somewhat of a barrier.

- > *Well this is only my opinion, that's the last thing you want because people have starved by rates, there's no money around, so why keep bleeding people more and more, you know shaking the pennies out of their pockets because if you said you're going to partner with them, obviously ratepayers are going to have to put financial input into that, people are squeezed enough as it is.*

4.5 Partnering with developers to provide key infrastructure for greenfield developments

- Developing a structure plan to guide development in the Upper Fitzherbert area, and
- Limit Council's up-front cost recovery for greenfield infrastructure through development contributions to 50%.

There was clearly support for the council partnering/working with private developers to provide housing infrastructure. However concerns were raised about the appropriate type and level of council contribution.

There seemed to be some uncertainty around what is meant by "partnering" with developers. Specifically, the role the council could take ranges from facilitator (e.g. rezoning etc) through to investor (with a significant financial stake in the housing stock).

- > *Female 1: I'm a firm believer that unless there is a dire need for Council to be involved in housing, that they shouldn't be involved in housing.*
- > *Female 2: Well they have to re-zone the area don't they?*
- > *Female 1: Yeah, yeah, sure, that sort of thing and making sure that developers can get access to key infrastructure needed to develop those areas - fine, but in terms of building houses, leave that to the developers. Council should not be involved.*

Discussions also turned to the need to ensure that the developers provide the appropriate type and standard of developments and that they are not able to avail themselves of a free ride at rate payers' expense.

- > *Talking about the Council supporting the private enterprise is that if you open up land for a developer to do it, you need to make damn sure that that developer does a good job, because if you look up Kapiti Coast you've had people go in, put developments in and they've hooked into the existing resources. They haven't fronted up for any extra cost to improve or build the capacity in that infrastructure, they've just hooked into the existing infrastructure and put it under pressure and they haven't contributed to that. So the people who have landed up owning the properties are now down the track having to fork out to upgrade the infrastructure by rates increases.*

There were also reservations expressed regarding the council's capacity to manage the private developers.

- > *Male 1: And you know what the worst thing is, possibly? If Council manage it. They can't. I think they need to get somebody very expert in the field that will manage the private developers. Otherwise they'll outsmart Council every time. It happened in the Hutt at the Hoyts, the car park building. You need a smart savvy business manager, not the council, who will manage the process, and get it right. And then you'll get the best result.*
- > *Female 1: Mm, good idea.*
- > *Male 1: Yeah. See, there are two examples in Wellington of well managed developments and one of them is Whitby and the other one is Aotea. And that's basically the Council being there to facilitate it more than even invest in it. And look at those developments down – look at Whitby. That was all private development.*

Due to lack of available time, none of the groups got into any detailed discussion on the proposal to "limit Council's up-front cost recovery for greenfield infrastructure through development contributions to 50%".

4.6 Greenfield Summary

The subject of greenfield development and funding elicited a wide variety of responses from our group participants.

Many were unconvinced that there was now, or would be in the foreseeable future, sufficient population growth in the Hutt Valley to warrant new developments. Questions were raised as to whether it might be better to focus on economic and business growth to attract jobs and population growth. Others supported the idea of planning ahead and establishing the proposed new housing in the immediate future.

Opinion was also divided on the proposed locations with some in favour recognising that these sites had been mooted because they represented the most accessible land. Some however felt that these locations were too “satellite” in nature (commuter suburbs), and would not appeal to the market, to the point of being unsalable. Kelson was given as an example of this.

Infrastructure funding was also a contentious issue, particularly the second Wainuiomata access road. Part of the community sees this road as a Hutt Valley asset, while others view it as a Wainuiomata asset only. This led to some polarised views in relation to the targeted rates and the level at which they should be imposed.

The idea that Council would partner with private operators for greenfield developments was widely accepted, but subject to some reservations in respect of the Council’s ability to manage these private operators.

At the end of the day while there was a lot of common ground, there was not really any global community consensus to be had over greenfield developments. In part this springs from some pre-conceptions held within the community. Predominantly, however, opinions seem to be driven by differing understandings of the proposals and their objectives.

This suggests that the wider consultation process would benefit from arming the community with a clear plain English synopsis for each proposal of:

- What is proposed?
- Why that in particular?
- How does this benefit the Hutt Valley community?
- At what cost?

4.7 High Quality Low Rise Developments

One of the proposed Council initiatives is the development of high quality low rise apartments in the following areas:

- The Eastbourne Village
- Jackson Street and The Esplanade in Petone
- Around the Waterloo shops and train station
- On the periphery of the CBD

In general, the concept of low rise apartments was favourably received by most focus group participants, but not without a robust discussion on various aspects of this proposed development. Participants reiterated that Council's role should not be one of developer of housing estates, nor should it own any housing estates. Council, according to participants, is a facilitator. In this case the role of the facilitator is to zone the land appropriately for its purpose and ensure that infrastructure matches the requirements of the development. Leave the rest to developers.

Low rise apartments near the CBD, particularly the southern end of High Street in Lower Hutt, received support from just about everybody in the focus groups, (also Jackson Street in Petone and to a lesser extent The Esplanade). Petone residents might not like the idea of low rise apartments on The Esplanade potentially blocking harbour views.

Initially, some participants could not see it work around the Waterloo shops and train station, but when it was pointed out that that area was a personal transport hub – “you're closer to the transport centre there” - the mood changed and participants voted in favour.

The concept of low rise apartments in Eastbourne was received with mild hostility at first, particularly from Eastbourne residents in the Harbour Ward group. The suggestion was met by cries of “they will chase you out of town” and “you will never get it past Eastbourne residents”. However, after some discussion the mood softened and (Eastbourne) participants started to see merit in the concept. They could not see it work near the village, i.e. Rimu Street area – “there's already an ugly high rise there” – but low rise apartments stepped against the sloping hill sides, similar to some apartment buildings on Oriental Parade in Wellington could work.

The group felt that low rise residential apartments on the Petone Esplanade would never get past Petone residents.

Here follow some comments that demonstrate general approval of the concept of high quality low rise apartments.

- > *I'm all for that, there's a lot of people that want to move out of their family homes and live in apartments.*
- > *Because there's a lot of agreement around this table [about low rise apartments] I would say all the comments have been very constructive and positive and there's been like actual decisions that we really all agree about the same thing.*
- > *I quite like the idea [of low rise apartments].*
- > *I think for low rise apartments around the CBD [in Lower Hutt] it's a no-brainer; I think that's a commonsense approach. You want to kind of intensify around the development. I worry about the Esplanade simply because you've got 14-metre side sites. I just don't know how you actually put four storeys on sites so*

narrow. So that does raise the feasibility question for me. The sites are orientated north-south along there. They're very narrow skinny sites. They'd actually have to own several of the properties to do it.

