

Council

**Wednesday, 27 February 2002
Commencing at 5.30 pm**

REPORT OF THE MAYOR

**SUPPLEMENT TO THE AGENDA FOR AN ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL
TO BE HELD IN THE CIVIC CENTRE, 6 WAIPAREIRA AVENUE, LINCOLN,
WAITAKERE CITY, ON WEDNESDAY, 27 FEBRUARY 2002,
COMMENCING AT 5.30 PM.**

PART A - REPORT OF THE MAYOR

ON LEAPING GAPS, MOVING FORWARD

This is my first report for the year, and while I regret that I will not be here to deliver it in person, I am assured that the meeting will be ably Chaired by the Deputy Mayor Carolynne Stone. I thank the Deputy Mayor for taking this role at this time, as I and a delegation from Council attend the Local Agenda for Action, at which I chair a congress leading to the second United Nations World Earth Summit on Sustainability.

It is timely, at the 10th anniversary of the Eco-City, that we establish a global perspective on what the international Agenda 21 movement has gained, and how it has made a difference in its different local adoptions. After ten years of leadership and solid effort, it is time to assure ourselves that we are on the right track.

I remain determined to make a difference. This Council must charge itself with both celebrating and reinventing the vision that has driven itself for so long. The Eco-City has put down roots in Waitakere for ten years of the City's 13-year existence. It is time to separate the concept from the City, and look at the results afresh. Many people say that the eco-city is a journey not a destination. What I am struggling with is how far have we got into the journey.

The recent BERL report on the performance of the economies of Waitakere City and others over the last five years, while only one report, makes for bracing reading. I have forwarded copies to all Councillors. Before this first Mayoral Report for the year turns into a real downer, I have got some good news.

The re-charging of our City starts here. This report contains Mayor Harvey's Quality of Life Checklist for Waitakere (or Any) City.

I urge you to read it right now, without missing a beat, and then tell me it is not the way we should "think". It struck me as I read the Glen Eden Revitalisation Review that it lacked passion, energy, style or flair, and I've lived there for thirty years. A sense of the quality and richness of life in Glen Eden seems terribly absent.

We need to be unflinching about measuring what we have done. We are "Westie" and Wonderful, and different from any other of the dull morass of town centres found in other parts of New Zealand. The thing that we can build on in Waitakere is a passionate, exciting community, so why don't we start adding a little more. But I am jumping ahead of myself. Why not read on and tell me what you think:

We are in a race for funding dollars; for the sponsorship dollar, for events, for economic investment. Cities that get out there and shout will get noticed. We have got to stop reacting to bush-fires such as the Painted Apple Moth, which wears whole departments down with a constant barrage of fire-fighting public relations handouts.

Other cities are out there hustling for investment dollars and new industry. Wellington, Christchurch, and even Hamilton, Taupo and Invercargill are doing exceptionally well in drawing attention to themselves and the future of their communities.



It seems to me that everyone talks about Waitakere City and the positive things we do from the Prime Minister down. We are lauded and applauded for our fantastic environmental programmes, our common sense attitude and our welcoming attractiveness to economic investment. But when it comes to seeing the dollar, it is begging bowl time. Why ?

It is time that we started to get tough. Let us start with tertiary education. We want it, we need it, and another year has gone by while we sit on our hands. Let us go with: In or out. Yes or no.

Our libraries: we want to build three. Even New York would find that a hard task. Yes or no. In or out.

There are a variety of decisions that simply hang in limbo. Some simply in the too hard basket, some never to be done, some starting very soon.

In my world, I prefer yes or no. Maybes are always on a limited timeframe.

There are huge projects swirling around us: Hobsonville, transport, the fate of Whenuapai, tertiary education, and others. These are real issues, but we seem to be getting a little tripped up in the small ones. The devil is in the detail when process becomes an end unto itself.

My personal targets to achieve for the City are very clear for the year ahead:

1. Tertiary training facilities.
2. Two more foreign direct investments in the order of Sovereign Yachts.
3. The Waitakere Stadium.
4. Film studios, soundstages and other film infrastructure.

These are goals we can achieve if we support each other in every way. To be frank, we want support to achieve them, since the planning is there. We want them done. This will require Council and Council's various entities to have particular people employed for particular steps: people who can pull in industry and capital players; people who can form deals; people who can seal deals; and people who can execute them.

