

ORATIA & WAIATARUA LAPs WORKSHOP

SATURDAY 21ST MARCH

The notes below contain the main points of the discussions that took place during the workshop.

Oratia Village and rural economic innovation

- Retirement village in Oratia – need to think ‘scale’ as not a Henderson-type situation...perhaps a residential-conversion?
- Discussion from the community about location
- Retirement village would require change in zoning via plan change but community were concerned if this happened that the land-use be restricted to that purpose, rather than abused for alternative use by developer (and therefore inappropriate...but this could be dealt with via specific plan change)
- An overall desire expressed to retain local character and any new retail be in keeping with Oratia character...i.e. small scale, attract visitors, boutique-style etc
- ‘Matakana’ – area is designed to attract daily visitors – is this kind of thing appropriate for Oratia? Example of Melanie in Noosa Hinterland was raised as being more appropriate in terms of its scale/activities
- If additional population, feeling that flexible meeting places are required
- ‘Branding’ of Oratia needs definition (‘packing shed’ kind of thing)
- ‘Branding’ may require ‘reconnection’ to revitalise for the future...Oratia ‘reconnects’ with food – activities in the area therefore centered around orchards and vineyards...this resonates with people so it has authenticity. Retention of orchards and vineyards?
- Need ideas for getting apples and orchards back
- Agreement that education is key – children have limited experience of fruit-picking etc
- Council-owned orchards? Adopt-a-tree? Provide potential for education and experience. Needs more than just saving orchards or trees - ongoing enterprise, education and actively maintaining historical culture- e.g. Albany orchards, initial attempt made at retaining its history of fruit production in one or two areas.eg Clemow's...but now swallowed up almost completely by development.
- Is there any scope for protecting existing orchards? Provide a future for production. Add value to the product, link up with other businesses – good opportunity for connection as people want to know where their food comes from (i.e. old families in Oratia etc)
- Issue raised with difficulty of small-scale production, including unproductive orchards and difficulty with spraying, regulations, taxes etc – need to identify and overcome these difficulties?
- Marked on plan where existing orchards are – and identify potential areas (possible more discussion on this?)
- The centre of Oratia is where ‘iconic’ value lies
- ‘Apple festival’ – revitalise and re-energise the existing community structure.
- Cider house? Authenticity is key – if cider is produced then does it need to be made from Oratia apples?
- Issue raised by community that should not be about ‘branding’ but retaining local focus only – wants village in Oratia for locals to meet...not necessarily about attracting outsiders

Environment

- Budget for walking track maintenance has been chopped. Need for community initiative to maintain tracks

- 'Categorising' walking tracks
- Green Network can help
- Need infrastructure to ensure maintenance effective (concrete tracks ugly but easily maintained)
- The priority for restoration is the land that backs onto streams
- Making sure people use the tracks is the best way to maintain them! (existing tracks and wish-list of linkages recorded on plan)
- Council can address the components of walkways/linkages that are public and which add value to economic viability – the maintenance issue can be addressed this way
- Need to think in detail about usage of tracks - key to deciding where (and if)
- Suggestion of 'funky' walkway to farmer's market with appropriate historical signs along the way to educate about the history of the area.
- Maybe identify a 'zone' for restoration and walkways etc (this was recorded on plan)
- In terms of tourism ideas, think 'Ranges-wide' not just Oratia
- Community initiatives need to address weeds (community-orientated activities with BBQ at the end etc)
- Reality is that weed issues (in Oratia and beyond) cannot be addressed alone by Council no matter how much money – need community buy-in for success
- Community said there are opportunities for capitalising on existing neighbourhood groups to invoke a groundswell of support (e.g. Neighbourhood Watch groups and street co-ordinators) – tap into these existing groups
- Weed identification was considered an issue – provide more education (utilising above groups) to ensure community awareness, info also to schools
- Lichen on apple-trees, 'natural antiseptic' and bio-indicator of clean air flow.

Growth/rural design

- Possible 180 new households in Oratia by 2050
- Growth will mostly be in structure-plan area
- Council presentation showed which areas yet to be subdivided and which have been already
- Heritage issues are being addressed separately. Old coach road on one property.
- Reconnecting people with the history of the land will help economic growth?
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- What is important in terms of rural-residential character?
- keep land that is good for horticulture as viable land, not for other uses, we are losing good soils (example of South American Incas putting houses on poor soil and leaving fertile land for food production).
- Landsendt has knowledge of the viability of various species and their success to local situation (developed over time and experience) –this is a knowledge-base that can be used (suggested a map of certain areas (microclimates, inversion layers etc...useful for planning ahead in terms of crop/food?)
- Bamboo farm in West Coast Rd...is this a resource that could be used more, (tourism?) some species not bad, bamboo good composting, high in silica, not being used to potential, many uses.
- Criticalness of education – needed in any branding exercise
- Need to engage community and get them to contribute - how

Mobility/Transport

- Mobility issue – idea raised that if there was more commercial development then it would be a good idea to have cars parked in one area and a small bus to collect

people and take them to train station (Sunnyvale) – approx 1.5 kms from Oratia to the station.

- Car-parking for visitors to tracks etc – not safe
- Footpaths – community raised desire to have footpath on one side and cycle track on other
- Ongoing ‘battle’ to get 3.2 kms of footpaths to the school (doesn’t want concrete, just safe) – this covers off area not provided by school bus
- Cycleways on roads too dangerous? – identify cycle routes
- General agreement that wherever increased access goes, it has to be accessible and good for all of the community (people with walkers/disabilities too?)
- How would rural character be impacted upon by footpaths/cycleways/walkways? Psychological’ access is as important as physical access
- Agapanthus useful for drains
- Physical barrier is required between footpath and road (high speed on roads is an issue)
- An overlay was developed on the map to show where footpaths are desired
- Where are the priority routes for footpaths...limited funding issue reiterated. Where are the dangerous spots?
- Are there alternatives to footpaths – such as pedestrian refuges in the ‘dangerous’ spots?
- Agreement that a combination of things will make pedestrians safer, not just changing the traffic habits of drivers
- Need to physically walk the routes to determine many of these things - impossible to show smaller, more dangerous sections of road on a plan, also need to somehow record near-misses.
- There is a problem with heavy traffic at the top of Shaw Rd – narrow, blind.
- Suggestion to open up the top of Parker Rd, currently a paper road.
- Economic development requires infrastructure development
- Possible re-design of road-edge drainage treatment (swales etc) which could also somehow be adapted to provide pedestrian access (such as filling in swales?) some other possibilities generally discussed – opportunity for further development of ideas.

Additional themes/thoughts

- Native plants are not always better than exotic – need some acknowledgement of this.
- There is a palm tree next to the garage in West Coast Rd that should be included on the heritage list
- Public sculpture in Oratia inspires pride
- Potential of school land (for future pre-school/daycare also?) should be explored
- What about a high-school?
- Street-signage and other signage which is ‘unique’ and beautiful (and may link in with Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area) could/should be developed
- Low-impact enterprises such as opening up local/private homes to visitors encouraged– may enable multiple entrances/exits to Ranges tracks and also provide a safe and secure place to leave vehicles which is an issue.
- Limited discussion on Waiatarua (only one Waiatarua resident present) – wants separate meeting in community hall, viewed the process as good but wants to utilize R & R to discuss further.
- The large red taxi-stop building on West Coast Rd might be around 100 years old... (near Raroa Tce on opposite side)...is this something Council needs to identify?