- > *There's quite a few apartment buildings in Petone, but I'd like to see more in Lower Hutt. We want to bring more people into central Hutt, don't we? So, I think it's a good idea. It's different, it's contemporary. As long as they're done nicely.*
- > *It'll definitely be popular I think, except for Eastbourne, now Eastbourne is a peculiar area, I mean in terms of they get plenty of sun and the sun sets over Wellington so they're going to get low level sun and that's going to blot every house behind that two or three or four storey, it's going to blot it out isn't it?*
- > *I think apartments are quite good because a lot of young people like apartment living. And older people too who want to downsize and seek more security.*
- > *Even like professional couples who haven't got time for gardening.*
- > *So generally speaking received favourably, it needs to be high quality and some areas appear to be more favoured than others, but generally speaking we could be convinced that this [low rise apartments] could be a good idea.*

Another aspect participants were seeking re-assurance about is quality. They mentioned several examples where they believed that the quality of the buildings left a lot to be desired and as a consequence these apartments failed to attract the right type of occupier.

- > *I think if they're good quality then it could be popular, they have a lot of that in Australia though, those two or three storey housing and a lot of young people or very small families, one child.*
- > *But I think it would have to be a coordinated design, you'd have to get some pretty snazzy architects so that it's not all discordant, so that it all fits in together.*
- > *The quality is the hard bit, when you look at Alicetown apartments you end up with a lot of them, rows and rows of cars and it's appalling and when it comes to rubbish day of course you get, the footpaths are full of rubbish bags, it doesn't add to a community much.*
- > *And it would bring in quite a good class of people too.*

Here follows a brief discussion on low rise apartments in the periphery of the CBD of Lower Hutt. Participants were very clear in their opinion that low rise was indeed low rise and not a seven or eight storey building block.

- > *Male 1: I think that's also a good idea [low rise apartments near the CBD].*
- > *Female 1: Yeah, it's quite acceptable because it just fits in with what the Hutt needs right now.*
- > *Female 2: And it brings a bit more life to the CBD.*
- > *Male 2: In other words spread the CBD out a bit better.*
- > *Male 3: Yeah, but not ten storeys.*
- > *Female 1: Oh no, keep the limit to three or four storeys.*
- > *Female 1: Three or four at the most in the city.*

Other comments in favour of low rise apartments near the CBD.

- > *But no higher and I think maybe three storeys would be the height I would be happy with, go up any higher than that and it's the people behind that are cut off then from what they have paid for and live there for. So three storeys I think*

you could cope with that because of the way the land lies and it would bring those people and those cultures that you want there, which will then bring the boutiques and the cafes and things out onto the shore.

- > *I think if they could encourage developers to get stuck into that area [CBD periphery], it won't be low cost housing, but it would be very good for the city, but the problem there is, as I see it is that they've got a hell of a lot of traffic on the road and I think they've got to deal with that.*
- > *Because it adds to character to your city, brings people into the city and then we get all sorts of spin off then. So it's all positive, as long as it is high quality.*
- > *The southern end they talked about some apartments and they've also talked about putting in more retail in there haven't they? Well the southern end always needed something.*

One participant related his experience about low rise apartments in Hamilton and others could see a similar approach for the southern end of High Street in Lower Hutt.

- > *If you go to Hamilton they built low rise apartments along the Waikato River in the back of the main street of Hamilton. It's filled up some empty spaces and they're nice living. And you can do that with Lower Hutt.*
- > *Yeah, they have to be really stylish, don't they?*
- > *Stylish, looking out over the river would be fabulous.*
- > *Because if you had those nice apartments, say, at the southern end of High Street and overlooking the river then you have a few more cafes, more restaurants. It's those people that bring, like, that's part of that kind of lifestyle. Then they go and eat out and enjoy themselves.*
- > *I think that's actually quite good because it's bringing people to the centre of the city, which will give you a bit of impetus for a lot of the cafes and the restaurants.*

Several participants were concerned that “downstream” infrastructure such as water supply, drainage and sewerage would be upgraded to accommodate a larger concentration of people. In this regard they also talked about car parking and ideally, apartments would be provided with (underground) off-street car parking.

- > *The capacity - so all of us going to the toilet at the same time in this apartment building, assuming there was enough toilets for us, would put an awful strain on the pipe going out of this building. And if you hook it into the main sewer line and suddenly you've got a problem because the infrastructure beyond the area that the developers developing hasn't been upgraded as well.*
- > *And I come back again. They need to make sure they have the infrastructure is in place to support it.*
- > *You're going to increase the population around there and it's just going to impact on that road quite a bit I think.*
- > *Council's going to have to be very clear about what their expectations are of the developers. So the Council would have to be very clear with developers about the upfront costs of, make the developers contribute as well, because it's unfair to load the existing ratepayers or the future ratepayers up with the improvement costs after a developer has gone in and pocketed all their money.*
- > *I think that quality apartments with their own parking, like they'd have to have their own parking. I think that in Petone not to have your own parking because the Council even considered that, allowing apartment developments without parking - it's just insane - and then they said something stupid like, well there's*

lots of people that don't have cars, but that's just not - most people do have cars.

- > But it's no good building an apartment building and saying oh people can park on the street. Because they can't do that.*
- > That makes a lot of sense. I don't like the idea of Eastbourne because you're going to put so much more pressure on that road there.*

In summary, the concept of developing low rise apartments was favourably received by most focus group participants. They felt strongly that these would have to be high quality developments and in this context several participants talked about architectural designs. As a consequence these types of apartments would attract high net worth people, professional couples or elderly people who wish to “live smaller” and seek a higher degree of security.

Low rise apartments near the CBD in Lower Hutt, particularly the southern end of High Street, possibly with a view over the Hutt River was considered a stylish living option and a desirable housing addition to Lower Hutt. An analogy was offered of Auckland when the CBD raced backwards in the 80s and 90s, but since then it has once again become a vibrant community because of housing and apartments being built and bringing the people back to the CBD.

Participants were very concerned that Council would take a holistic approach to these developments, taking into account “upstream and downstream” infrastructure, like water supply, drainage, sewerage, roading, transport and also car parking. Off road car parking is a must.

The group with business owners was unanimously in favour of low rise apartments near the CBD as they felt that it would also improve the prospects for local businesses.