It is clear that although many assure us that we have the moral high ground with regard to environmental sustainability, public and private capital is coming only in fits and starts. As the Prime Minister has indicated very clearly in the Innovation strategy, we have to get out there and actively hunt these companies down. The key to eradicating poverty and promoting health and well being at the very base is in generating highly-paid jobs within highly sought-after careers, within highly valued and growing industries. So that is what I have done, am doing, will do, and want support for.

So what will it take to push us beyond business as usual?

Let us imagine for a moment that a disaster of comparable scale as that affecting New York on September 11 occurred in the Auckland region, a small tsunami for instance. There would be untold tragedy, horror, and grief. It would also be a time in which the City could and should assess its vision of itself. A City should not require a disaster to be imaginary, but something needs to jump us out of complacency.

Only if our region is capable of putting aside old assumptions and making strenuous efforts to think and act anew, will the region - and the City of Waitakere - fulfil its destiny.

The challenge of a crisis goes beyond patching up the masonry and making firm resolutions about our love affair with the car. What is needed is a new habit of thinking that always strives for the innovative and the new.



Our celebration of 10th anniversary of the Eco-City should by all means hold high what we have achieved.

We must certainly ask: where did it get us, and we must expect a clear answer. Because what we have done must be the basis for re-imagining the whole of the City again. It is true that the really big moments of the Eco-City occur in about three years' time: the eco-hospital, the completion of the New Lynn and Henderson town centres, the new public transport system. These are all good. We are better informed. We are surer.

But we must also ask: what do we keep, what do we throw out, what new elements do we bring in to improve? We need to spur new thinking and debate. We need a vision of where we are going.

Imagine this.

The tsunami of 2002 was the end of the beginning. For some years now, through recession, increased social inequality and fire, Waitakere City been like a hypochondriac, taking its pulse every five minutes, asking itself what was wrong.

Would it expire from a declining economy as primary producers shifted out, or from an influx of diverse new populations, or inertia through population ageing, or perhaps from clogged arteries as words such as "motorway" and "mobility" became merely ironic?

Then came the tsunami, and it was a release of tension in more that geological and marine terms. The region and ourselves took a terrible hit, with loss of lives and property, but immediately people knew our city would go on.

The mess afterwards was a massive shock of recognition. Ours is a big place, not limited by abstract political boundaries. If you live in Half Moon Bay or Ranui, you are connected to the whole; when friends and relatives call from all across the country or around the world, they know you live in Auckland, they worry, they ask about how you are.

Shaken but hanging together, you tell them, and the same goes for the city and its region.

But there is much confusion. For every problem, from transportation to the economy, there are many answers - from trains to telecommuting, local councils to regional authorities, from agriculture on vacant lots to multimedia start-ups in converted garages.

The questioning is healthy, but priorities are wanted. We need to have a vision of where we are, what will be required, where the evidence says we are going and how we will come out.

The fact is, the region as a whole is a world city that could become grander and more powerful in the next decade than it has ever been.

A historian would see similarities to Venice in 1300, as it was about to become the great trading city of its region.

World cities are clamorous, incredibly diverse and energetic. That is why people come to them. "If you are curious to see men from every part of the earth, go to St Mark's Square or the Rialto," the French historian Fernand Braudel wrote of Venice. Renaissance Venice, at the crossroads of Europe, the Middle East and Asia, made itself the warehouse of the world. Today Auckland is the marine capital of the world, but it is acquiring only very slowly the infrastructure to support it once the America's Cup is eventually lost.



Following the tsunami, the Avondale Markets bought out the racecourse itself and became the largest market in the southern hemisphere, open 24-hours. Even the great malls tremble.

Then as now, people move here because they have chosen to have a life. The environmental richness and neighbourhood distinctiveness in Waitakere becomes crucial to Auckland's regeneration, and to New Zealand's as a whole. We establish ourselves as a leader not only out of political will, but because people simply demand it. Waitakere City opens its second Middle Earth themed children's playground.

As the world's emerging lifestyle capital, Auckland adopts a new slogan: Just Add Water. The humour is not lost. It gathers together industry, ecology, entertainment, infrastructure, lifestyle and total distinctiveness.

