

31 March 2010

TIME TO RECOGNISE IMPORTANCE OF ECONOMIC HEALTH AND VITALITY TO KAPITI'S FUTURE

The Kapiti Coast Chamber of Commerce today made a short but significant submission to the KCDC on the scope of the forthcoming District Plan review.

Chamber Chair Mark Ternent concludes in the submission that "It is time that the importance of economic health and vitality to the future of a balanced, healthy and happy Kapiti community is recognised and addressed."

The Chamber wants to see Kapiti's future 'Economic health and vitality' added as a 'big picture' item in the scope of the District Plan review.

The full text of the submission follows. The question numbers relate to the KCDC feedback form.

1. Have we identified the right list of issues to focus on? (Yes / No, and comment)

No.

The issues identified are excellent; however there is one critical 'big picture' issue missing – **Economic health and vitality.**

3. What issues have we missed?

Economic health and vitality.

6. What else would you like to tell us, including any useful examples?

The Kapiti population is growing well above the national average and this is likely to continue. The District also has a growing business base, but this has been growing at a slower rate and generally is still overly reliant on housing construction, the retirement industry and a relatively high proportion of working people commuting up to 50km twice a day for employment. The economy is sensitive to shocks, as evidenced by our unemployment rate over the last two years. There is still a strong incentive for our younger people to move away from the District to find employment and to follow careers. These factors and our recent status as small and fragmented townships means that the economic development and future economic health of the district needs to be accorded a significantly higher priority over the forthcoming decade or two than it has historically.

The proposed 'big picture' issues for the District Plan review address land use and allocation, rural productivity, the development of a town centre and the prevention of fringe developments amongst others. These factors are all supported, but on their own will not create a healthy economic future

for Kapiti. It is strongly submitted that the future economic health of the District requires a much more proactive approach. This needs to be properly recognised through the addition of 'Economic Health & Vitality' as a big picture area to address in the District Plan review.

To express our point in question format in a similar manner to the other big picture proposed focus areas - Why would good businesses and employers want to remain in Kapiti? Why would they want to start up, or relocate here? What do they need and how can we help them? What can we do to make our economy and the employment it creates less susceptible to hurtful external economic shocks? How can we create an environment where less of our people need to commute or move away from the District for employment? What types of businesses and employers would fit in with our community vision for the future of Kapiti?

It is time that the importance of economic health and vitality to the future of a balanced, healthy and happy Kapiti community is recognised and addressed. One key way to do this is through the District Plan.

ENDS

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