The group with Wainuiomata residents was in favour of tastefully done high quality low rise apartment developments around Waterloo shops and train station and CBD. They also would like to see more done to improve the Petone Esplanade, and thought that some “clusters” of low rise apartments might attract more activity there, seaside cafes etc.

4.8 Business and Intensification

The groups discussed several proposed initiatives. They were:

- Financial incentives to undertake high density developments and large non-residential developments in Hutt City
- Increased investment in Making Places
- Rezoning State Highway 2/ Korokoro entranceway to allow development of more than 12 metres and rezone the southern portion of Manor Park to allow limited light industry

None of these concepts were readily understood. With the exception of a couple of well informed participants, nobody had heard much of or knew what Making Places was.

- > *Well if they advertised it better we'd know wouldn't we? I think there are some good things going on there, but I don't know too much about it.*

4.8.1 Making Places

Participants were not well informed about Making Places and there was a lot of guess work and half truths about this initiative.

- > *Was that the programme they had around the river?*
- > *So the beautification of the river, the riverbank and around the CBD they obviously want to make that more attractive.*

One participant in the group with business owners seemed well informed and he articulated and summarised Making Places as follows:

- > *Well, Making Places, what they've really had is a team from Melbourne and I'm trying to remember his name. He knew council. But he's done this before and it makes -- you have a place manager, so a city becomes -- it's a cliché term -- a centre management area where you actually get things to happen and that's apartments down the river bank, get nice areas on the river, create a nice environment within the general shopping area, change the shopping dynamic, know where your green space is going to be and encourage business development. And he looked at areas like Petone, Lower Hutt and had all these ideas. It's making places; it isn't about making a park. It's about actually making the place work and a vibrant business centre.*

Another participant added:

- > *It's about attracting new business to the Hutt Valley. It's about attracting people to come and live in the Hutt Valley. It's about just a total revitalisation of the city. That's what Making Places is.*

Other groups weren't so well informed or saw the money Council was spending on Making Places compete with money that could be spent on making their immediate environment more attractive. This was strongly felt by the group of Wainuiomata residents.

- > *It doesn't seem a very clever plan, either to just like pump millions of dollars there and hope people come.*
- > *I don't mind if they do spend some money, some ratepayers' money on that area, but I don't want them to vastly increase it at the expense of either higher rates or pulling money out of spending it in Wainui.*
- > *Well hang on, how is that going to benefit us? It's going to make the Hutt look pretty, it might group some people in there, but how is that going to give us anything, you're not going to drop our rates because you've had an increase of income there, it's not going to do anything for us. Wainui is looking tired,*

shabby, uncared for, unloved, except by the people themselves. So it's selfish I think really to even think about spending masses of money on stuff like that that may or may not bring business and people there.

- > *Especially without evidence, if you had really strong evidence that said so many people would use it or come from outside the area or something, but if it's just on a whim...*

A participant in the group with business owners gave Making Places the benefit of the doubt.

- > *It would be interesting to know what those early plans were but I've always thought that we ignore the river; the river is the forgotten part. The CBD doesn't really utilise it and it can't at the moment until they sort out the stop banks and everything and how the final layout will be. But you would think there's a lot of potential there. And if Making Places is their attempt to improve that and to link in, well, good. But it comes back to what we were talking about earlier that half of the CBD isn't there at the moment. It's just a place you pop into ...*

A couple of participants in the group with Lower Hutt residents observed as follows:

- > *I knew it was the redevelopment of what some people call Red Square there and it was meant to, as I understand it, be some way to link the CBD with the river and try and improve flow from there through High Street to the river. It doesn't do that at the moment. I don't know that it ever would.*
- > *They are spending 2.5 million dollars on the square in front of The Dowse – for what? It looks ok, but I don't think that this brings business or people back to the area.*

In summary, there is confusion about what Making Places is all about. Very few participants knew much about Making Places. Those who had heard about it thought it was just a beautification programme around The Dowse. Some participants were quite complimentary about the square in front of The Dowse, whereas others summed it up as a waste of money. By and large, participants were reluctant to approve more money to be spent on Making Places, mostly because they did not know enough about it. Perhaps if the intent of Making Places had been better communicated to the community, it would have been received more positively.

Most participants are sad about the state of the “lifeless” CBD, but they see the answer as being multi-pronged with the encouragement of business, and decreased parking charges being also in the mix.

4.8.2 Intensification - High Density Developments: Infill Housing and Multi-unit Developments

There were mixed reactions to the idea of financial incentives for high density residential developments.

Some are philosophical about intensification:

- > *I'm trying to put these into perspective, I think the traditional size of a section was a quarter acre, which is about a thousand square metres, so that is sort of the section cut in half and a piece taken off for a right of way to the back, so that's half of the original and that's about a third of the original and that's probably about a quarter of the original. That's really dense, but if you're going to grow the population in any city in New Zealand I think that's what you have to do, because otherwise you're just swallowing up farmland and you're losing production out of that. And also as you expand the city you've got to spend so*

much more money on the extra water pipes and the extra sewage pipes and the extra public transport which links up to these and so on. So it's not sustainable to keep the cities expanding out into those green fields forever and a day.

High density living was mentioned as a current trend.

- > *I have a daughter living in Italy, and in the big cities, people just have to live in apartments. In New Zealand, there's a trend with young people now to not own a house, but live in an apartment. They want to go out on the weekends and just not have to do the garden or anything. That's very prevalent around Wellington, but I wouldn't want to see a high rise that ruins it for everybody else, but there is something that the Council should be looking at – not just infill housing, but also younger people choosing, if they haven't got a family and they're a business couple, they would prefer, a lot of them, to live in an apartment that's close to a community.*

The group of older residents discussed infill housing, but were unsure if this would help those looking for cheaper housing:

- > *Male 1: What's the equation do we think between the number for older four bedroom houses that are being released in that event to meet the needs of the newcomers with families who would like a four bedroom house? Is there some sort of equilibrium here do you think?*
- > *Female 1: No because you normally find that people who are now dying or thinking of shifting are in more of the centre of the Hutt and consequently their costs or the value of their homes is up here, you've got young ones coming in down and they just can't afford to buy those homes.*
- > *Male 1: So it's a financial problem rather than a numbers problem of houses?*
- > *Female 1: Yes and maybe this is somewhere where infill could work.*
- > *Male 2: The older houses having a far bigger section that could lead to infill?*
- > *Female 1: Yep, but then they're in the centre of the Hutt, I mean your rates and your costs would be horrendous.*

Other residents thought intensification could provide cheaper housing in a more central location, with easy access to facilities. They thought this might be important for older residents who might need to downsize in the future.