I would hope that the aftermath of a Tsunami would bring state funds to the Auckland region of a similar scale as that awarded to New York after its disaster. But the new Local Government Act - passed just before the tsunami - offers greater opportunity for cooperation through its "powers of general competence". Protocols for public-private partnerships are adopted firstly across the Auckland region, then nationally.

In pursuit of behaviour modification - and public revenue - charges for travelling alone in a car at rush hour are introduced. No free parking may become as axiomatic as no free lunch. Ferries are full and fast.

For industry and jobs, new thinking was imperative. Before the tsunami, the Auckland region worried about losing companies to the blandishments of Australia and the cheap labour pools of the Pacific Islands, which wanted to spirit away the technical and scientific brilliance that made this a region of advanced industry.

The tsunami has not stilled those worries, but it has spurred fresh thinking. The future will see more cooperation between government and private business in the Auckland region as it prepares for new industries and tries to bolster its position in international trade.

An example is the Organic Cluster, for which the Council runs a portal allowing producers of organic goods to match up with organic crop growers from around the country - it becomes a live on-line market for organic produce commodities.

The Waitakere Corridor, a tunnel comprising two-way rail tracks and heavy trucking from the international airport to Waitakere City and the North Shore, is taking shape with the cooperation of Greater Auckland - the new entity proportionately controlled by the Councils of the Auckland region - governing water supply, the port, land transport, electricity, and airports.

But more will be needed. Central and local government must partially fund the move to Peak Traffic Charges. It must provide incentives for building "boat-parks"; the stacking of private speedboats, kayaks, and windsurfers used for commuter vehicles.

They would be enormously fruitful, job-creating investments, revolutionising the marine emphasis of the city and providing a necessary break from the increasingly resented and invasive telecommunications technology, and giving huge new emphasis to the pleasure craft industries.

To be sure, there is ferment with clusters of organic produce industries in Henderson Valley, Kumeu and beyond. Unfortunately, to most of Auckland, organics can be an economic yawn. What do juices and chutneys do for a city in which many are not well off - people for whom the relevance of the organics industry promises only another low-paying production line job?

They do a lot. Much food manufacturing requires increasingly complex production requiring consistently higher operating skills - and pay. Economic development anywhere in the region can offer opportunity to all, especially if they have education to handle the work and transport to get to it.



Re-imagining how we live due to a crisis, or a checklist, is just a device to give the imagination a kick. Find your own way. Few of the ideas here are new - the point is to imagine, and to use this anniversary of the eco-city as the moment to do its re-inventing. In fact we need to go a step before that, combining that sense of re-imagining the style and energy the city, with a re-imagination of what it would mean to live a life that you want. A good life. And so I suggest:

RE-IMAGINING THE GOOD LIFE IN WAITAKERE CITY

A Quality of Life Checklist to Help Sort Out What Really Matters in Our World:

Ahh the good life. Fine Henderson wine. Fast cars. Beautiful people. The beach house at Piha. The ski chalet on Ruapehu. The apartment overlooking Viaduct Basin. The lifestyle block in Bethell's. The farm homestead

Dream on!

For the overwhelming majority of us, living like this is about as likely as throwing the line-outs for the All Blacks. Our days are not spent on the beach or the ski slopes, but rather commuting to work, struggling with bills, and perhaps sensing that the best things in life are passing us by. It is easy to feel small and drab compared to the millionaires and movie stars whose exploits are chronicled across the media. Making money - lots more money - comes to be the only way to ensure a meaningful life, a point hammered home incessantly by advertising, financial experts, and political leaders.

We need to recover from this condition, and this starts with a realisation that there is more to life than the pursuit of private splendour. The good life cannot be measured in dollars. The vitality of our community, the direction of our nation, the health of our environment, and the ins and outs of everyday existence significantly affect personal happiness.

That is the point behind my Lifestyle Checklist: to highlight some of the social, cultural, spiritual, political and ecological factors that enrich our lives. A stunning sunset or a beloved bookstore can be just as fulfilling as a fancy house full of expensive stuff. I hope that this list inspires you to think about the things large and small that bring the Life back into Lifestyle.

A fierce but friendly spirit of local patriotism:

We should all feel comfortable boasting about our hometown breweries, amateur sports teams, theatre companies, cuisine, architecture, nightlife, political accomplishments, and natural scenery. The ability of the Te Atatu people to determine that they wanted a large park, form a concept to carry their desires through, lobby it through Council, and accept no compromises from bureaucrats is a wonderful illustration of this.

