

Findings from consultation meetings and the survey

Background

The Tasman District is an area with high land prices, and low wages, giving rise to a high median house cost when compared to the median income. This is true particularly for more remote areas such as Golden Bay. Additionally, the district is forecast to have one of the highest increases in the proportion of older people in the country, well above the forecast nationally.

More young people are leaving the Bay than coming to live here. When young people leave school, many leave the Bay for further education and job opportunities, and this is a good thing as it gives them a chance to broaden their horizons. When they start their families and want to move back to, or into, the Bay to live, they find it difficult to do so because of a lack of jobs and affordable housing.

TDC therefore has the opportunity to be a leader in New Zealand in innovative planning for the housing needs for people over 65. If this is matched with positive action to create affordable, diverse housing options for younger people who can support, and be supported by, the elderly, this will strengthen the community and the economy in Golden Bay.

There are many examples around the country of creative solutions including the Papakainga model for Maori housing, and communities such as Earthsong in Waitakere, and Kotare in Bay of Plenty, where the Council has developed a partnership approach to enable more diversity in housing options.

Ageing in Place

As people age, they survive much better and more comfortably if they can maintain their independence, while having family, friends and carers nearby to support them when needed. When they are still able to live independently, but need extra support, they have two main options – to adapt their current environment, or to move. Different solutions will be appropriate for different people, and not one size fits all.

If people want to stay where they are when their house and/or property becomes too big for their needs and ability to manage, one option is to share their “resource”. They can either move into a smaller house, and rent out their larger house, or stay in their own house and build another dwelling for a younger family or person able to help manage the land and be around to help them. Having a cluster of two or three houses would enable families to look after their old people, or older people to be supported by other people, in small land-sharing, co-housing or village-like developments dotted around the Bay.

Council planning and building regulations

The survey carried out in February asked people to rank priorities. Two thirds of the respondents thought that more flexible Council regulations was the number 1 priority.

People commented that at present it can be difficult and costly to get permission for such developments because of Council planning and building regulations, and difficulties with obtaining permission from NZTA for access onto the state highway. While acknowledging TDC's desire not to fragment highly productive land, there is a lot of less productive land around the Bay which arguably would become more productive with more households using the land to produce their food.

People saw an urgent need for more flexible / creative planning and building regulations to allow ratepayers to have more than one dwelling on suitable properties. This would enable families to look after their old people, or older people to be supported by others, in small land-sharing developments. These could be co-housing, eco village, or small community villages with some shared facilities, structured to meet the needs of both the elderly and working families / young people. People can then be supported as they get older in a network of family and friends living close by, and allow them to “retire” from their larger houses to the smaller accommodation on their property, with free or cheap rental being offered to younger people or families in exchange for “elder care” duties such as grocery shopping, and veggie garden care. This could be a mutually agreeable sharing arrangement, especially if the elders have no children nearby, or at all, and could enable young families an affordable way of living in the Bay.

TDC is currently doing a review of its Rural Land Use and Subdivision policy, and people commented that this is an opportune time to try to encourage a more flexible approach from Council. Enabling small "support villages" on suitable land would address some of the issues of people wanting to age in place. Other groups have also been submitting proposals to Council on this issue.

Suitable housing in town – flats, units, apartments, co-housing

People want high-quality, attractive, small, simple, non-toxic, energy efficient, inexpensive dwellings on small, easily maintained sections with low running costs so it is possible to live on their superannuation. They want small bungalows or Council pensioner flats dotted around in the centre of the existing Takaka and Collingwood communities, so people can keep in touch and visitors can pop in easily when shopping. Some older, larger sections could easily have a cluster of 2 - 3 units with some land available for growing vegetables, the possibility of sharing basic tools and amenities, and people better able to support and keep an eye on each other. This could allow older residents to stay in Golden Bay and not have to move over the hill. Ideas included converting a building like the Junction Hotel into apartments, or building on the vacant section on corner of Reilly St, the Medical Centre land or the Joan Whiting land.