- > *You've got to make the houses affordable because who at our age, my age anyway, can get a loan? I mean no one's going to loan to us, I mean we might be dead next week.*

The older residents in the Seniors group were very interested in “cluster housing” – small one or two bedroom, good quality, low maintenance houses, built closely together and possibly where there is a degree of supervision/oversight with easy access to amenities.

- > *Male 1: They could take your concept and incorporate it into these existing new houses. You see that off the Terrace, you see it up at Taita. These new houses. They've got the solar energy and all that. Nice looking houses. And the clusters of four, five and six. So they're already here, but they don't have a central person and there's a quite different segment of the market as it were, or the demographic. But this could be adopted for the older people.*
- > *Male 2: Yes, it would need to be handy to transport ...*
- > *Female 1: But there is a concept in Tauranga that operates already that's sort of half way to what you're talking about, where there's a whole area of smaller houses, people 40 and over are only allowed to live in them, and you get a slightly wider age range and people still working. They own their own property, but they have a community hall attached to the area, and so they can go and*

use the hall for when the family comes or weddings or anything else; they don't have that in-service help coming in, but that could be organised through the medical side.

A parent of young children pointed out that smaller (high density) sections may be cheaper, but then there is more need for community facilities, e.g. playgrounds for children to run around.

- > *You see that's where it would counterbalance wouldn't it - if you had smaller sections you need to have somewhere your kids can go safely.*

One viewed intensification with facilities positively:

- > *I don't agree entirely with the concrete jungle because the section that I live on is 307 square metres. It's not big but it's more than big enough for us because of the environment. We don't have to stay in our own boundaries because we've got so much around. In fact, the lawns on our section are a burden; they're not an asset because it's stuff that we have to do instead of getting out and enjoying ourselves. So, it's the context of where that happens, which could be the little community with all the facilities around it. I've got family that lives in one of a development where it's a sort of a circle of semi-detached homes. And they've got a central park with a swimming pool and it's great for kids, it's fantastic. And they don't need a section at all, really. They've got enough room to have a barbeque and that's about all they need. So, it's the context.*

Intensification alongside some designated public space was mentioned as a good solution.

- > *Maybe there needs to be a stronger assertion that when any development or subdivision or modification is done to an area there is a minimum amount of land that's set aside for public use.*

However, others view the concept of intensification with something akin to horror – thinking it will lead to a lack of privacy and noisy neighbours. Here follows a discussion in the Wainui group.

- > *Female 1: Yeah, I think you've got to have a reasonable amount of space.*
- > *Male 1: Yeah, look at where Main Road, or right at Burden Avenue and Hine Road, there's the houses that went in there, those new houses, they're so close together.*
- > *Female 1: Yeah, but that's the thing, it's going from one extreme to another, you go from where you've got massive wasted land in the back of the house, to where you're squashed on a massive great mansion on that piece that's got no walking room round it and then the little house is stunted in the front with their bit of land. So you've got to be careful how you do it and you control what you put on those sections.*
- > *Male 2: You can't have two things though, Wainui's great for cheaper housing okay, now you can't have cheaper housing on great big sections, so to cut it down, Woodland Mews and Woodland Grove is a good example, especially Woodlands Mews, they're quite attractive and very close together-*
- > *Male 1: Yeah, but I have friends that live there and you can't make a noise because the neighbours complain.*
- > *Female 1: Yeah, yeah, that's too close. You've got to make the gaps sufficient that you have your privacy so when you sneeze your neighbour's not saying 'bless you.'*

Good design was viewed as essential for maintaining privacy.

- > *I saw this recently in Napier. There's a lot of new subdivisions in Napier. A lot of the land is actually below sea level, so they've first of all got a major problem there, plus the seismic problem. But they started off with nice sections, very high quality housing, little demand, little uptake because of the cost, so the developer's now moved on to another stage where he's reduced the size of the sections, still high quality houses, about \$350,000 to build a house. But there's hardly any place at all except a little courtyard. And trying to provide privacy: He's doing back-to-back developments so the courtyards don't face each other; they face away. But at some stage someone's going to have a courtyard facing another courtyard.*
- > *A good development is over in Wainui next to the mall, a little mews development there. They've got 50-odd houses in there. And it's a pleasant little environment. They've sold well because all the people from Wainui who went there 50 something years ago, they've all bought them. Some have got double garages; some are single garages. Most of them are semi-detached, so the advantage of that is, the idea of 1 1/2 metres between everybody and a fence, you need to get rid of the 3 metres that's lost and it's better sound and everything else and insulation because it's a concrete block wall between you and your neighbours instead of 3 metres where you can hear everybody quite easily. That kind of development, I think is very acceptable. And it's low rise, high density. It has been very, very well done.*

Many accepted that intensification is required because of a looming lack of land, and they generally agreed that there should be an appropriate mix of smaller and larger sections. Several participants suggested the idea of semi-detached homes, rather than smaller houses on single small sections. But there is a need to look at the wider implications:

- > *Female 1: And then if you also do infill housing then you double the traffic.*
- > *Female 2: So they've got to look at the infrastructure again.*

Also viewed as very important are community consultation and good design guidelines.

- > *I got nothing against infill housing. I live in a house that's an infill house. But what I can't believe is the lack of consultation. You don't get consulted when one's about to go up right next to you. In Sydney you couldn't put a water tank in without having to ask all of your neighbours, via the Council, if it was okay. But there's got to be consultation and good design, great design.*
- > *I would say the need for good design guidelines for infill housing is paramount.*

The business group viewed Intensification as a necessity, because of a shortage of land. However, there should be a healthy balance between small and large sections, "don't fill up the land with poky sections" for fear of them turning into a ghetto. Mix and match.

- > *I think a mixed balance is probably good, as long as it's kept to a standard like duplex. In Australia they're quite popular where they almost put two houses together, two garages in the middle. You have it a bit here.*
- > *Be careful that we just meet demand, but we don't want Lower Hutt being an old-age centre, do we? We do want to have vibrant families and we want to get the mix right. We want to cater for all age groups and families in different stages of life.*

Overall the feedback is that intensification could be beneficial for some residents looking for smaller, cheaper, low maintenance properties. However, most participants viewed it as essential that good urban design be used, that ensures privacy is maintained. Many expressed opinions that encouraging

high quality architectural design that preserves the environmental aspects they all value, will make a city everyone will be proud of.