Great dividends on your rates:

First-rate parks, libraries, recreation facilities, transit, and other local government services make all the difference in the community.

A wealth of funky businesses:

The vitality of any community depends on an interesting array of idiosyncratic and often financially marginal little businesses: friendly cafés, bookstores outfitted with old sofas, wild and woolly garden shops, affordable antique dealers, magic stores, art galleries, eccentric fashion boutiques, record stores with nerdy obsessive proprietors who know their stuff, wine bars prepared to sell Purple Death in a paper bag. New Lynn in particular is getting this mix right.

Places far from the maddening crowd:

Quiet sanctuaries where you can watch sunsets, hear crickets, and see stars shining brightly in the night sky: forests, beaches, lovers' lanes, fishing holes, and yes: obscure nudist beaches.



Not-at-all-random acts of kindness:

Adequate public assistance, widespread charitable giving, effective social service agencies, affordable housing initiatives, and good wages.

True blue glue:

Bowling clubs, book clubs, churches, Bhuddist retreats, Muslim temples and other religious groups, bringing people together into a strong fabric of people who know each other outside of work and home. So do performance art collectives, immigrant associations, wicca covens, classic car groups, Touch teams, and active members of the Engelbert Humperdink Fan Club.

A bit of vice to keep things interesting:

Bars that stay open until 4.00 am, dessert cafes, and at least one spot around town that looks provocatively seedy. On the other hand, counselling programmes and active 12-step groups are lifesavers to people for whom these pleasures become disasters.

Diversity with a capital D:

M1-M2

Immigrants, obscure languages spoken on the street, poor people, the elderly, plus free thinkers and free spirits of all stripes - these folks should not only feel welcome in the community but feel that they have something to offer everyone else. And this goes for lovable eccentrics as well: sculptors whose medium is junk steel. People who have founded their own religion. People who take the healing power of crystals seriously. Grand conspiracy theorists with collections of el-bizarro left-field magazines. My current favourite eccentric of the week; the woman who continues to feed the cats at the old Tui Glen campsite as attached at pages M1 to M2.

Ways to go out of your mind:

Modern society tends to imprison us in our heads, locked away from natural rhythms and a sense of spiritual wonder. Dance clubs to bring out your inner sensual woman, yoga studios, hiking trails, sports programmes, and a relaxed pace of life can help us escape back into the realm of the sense and our bodies. A full platter of spiritual offerings - from high mass at a Latin-only Catholic church to impromptu meditation in a public garden or inside the green room - also remind us that there's more to the world than what's rattling around the bank account our rattling around our skulls.

Body and soul:

Easy access to massage therapists, natural food stores, homeopaths, tai chi classes, midwives, primal screaming, banging drums caked in wet clay at midnight on a beach, along with open-minded doctors and hospitals.

Safe streets:

Violent crime claws at the soul of a place. Community policing, which involves citizens in the job of protecting their neighbourhoods, not only lowers crime rates but also raises community spirit. My vote for the neighbourhood with the strongest community spirit in Waitakere at the moment is Te Atatu Peninsula. Not only because the community protection organisations are tight-knit, but also because they have a smart and effective community policeman, and because they get stuck into projects with a vengeance, such as the People's Park.

Salute to the seasons:

Solstice and equinox rituals. Singing-in-the-rain celebrations. Midnight swims on sweltering nights - with a pay-per-swim lifeguard option. Mud fights in the Whau Creek.



Where the wild teens are:

It is a balancing act to maintain places where kids can feel boisterously on their own yet not hidden away from the rest of society. Skateboard parks, 24-hour swimming pools, all-ages music clubs, open gym programmes, and cafes pitched at the noisier, younger set without a chemical emphasis - the classic example being K'Road's Verona Café. We also need a local rite of passage - like a mass tree planting on leaving school or a huge cream bun fight or a parade down Henderson in which they are all saturated by their parents with water hoses - or whatever - instils youngsters with a sense of progression, and a sense of belonging to a community.