Eco villages

The rationale for an eco village includes it being a more natural, village-style living, with children and pets, gardens and fresh produce, people who know each other and look out for each other, also possibly including a communal kitchen. People talked about

- an "eco-conscious" facility in or close to Takaka, so that they get to facilities in town by walking, cycling or mobility scooter.
- as much as possible energy independent using "alternative" methods such as solar panels, wind power, and biogas, designed and built on the spot using as much local recycled materials and skills as possible.
- small houses that can be bought or rented, in a park-like setting where people can still be involved in the production of healthy food if they are still able and wish to be involved, with common facilities including spare rooms for guests.
- could be run by a professional couple who also act as caretakers and include other facilities such as a restaurant open to the public, which could provide some income and food for residents as well, and workshops where residents can work or teach younger ones certain skills.

Eco village communities fit well with what used to be called the "alternative" ethos of GB, and would suit some sectors of the community, while more conventional facilities would suit others better.

There were differing opinions about whether it was best to have older and younger people in close proximity, with some people not wanting to live in an "elderly ghetto" while others were concerned about noise and security with young people around.

Supported housing

People suggested more Abbeyfield concept housing, or perhaps serviced apartments, with a supported living environment for older people who are able to look after themselves and remain independent, and cook for themselves if they want to, but with 24 hour oversight and coordinated help as needed.

Retirement village

Another option is a retirement village, preferably community run and not for profit rather than the usual commercial model. This would be for active elderly people who are not yet ready for full rest home care. Some people would prefer it close to rest home facilities, which would ease the burden on older couples when one has to move into the rest home while the other partner can stay at home and easily visit every day. It could be part of a larger village with different age groups rather than isolating the older people. People thought that if it was costly to buy-in/sell-out, this would preclude a certain section of the community. Others doubted that a retirement village is economically viable in Golden Bay.

More rest home beds

People commented that an increase in rest home beds will be needed in the future, not only for permanent residential care, but also, importantly, for respite care, allowing for ongoing care at home, but with regular relief for the carer. A bigger rest home would also provide jobs for the Bay. Some people said they would prefer a less institutionalised model, like the present Joan Whiting rest home. Some people said that ideally, someone would buy the Joan Whiting and continue to provide the Collingwood end of the Bay with a homely, though not full, rest home facility (like the one in Fairlie).

Secure dementia unit

Dementia is now a common end-of-life occurrence, and people see a need for perhaps six beds initially in the Bay, attached to the rest home facility, with a gated garden area, restful for both carers and residents. This could have the flexibility of providing extra rest home or respite beds.

Home Care

This is an important issue in Golden Bay, and it was brought up in comments and meetings. Many people would prefer to remain in their present, known accommodation if satisfactory support was available to allow them to do this, with assistance for housework and maintenance, personal care where needed, and assistance to install equipment such as handrails.

More realistic remuneration for home help is urgently required - the services at present are woefully underfunded by government, resulting in workers being paid the minimum wage and inadequately reimbursed for the costs of travel in a widely dispersed area such as Golden Bay. This is illogical and false economy, because people are forced into rest home care which costs much more to provide, when, with a bit of reasonable help, people can continue to live in their own home where they are happiest. There's also a need for better financial incentives from the government to enable people to care for aged parents when it involves them reducing their paid work hours, and also better respite for primary carers.

Other ideas included a better, more flexible system for providing food than the present meals-on-wheels system, more opportunities for entertainment, visiting and friendship for people living at home, and developing a list of trustworthy people capable and willing to help with job such as gardening, house maintenance and housework.

Transport

One of the major problems for people as they age is transport. When they can no longer drive, they are totally reliant on others as there is no public transport or taxi service. Some ride sharing system would be great for those who choose to live further away from residential centres. Mobility scooter access to parks / reserves / town facilities will be a growing issue. Walkways for walking, cycling, mobility scooters and baby buggies between residential areas and essential services, would enable non-drivers to safely move around as well as promoting healthier life-styles.