Older residents could see benefits in having infill housing or developments of retirement units that were still close to amenities, (preferably walking distance). However, many Hutt residents really value the larger sections available in Hutt city (compared to Wellington).

So, in summary - there was debate about high density developments; some people don't like the idea (valuing space and privacy). However, if it was done well, with good sound proofing many thought it might be a good option for providing some affordable housing close to community facilities.

4.8.3 Business and Non-residential Developments

In respect of non-residential developments, participants again questioned the logic of these in the light of large holdings of vacant, underutilized land in Seaview and the many empty buildings in Seaview and other parts of Lower Hutt.

- > *Do you know what I would probably say is: why don't they, rather than just keep growing out into Manor Park and everything, why don't they really create incentives for better use of lot of existing space that we've got. [Group of business owners]*

As mentioned before, participants felt that attracting business to Lower Hutt and assisting existing businesses to expand would be first priority for HCC.

- > *Just what [he] is saying, the Council wants to create all this infrastructure for what? You get the business in, then you build the infrastructure.*
- > *That's throwing good money after bad, quite frankly.*
- > *Well, it depends what sort of business you're talking about. If they want retail I think it's a dead duck, there's just not the population to support it, particularly now that Petone's growing.*

One participant made this observation which resonated with all other participants in this group (Group with business owners).

- > *If they just create more [land for non-residential development], they're actually going to empty out more existing buildings.*

Despite this, there was a positive side to the debate, particularly regarding the rezoning State Highway 2 / Korokoro entranceway to allow development of more than 12 metres and rezoning the southern portion of Manor Park to allow limited light industry.

- > *Yeah, all that area up there to Korokoro. So that's what they're talking about. Personally, that's sensible. It's like Wingate. I don't understand why they developed, because the Council owns Wingate, that piece of reserve.*
- > *But the potential there for an industrial development, yeah it's sensible because you'll have the transport hub, which will happen there with the four lane highway ...*
- > *Yeah, everyone seems to agree with that. What about the Manor Park one, though. I don't think that's a bad idea.*
- > *I think personally that the idea of keeping a lot of this industrial development close to the motorways is a really good idea. Having a lot of industrial development at Seaview just puts a whole lot more heavy traffic on the foreshore just doesn't make sense. Like Manor Park and at the bottom of*

Korokoro and everything where you're close to the infrastructure makes a lot of sense. If you put all that stuff on the motorway, you've already got a noisy road; you put all the noisy factories next to it.

- > *Sounds like big thumbs-up from us [Lower Hutt group] for Manor Park and entrance way to Korokoro for rezoning.*
- > *Rezoning state highway 2 and the Korokoro entranceway – that's over there – to allow development of 12-metre height business units and also re-zone the southern portion of the Manor Park, that's opposite the turnoff to Haywards, also for light industry, to create space for light industry, I think is a good idea.*
- > *If there's a demand for over 12 metres and it's not blocking any housing views I don't really see a problem with it; you only go past it on the motorway. As long as they do it nicely ...*

In conclusion, there were mixed feelings about rezoning State Highway 2 / Korokoro entrance way to allow development of more than 12 metres and rezoning the southern portion of Manor Park for limited light industry. Some were for this in principle, largely because they thought it was “out of the way” and did not affect residential housing.

Others felt that money was better spent promoting existing under-utilised land holdings and vacant buildings in Seaview and other areas in Lower Hutt. Besides, newly created zones for industrial use would have the potential of “emptying out currently occupied buildings”.

4.8.4 Technology Valley

Participants in several groups [Business owners and Harbour Ward] picked up the discussion about Technology Valley and felt that Council was not doing enough to promote this concept despite the huge talent of those who worked in technology and the potential for spin-offs in other industry sectors.

- > *If the future of Hutt Valley could lie in the development of advanced technology, building on the old DSIR theme and so forth, then we've got a big driver for the valley. The valley would be recognised... like Silicone Valley, and the Hutt Valley could be that: we've got the intelligence in the people that we consult, the ingenuity, the entrepreneur, it just needs to be drawn together, given a focus and everybody, including all of us and everybody around, knows this is the way that the valley needs to go, get behind it. When that takes off the people and the businesses will come.*
- > *Take Callaghan Innovation, the old IRL. Other industry sectors provide services to them. There are other businesses around who would benefit from using them. The technology that's developed there has to make it out into industry. But I don't think Council has an appreciation of that and where all those companies fit in. And if one of those institutes was to disappear, it would take a lot of supporting businesses in Gracefield, Seaview and Petone with them. So I think they need to better understand that. And because the Hutt Valley is made up of small manufacturing – there is no big companies here. So the Council has to represent that sort of industry and work with government because the industries themselves are so busy surviving and doing what they do well that they can't put a cluster together, yeah, they can't hold their own there. So, they have to be represented by Council and I think that's one thing from a business initiative that council has to do.*
- > *Technology spins off into manufacturing. Maybe it's like a point of difference [compared to Wellington] as to what's happening here. It's a very good cluster to have.*

From these comments it may be concluded that participants were only luke warm on the concept of providing financial incentives for undertaking high density developments and large non-residential developments in Hutt City. Their adage is use what we've got. Promote existing business and attract new business.

Increased investment in Making Places was received with a degree of skepticism, largely because participants did not know a great deal about the intent of Making Places.

There was some support for rezoning areas along the Hutt Road, but on the proviso that Council first look into making better use of existing land holdings, particularly in Seaview.

5. FOCUS GROUP SUMMARIES

These summaries were emailed to HCC directly after completing each focus group.

5.1 Seniors - 6 March 2013

The group with Seniors completed: eight participants (four males, four females), all making a great contribution and participating really well.