Our inalienable right to walk:

We may love cars, but that does not mean we want to climb behind a wheel each time we venture out to buy a litre of milk. Everyone deserves to have a grocery, coffee shop, playground, hardware store, school, video store, friend's house, and Asian takeaway within easy walking distance (or a manageable bike ride if you live in outer suburbia).

Feisty local media:

Let a thousand voices rise. Community radio stations. Competing locally owned newspapers. A flowering of community-minded websites. Satire rags, cranky pamphleteers, anarchist postering. No more boring poop smeared on a printed yawn about whether Council has decided to pick its nose again.

Brightness at the edge of town:

A definable moment or line where urban development ends and the countryside begins, ideally within easy reach of most households.

A commitment to making sure the kids are all right:

Children should figure in every decision made around town, from how neighbourhoods are designed to how our rates money is spent. For the first time, this year I have invited over thirty of the children of Whenuapai to tell us politicians to our faces what they want. Watch this space.

SOME IDEAS FOR MAKING THE TOTAL LIFESTYLE CITY HAPPEN

A Large Tertiary Institution

How it Works

Council facilitates the land - say, for arguments sake, the Corban Estate - shows them the demand within the population, and then a tertiary organisation sets up and then trains people for higher qualifications.

Benefits

Higher skills in the population requiring higher pay. A more advanced degree of debate within the community. Sharper, independent focus and scrutiny of big decisions within the community, including Council ones. Clearly defined future and hopes for young people leaving school.

Short Term or Long Term Impact?

Increasing in the long term.



Supporters

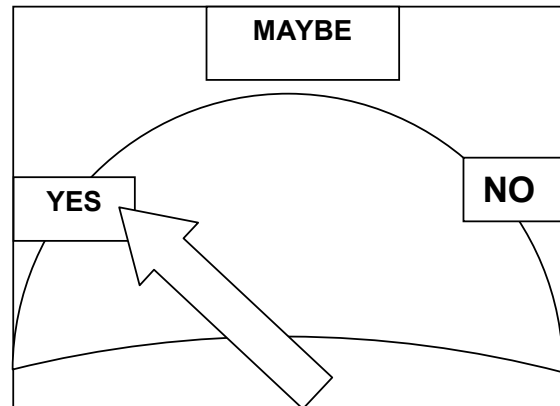
Young people. Anyone involved in getting a better future for young people. Employers.

Opponents

Who cares?

Reality Check

Leaving something in the hands of Council decision-making processes leads to unpredictable and usually slow results.



See motion below.

Paying For Congestion

How it Works

Just as a telephone company charges callers higher rates for peak-hour calls, motorists would be charged a fee for driving during rush-hour. Cars would be equipped with transponders that log the time of day that the vehicle is driven, and indicate whether it travels on a congested thoroughfare, at a particular time.

Benefits

Drivers would avoid crowded freeways during peak hours.

Short Term or Long Term Impact?

Long term.

Supporters

Proponents say that, unlike petrol tax that indiscriminately forces all drivers to pay, a transponder would penalise only those who drive during peak hours in congested areas. It would all but eliminate unnecessary trips on motorways during rush hour. No one would go out for a recreational drive between 4.30 pm and 6.30 pm. Motorists would schedule shopping trips during the middle of the day. Fewer trips and less pollution.

Opponents

Motorists would hate it as yet another tax. It would be seen to restrict freedom and independence - the Aucklander philosophy being: I can be and do what I want in my car, and these days, pretty well few other places. Highway officials would have a virtual log of each individual's road trips, so there would privacy issues to overcome. It would also necessitate the creation of a governmental arm to handle billing and insurance of transponders.

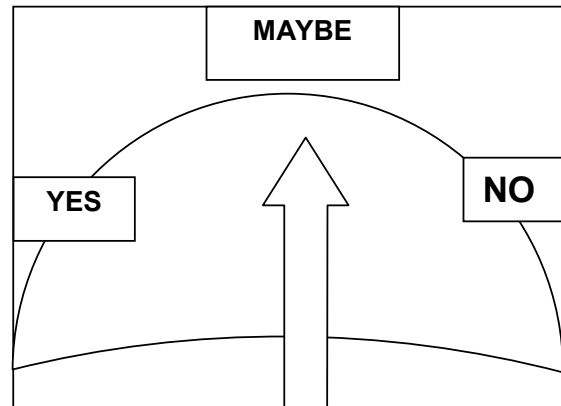


Costs

The technology exists.
Traffic engineers would determine a price rate steep enough to make motorists use the car during peak hours only if they had no alternative.

Reality check

Great for the world, great for the city, but since it would be close to political suicide it would need unity from all Auckland TLA's.



Expand the Rail Network

How it Works

Rail transportation includes subways, monorails, heavy rail, light rail and bullet trains. The current plan has a web of rail lines that would include hundreds of stations connected with park-and-ride lots, bike paths, buses and taxis. At the time of this Council meeting I will be in Vancouver and Portland, who have most of those options in abundance.

Benefits

Rail lines remove motorists from congested motorways and surface streets.

Short-Term or Long-term Impact?

Not much benefit in the short term.

Supporters

Most local government officers and political representatives, because they provide an appealing alternative for solo motorists. Rail travel allows people to get to work without the stress of driving, unaffected by traffic conditions.

Opponents

Some urban planners and advocates for lower-income bus riders say that the cost of building and operating rail lines is exorbitantly high compared to the relatively small numbers it currently serves or can reasonably be expected to serve in the future given current population densities within the Auckland region. Others argue that fixed rail lines are inflexible and cannot respond to changes in commuting patterns and employment trends. Others say that they increase danger, with a higher mortality rate per accident than cars.

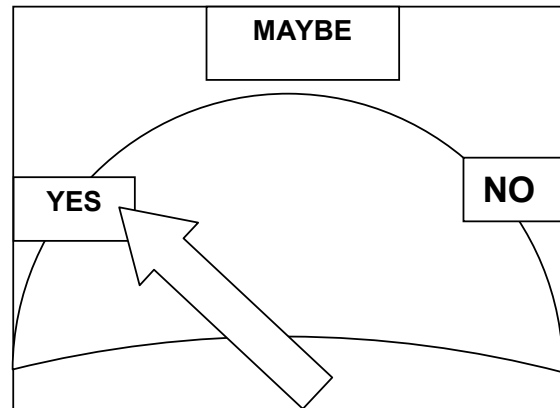


The Costs

High for infrastructure, high for subsidy per commuter. Under-grounding is desirable, but costly.

Reality Check

The Auckland region is doing it. Waitakere City has built higher density around rail transport nodes for ten years. People want an alternative and it is happening. Rail lines are not expected to eliminate the need for cars but can serve commuters on a fixed route and timetable.



The Telecommute Alternative

Around a quarter of a million employees in the Auckland region already use computers, faxes, modems, and phones to work from home on a regular basis. It is difficult to measure how many cars stay off the roads, because most telecommuters have varying schedules. Telecommuting allows employers to reduce costs on offices and parking.

How It Works

Work phones are diverted to home, work databases are connected to home, people wear headsets, and interact with customers or other staff as usual.

Benefits

Fewer trips taken on roads, particularly during rush hour.

Short-Term or Long-term Impact?

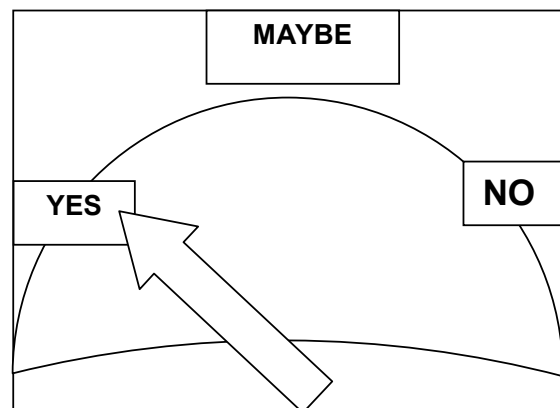
Short term in terms of commuter behaviour, long term in terms of lifestyle.

Supporters

Telecommunications companies, computer service companies, part-time caregivers (ie. with kids at school), smart employers who value loyalty.

Opponents

Inland Revenue Department through increased work-space within family home. Anyone reliant on a telecommunications company for service, especially for bandwidth.



Costs

High for underground infrastructure for fibre-optic cabling.



Reality Check

Waitakere City currently has fibre optic cable going up through the north-western motorway, and another up through the rail line, separated by only 1.5 kilometres of the City's industrial heartland: Lincoln Road. Yet there is no link between them, there are no spur lines off either of them to serve the workers or citizens of the City, and the customer demand lobbied to the telco's is only just gaining steam.