If I was to summarise the groups' collective opinion on the issues put before them, it would be as follows:

- All a deep love for Lower Hutt/Hutt City, have lived there a long time.
- Prefer not to think about moving from their home into a retirement village, but are realistic that this may become a necessity one day.
- Very interested in “cluster housing” – small one or two bedroom, good quality, low maintenance houses, built closely together and possibly where there is a degree of supervision/oversight with easy access to amenities.
- Have no problem with Council taking a leading role in stimulating growth and development.
- Little understanding of the impact of a growth target of 7,500 new homes by 2031.
- Agree that there is a shortage of affordable housing.
- Agree on strong focus on small homes and sections. Happy with smaller sections.
- Agree on the concept of low rise developments in the areas mentioned in the project list.
- Agree that the concept of infill could work.
- No interest in housing developments in Wainuiomata and little interest for Kelson, “People don’t want to live in Wainui”.
- No interest (were quite vocal) in new access road connecting Wainuiomata to Naenae.
- Group consensus that Council is going about “growth development” in the wrong way; attract business first, before starting to spend money on housing developments and infrastructure. Use existing facilities first.
- Council needs a clear vision and leadership to take the city into the future. Very keen on “technology valley”. “We have the best brains in the region; we need to capitalise on this”.
- Generally understand the concept of cost recovery by partnering with developers.
- Can’t see any merit in rezoning State Highway 2/Korokoro entrance way and area around Manor Park to allow limited light industry. “There are plenty of empty spaces that could be refurbished for new industries”
- Money spent on Making Places is “wasted”. Council needs to ask itself two questions: 1. How do we revitalise Lower Hutt? (branding/marketing) and 2. Why would businesses want to come to Lower Hutt?
- Beautifying CBD (Making Places) is not going to attract new businesses, lowering rents does. A comparison was made with Jackson Street in Petone where the rent is (was?) a lot lower. Retail margins are very small and in the current economic environment a shop will survive in Petone, but not in High Street.
- Some extraneous observations were made about excessive cost of car parking in CBD.

5.2 Hutt City Residents - 7 March 2013

We had a good group tonight. Eight participants; 6 females and two males. Everybody participated really well.

This group loved Hutt City because of its proximity to Wgtn, “cheap” real estate, excellent amenities and generally better living conditions than Wgtn. About half worked in Wgtn, but given a choice, they would also like to work in HC. They like easy access to Wgtn and north, they like the environment (parks, beaches, river and hills) and easy transport – not too many traffic lights etc. From a housing perspective HC provided better “bang for their bucks.”

When we started to talk about growth they insisted that economic growth does not have to mean population growth. Reason; they don’t want population growth. “Why can’t we have economic growth (more industry and business) and ensure that those that now work in Wellington can find jobs in HC.” Their argument is that there are enough vacant buildings that can be used for attracting new businesses. They saw a problem that many businesses have left or are not coming to HC because the infrastructure is wanting, particularly Broadbent and high capacity fibre optic cabling into the city. The reason that they don’t want population growth is that they feel that it could compromise their current lifestyle and become like Wgtn – smaller sections, too busy. Smaller housing was not on their radar screen.

When discussing the various options they were fairly positive about most of them.

- Agreed on greenfield development in Wainui and Kelson, but they would not want to live there.
- Thought the access road between Wainui and Naenae was a good idea.
- Supported the high quality low rise (but not high rise) developments in the areas listed on the project sheet, although some couldn’t see it work near the Waterloo shops. Council to make sure that these apartments had off-street car parking for residents.
- Agreed on the rezoning of SHW1 and Korokoro entrance way and Manor Park to allow the establishment of light industry. Some found it difficult to understand the concept of light industry.
- Were quite concerned that these developments should be done properly and that Council should be aware of “ripple effect”. Make sure that all scenarios are thought through including downstream consequences.
- Were adamant that Council killed High Street by allowing Queensgate to open and later expand. Were “dead-against” the possibility of another major (high rise?) shopping centre in western Petone. Would also kill Jackson Street.
- Had no confidence that Making Places and beautification of CBD and river bank would revitalise CBD.
- There was broad agreement that CBD could be revitalised with developing low rise apartments. An analogy was offered of Auckland when the CBD raced backwards in the 80s and 90s, but since then it has once again become a vibrant community because of housing and apartments being built and bringing the people back to the CBD.

5.3 Hutt City Residents - 12 March 2013

Last night's discussion group was with 9 residents from throughout Hutt city, four females and five males with a good age range.

Overwhelmingly, they value living in Hutt city for the environment: the bush, beaches, sea, space, views. Also, they value the affordable land: better value, reasonable section sizes, gardens.

This group were in favour of council taking a lead on development, but cautious about a political faction (4 councillors) focused on driving down debt to the detriment of the environment, and improved facilities.

However, they insist council must have a creative vision to transform the city in a way that retains the environmental features they love and makes a city they will be proud of. (E.g. protect the trees, and encourage more planting.)

They agreed that currently council's Making Places is "making spaces not places", and see a need for places that appeal to all demographic groups – families - from the young to the elderly.

For example they wonder why the Dowse area renovation does not include a skateboard park, and musical events outdoors on Friday nights – when people could attend.

They were in agreement that Hutt City lacks activities for young people (teenagers and young adults).

One example was that a group from Moera wanted a half-length basketball court, but it was not approved as too costly at \$25,000.

All agreed that if the facilities were really well designed and something to be proud of then young people would treat them well (not tag).

Also, if the place is used by many ages (like Waitangi park) then it is safer for all.

They wanted to see something like the Napier water park, or an improved H2O extreme in Hutt City. Perhaps at Avalon – with bumper boats on the pond.

In relation to the proposed initiatives:

Greenfield and infrastructure – they agree that infrastructure is very important, as well as continuing regular maintenance of infrastructure.

Most were in favour of the greenfield initiatives, basically because they saw them as being fairly "hidden" and not spoiling views etc.

However there was concern that this might lead to commuter suburbs (children needing to be ferried), and there would be a need for good transport.

One resident from Kelson was in favour of the development, because of the approach taken by council staff in visiting and informing the community about it, as well as financial incentive.

High quality low rise apartment developments

Several participants had engineering backgrounds and expressed geotechnical and cost concerns about meeting the Earthquake Code in buildings up to several storeys (on mixed land – bed rock, former swamps etc), especially on land near the shore in Eastbourne and Petone. There were also concerns about a lack of guidelines around shading etc. (Example of Petone cemetery used.)

However there was support for low rise apartments on the periphery of the CBD, (and along beside the motorway – to mask traffic noise).

There was mixed support for the Waterloo shops and train station.

Business and intensification

The group was only in favour of intensification if it was done with good design, and led to good quality developments.

In fact they were all in favour of HCC offering awards for architects and designers to encourage high quality architectural design, perhaps partnering with the university to encourage some young designers to get involved.

They liked the fact that some beautification has started, but feel it has not gone far enough. People are not being attracted to events, like the market, Polish Festival, lunch-time musical events. All want to see cafes by the river!

Business

There was concern expressed about being aware of the Maori burial ground at Korokoro, and ensuring there is consultation with Maori.

But – in terms of allowing development of more than 12 metres at the entranceway, they thought this was a good place for that.

And they thought allowing limited light industry at Manor Park made a lot of sense.

Overall, they want Council to really do their homework and research the feasibility of these options before presenting them to the public (geo-technical aspects, Maori consultation).