Commuter Miles

How it Works

A market in commuter kilometres - similar to a market in air pollution credits - would be created to control how workers get to and from their jobs. Companies would be allotted kilometres based on a formula that takes into account the number of people a firm employs. Then companies could trade these commuter kilometres in an orderly market. Companies whose employees telecommute, work out of satellite offices near homes, car pool, have staggered schedules or use public transportation, would accumulate excess commuter kilometres. Companies whose employees tend to drive from home by themselves would run short of allotted commuter kilometres and would face financial penalties. But companies with excess commuter kilometres could sell them to companies that need more, much as pollution credits are now being bought and sold across the United States.

Benefits

It would give businesses a strong financial incentive to reduce traffic congestion and encourage new forms of work, such as telecommuting.

Short-Term or Long-term Impact?

It would take time for a system to be put in place.

Supporters

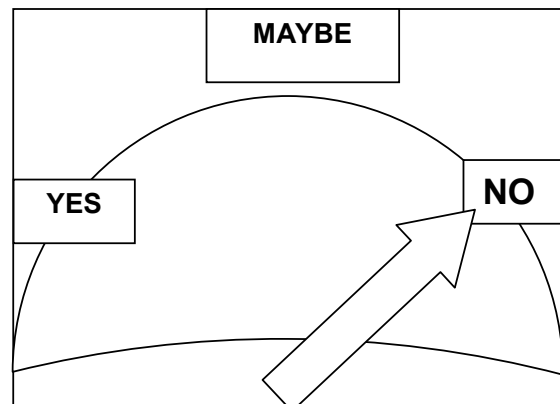
Telecommuting advocates and others would endorse the idea as a sure-fire way to reduce work habits. They would say that it forces businesses to either change or pay a price.

Opponents

Critics would say that such a plan would make some companies relocate out of the area, resulting in a net loss of jobs. They would say that it would unfairly penalise some companies and force some smaller firms out of business.

The Costs

Some companies would end up paying steep costs to continue to have workers commute. The programme could be funded through penalties collected from offending companies or through a percentage of the proceeds from the transactions.





Reality Check

If it works for smog in California, why not for traffic congestion? A similar programme to control development density and to preserve historic structures in downtown Los Angeles by buying and selling the unused "air rights" above low-rise buildings was successful in the 1980s - until the bottom fell out of the real estate market and developers stopped building office towers.

Community Service From Work

How it Works

Employers give workers the opportunity to take one day off a month to work in the service of their communities. The strictly volunteer programme could be anything but would be most feasible if it were in the field in which the employee works. But it could simply be: volunteering in the local library; working on a local newsletter or building project; doing some kind of organising of the residents in a neighbourhood. Your employers would have to know what it was, but there should be a lot of latitude over what is "approved" community work.

Benefits

The neighbourhood gets the benefit of the energetic, unbegrudged work of people who do not have to sacrifice money or time to do it. It would become as much a part of civic life as jury duty. Companies who gain profile by advertising their volunteer contributions.

Short - or Long-Term Impact?

People suddenly get to know their communities.

Supporters

Everybody! Except

Opponents

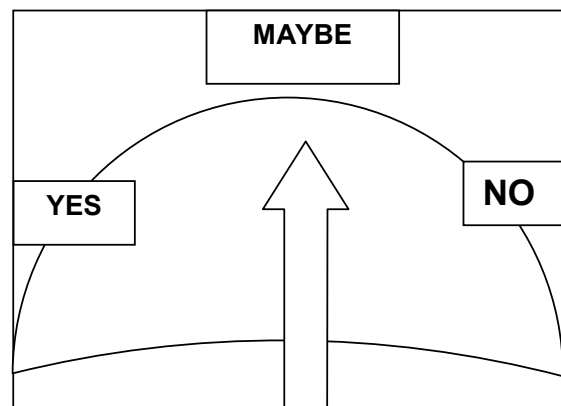
Employers who would probably complain about lost work time. But many companies are already donating huge sums of money to causes through sponsorship.

The Costs

Companies would lose work hours and would determine how many employer-hours they could afford to donate. But tax breaks could be structured as incentives for companies, just as they are now when firms donate money to charities.