And they believe it is vital to have architectural design that preserves the environmental aspects they all value and makes a city everyone will be proud of.

5.4 Group with Business Owners – 13 March 2013

This morning's group was with eight Hutt City business owners; four males and four females. They all seemed passionate about living in Lower Hutt, but delving deeper into their motivations; it became clear that they feared for the future of Lower Hutt. They like the environment, affordable housing, access to Wellington and direction north. They also liked the fact that "you don't have to go anywhere else if you need anything". They liked the parks, beaches and hills. Schooling was good.

However, they feared for the future of Lower Hutt and fully appreciated that the Hutt had lagged behind with minimal growth compared to Wellington, Porirua and Kapiti coast. Big business has disappeared and not been replaced. This caused a ripple effect on other businesses in the supply chain. Their children find Hutt City boring and "bogan" and don't want to live here.

Group was very critical of the car parking problem in LH and the retailers condemned as unfair how Council struck a deal with Westfield for free car parking while their customers were stung with parking infringements. Group was also critical in Council's role in the Westfield development and considered Council responsible for the demise of High Street.

All participants were full of praise about how Petone had transformed itself from a backwater to a very desirable place to work and live. One participant wants to move out of LH (proper) and buy a property in Petone. All participants liked Jackson Street and rather do their shopping there than in LH. They are very concerned what might happen to Jackson Street if a mall was to be built at the western end of Petone.

The group was overwhelmingly in favour of Council spearheading growth and development, but “seeing is believing”. The group felt very strongly that Council (read: Councillors and Council staff) does not support business. “I have been in my shop six years and I have yet to see a Councillor or staff member visiting me and showing some interest”. “A lot of Council staff don’t even live in HC, how can they get motivated about HC? They don’t listen to business owners.”

There was general agreement about all the growth initiatives discussed, PROVIDED THAT THEY ARE DONE WELL AND SUFFICIENT THOUGHT IS GIVEN TO THE DOWNSTREAM EFFECTS SUCH AS INFRASTRUCTURE.

Greenfield and infrastructure

- Good support for these developments, particularly the second access road connection between Wainuiomata and Naenae. One participant was somewhat skeptical and wondered if this would befall the same fate as the road connecting Petone and Grenada North.
- “Who is going to live in all these housing developments if there isn’t the business to support them”, was a question by many. Council needs to support business – stop businesses from leaving and attracting new businesses. A couple of participants were less concerned on the premise of “you build it and the people will come”.
- Several participants were concerned whether Council had the capability to spearhead these developments and proposed to set up steering groups consisting of business people, designers, architects and other specialists to make it happen. They mentioned many times throughout the discussion that these developments had to be high quality, built to high standards with minimum (negative) impact on the environment and sufficient thought for downstream effect on infrastructure.

High quality low rise apartment developments

- Was very favourably received, as long as it was high quality and high standards, otherwise would soon turn into a ghetto. Target the higher socio-economic groups.
- Need off-street parking.
- Considered that apartments would bring life back into the city and would stimulate business.
- Were concerned that this was (apparently) a long term plan. “We can’t afford to wait till 2031. We need action now.”

Business and Intensification

- Providing incentives to undertake high density developments was favourably received.
- Few participants were aware of Making Places by name, but once explained, appeared to have some knowledge of it.
- “A low rise apartment along the river bank would be fantastic”, with the repeated rider of it being high quality and high standard.
- Beautification alone would not necessarily attract businesses. Housing, beautification and business development would need to be done concurrently.
- Participants had no concept whether an additional 7500 was a lot or not – similar as other groups.
- Intensification was seen a necessity, because of a shortage of land. However, there should be a healthy balance between small and larger

sections, “don’t fill up the land with poky sections” for fear of them turning into a ghetto. Mix and match.

- General acceptance that older people might want to live in smaller low maintenance properties on smaller sections.

Business

- Rezoning SHW 2/Korokoro entranceway and southern portion of Manor Park for light industry development was greeted with approval, provided it had minimal impact on the environment.

5.5 Wainuiomata Group – 14 March 2013

Last night we held a discussion group with 9 Wainuiomata residents, four women, and five men. There was a range of ages and ethnicities.

First – they are keen for HCC to take a lead in rejuvenating Hutt City. However, they definitely want that to include Wainuiomata.

The main reason they live in Wainui is the environment – the bush, clean and green, and space. They also value being separate from “the rat-race” - the peacefulness “over the hill”, and the community spirit: friendly people, friends & family.

Thinking more broadly of Hutt City their main reasons for living there are: the good shopping, being close to Wellington (for events/jobs/airport etc), and the environment; beaches and river. But they described Hutt City as “middle-aged” with everything asleep.

In relation to the proposed initiatives:

Greenfield

They agreed there is a need to attract more people to Wainuiomata, to encourage the revitalisation of the area. Residents are keen on a second access road, although many questioned who would want to drive towards Naenae? However, everyone agreed it was unfair to impose the annual \$50 targeted rate only on Wainui residents. They want it shared throughout the Hutt.

There was quite a debate about the size of new sections to be developed in Wainui, and consensus was there needs to be variety. Some felt that families value the larger, better value for money sections available in Wainui, but they could also see a need for cheaper housing. Most agreed that smaller sections would be cheaper, and could appeal to older residents. However these residents were adamant that they want to see well designed housing – not lots of concrete box “state housing”. There was also a lot of interest in sustainable homes: use of solar power and green initiatives.

In fact the group agreed that perhaps Wainui needs some kind of draw card to attract people to want to live in the area, and desperately needs activities to keep teenagers occupied, and out of trouble. Suggestions included an outdoor roller skating rink, an internet café, a “decent” restaurant, local movie theatre like the Lighthouse, community gardens, more parks with better playgrounds, attractive public gardens. They want a better connection from the mall to Queen St, and opening up the mall to encourage more community use (i.e. lowering rents to allow community use of space, or free

use of empty space; for pop-up art galleries etc.). It could start with something as simple as picnic tables in park on Queen St.

Low Rise Apartments

The group was in favour of tastefully done high quality low rise apartment developments around Waterloo shops/train and CBD. They also would like to see more done to improve the Petone esplanade, and thought that some “clusters” of low rise apartments might attract more activity there, seaside cafes etc. They don’t want to see the whole esplanade blocked, but thought some groups of apartment stretching back towards Jackson St might work. Again they would encourage these to be sustainable, with balcony gardens. There were concerns that apartments blocking the sun would be a big concern in Eastbourne.

Business & Intensification

As mentioned above, there was debate about high density developments; some people don’t like the idea (valuing space and privacy). However, if it was done well, with good sound proofing many thought it might be a good option for providing some affordable housing.

One issue that divided people was the investment in Making Places. While participants did think High St was looking very shabby, their big concern was that closer to home Wainui is looking shabby too. They don’t want millions spent only in CBD to the detriment of the periphery like Wainuiomata. A survey of Wainui high school students was mentioned that showed half the students had not been “over the hill” out of Wainui. There is strong support for improvements to be made in facilities for Wainuiomata residents.

Business

The group was largely in favour of the business initiative; rezoning SH2 at Korokoro and the southern portion of Manor Park.

Informing residents

Another issue that came up was that people would like to know more about events happening in Hutt City. They felt the new Dowse area was underutilised, and they might go to events if they knew about them. There was a strong call for some much better eye-catching advertising of events, perhaps several “what’s on/events pages in the Hutt News – including notices about cultural events, but also HCC meetings etc. Another strongly supported idea was for an online/email newsletter that people could sign up for.

5.6 Harbour Ward 20 March 2013

A very lively group of two females and six males: five Eastbournites and three Petone residents.

This was by far the most skeptical group so far. They love living here and the things that appeal to them are not too dissimilar to what other groups feel about the area, but.... they would not want to live in Lower Hutt (proper). They love Eastbourne for its village atmosphere, the beaches, parks and hills and the community spirit. Petone residents love the cafe culture, Jackson Street, affordable housing (15 years ago), amenities and access to schools.

Essentially, the group does not want growth. It’s fine as it is. They did not buy the notion that a city that does not grow necessarily finishes up in paupers.

The group had difficulty understanding the role of Council in growth and development, but after a while they agreed that Council could be a facilitator for growth and development, as long as Council does not become the owner of housing developments. Rezoning certain areas and developing infrastructure was as far as they could see Council going.

As mentioned before, this was a very skeptical bunch:

- Did not see the need for housing development in Wainuiomata. Did not think that there was demand for that.
- Further residential development for Kelson received a more positive reaction, although a lot of the land was deemed to be too steep.
- A second access road to Wainui was unanimously voted down as too expensive, therefore putting too much pressure on rates. Charging Wainui ratepayers a \$50 rate surcharge was considered a joke “yielding \$200K per annum on a multimillion dollar development”.
- High quality low rise apartments was initially also voted down. “you will never get it past Eastbourne residents”. “They will chase you out of town”. However, their stance softened somewhat if these apartments were stepped against the sloping hill sides, similar to some apartment buildings on Oriental Parade. The best site for low rise apartments was felt to be in Petone and later on in the discussion along the Hutt River was added by bowling over some existing buildings. One person thought that the Waterloo shop area could also work.
- The group felt that low rise residential apartments on the Petone Esplanade would never get past Petone residents.
- Very few were aware of Making Places. One person had read about it. Linking the river to the CBD could work, but they were skeptical if it would ever happen. Low rise apartments on the periphery of the Hutt CBD were a possibility, but they were unsure whether low rise apartments in Lower Hutt (as distinct from Petone and Eastbourne) would work. Would the demand be there?
- Rezoning SHW2/Korokoro entranceway for light industrial use was deemed to be unnecessary on grounds that so many empty buildings could be made available for that purpose. They did see merit to rezone the southern portion of Manor Park.
- Again, spontaneous comments were made about Queensgate. “It should never have been built.” “Another shopping centre in west Petone will kill off Jackson Street.”

5.7 Hutt City Residents – 21 March 2013

This time I had to work a little harder to keep the conversation going and making sure participants did not get off a tangent. Nevertheless, good info was obtained. Seven participants: two females and five males.

While three of the seven participants came to live in Lower Hutt because of work commitments (they moved here from other cities), now they wouldn't live anywhere else. It is the proximity to Wellington, the amenities, schooling, harbour and river that keeps them here. Unfortunately, some also feel that Council has “turned its back on the harbour and river.” They are regarded as very important assets to the valley – the jewels in the crown. They would like to see them incorporated in the city development, particularly the river.

This group seemed adamant that HC has no housing shortage. “Why develop housing if there is no shortage?” “Who is going to live there?” One participant who is a member of the Chamber of Commerce, mentioned that despite many big businesses leaving or closing over the last decade, there are many new businesses starting up, mostly smaller ones. He felt that Council should do more to attract business and only then start worrying about housing. The group agreed with this. Business first, housing to follow.

Greenfield and Infrastructure

- Could not see the need to develop housing in Kelson or Wainuiomata. The problem with Kelson would be that it is too far away from amenities and general services.
- Partnering with developers would be a good thing as long as there was good planning beforehand. Clear guidelines, rules etc for developers.
- A second access road between Upper Fitz and Naenae was positively received, without the housing. Several participants suggested that a cross valley link would be better use of money.
- Agreed to limit Council’s up-front cost through development contributions.
- Raised their eyebrows to increasing rates for Wainui properties by \$50

High Quality low rise developments

- Generally well received.
- Suspect that Eastbourne residents would come “up in arms”, particularly if these developments would be near the village.
- Jackson Street would be very suitable for high quality low rise developments. There are plenty of old buildings that are an earthquake risk and could be “bowled over” to make place for these developments.
- Esplanade also deemed suitable, but suspected that Petone residents would object.
- Waterloo shops and train station a good area because of proximity to transport and shops.
- Could not get their head around periphery of CBD, but southern part of High Street would be very good and bring that area back to life.

Business and Intensification

- High density developments and non-residential in HC favourably received, although had some difficulty in grasping the concept. Accepted that intensification is required because of a looming lack of land. Agreed that there should be an appropriate mix of smaller and larger sections. Several participants suggested the idea of semi-detached homes, rather than smaller houses on single small sections.
- Again, only one person knew about Making Places. After some explanation group seemed quite enthusiastic about this, particularly the idea of incorporating the river with the city. High quality low rise housing should be part of that, provided there was variety in the building style and lay-out so that it caters for different likes and needs of those who will occupy them. Good planning is a must. There was concern about the cost of these developments and a possible loading on property rates.

Business

- Agreed to the concept of rezoning SHW 2/Korokoro entranceway to allow development of more than 12M, (although it was felt that this needs further definition)
- Rezoning southern portion of Manor Park to accommodate light industry was also greeted with approval, but when one participant suggested that this could be used for housing development (if there has to be housing development) this area could be used for housing instead of light industry, thus capitalising on the proximity of the river.