Reality Check

It could happen here. Companies - big companies with high civic profiles especially would look churlish for refusing to take part in a programme promoted by the Mayor and others.





Virtual Communities

How it Works

Local communities would tap into the information highway. Neighbourhoods would have 24-hour individual and community access to an on-line computer bulletin board. During emergencies, the board could put people in immediate contact. Perhaps the most stunning example of this in the Auckland region is www.karekare.org.nz, which has pulled a tight community even tighter, advanced the level of public debate, awareness and the general contest of ideas, and has been a whole lot of fun to see in operation especially in the live chat room while it was up.

Another key site - due for launch this week - is www.wedg.org.nz. This will be another massive advance in raising the political speed and width of political debate online about local issues.

Short-Term or Long-Term Impact?

Both. Easy to get started; yields long-term benefits.

Opponents

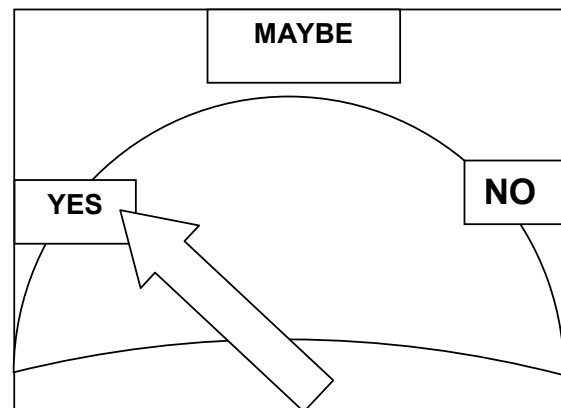
Critics say it has the potential to further diminish direct human contact and might exclude non-computer owners and the technologically incompetent, exacerbating class disparities. Also, the medium could be abused by community creeps.

The Costs

A used computer with modem is cheaper than a 19-inch colour television. Expertise in hook-up and use could easily be supplied by locals; every neighbourhood has a computer "nerd" or two.

Reality Check

This needs to happen more and more. I believe it is the next step for the citizens of Te Atatu Peninsula, and I would challenge them all to make it happen. Hopefully it will lead to faster and better informed local decision making.



Business-Neighbourhood Partnerships

How it Works

Businesses, large and small, should establish much stronger ties with neighbourhoods in which they are located. Grass-roots hands-on links would be stressed, not simple cheque-writing to schools or umbrella organisations. Neighbourhood groups, in turn, should pursue accommodative policies toward businesses rather than antagonistic, anti-growth policies.

Benefits

In many parts of the Auckland region, common complaints are the lack of community and the perceived lack of involvement by residents and businesses, which lead to alienation or indifference on both sides. Reinvigorated businesses-neighbourhood partnerships could halt the trend, improving the quality of life and ultimately protecting neighbourhood jobs. It would in fact be the working-through of the Council's district plan concept of "working environment".



Short-Term or Long-Term Impact

Impact can be immediate and long-lasting.

Supporters

Many cities say they have come to realise that they are only as strong as their individual neighbourhoods. It is important to separate the fear of commercialisation from the necessity of continuity between skill acquisition and careers for young people. Greater business participation in local schools could stop the growing feeling of abandonment on the part of school children and teachers. This can apply to churches, health clinics, recreation centres, clean-up brigades and other local groups to cement neighbourhood ties, consumer loyalty, and bring the businesses new customers.

Opponents

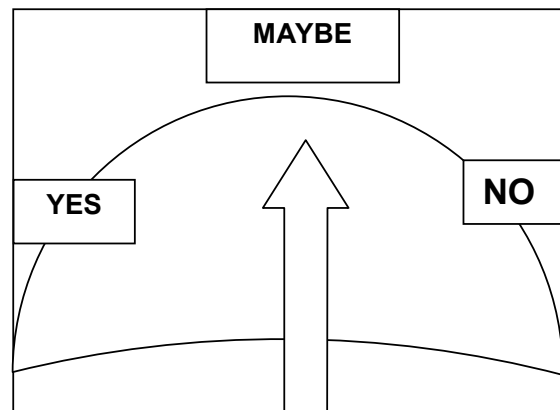
Recession-stressed business owners may not see enough potential benefit in raising their community involvement, especially if relatively few other businesses join in. Sometimes offers of help can be perceived as thinly veiled attempts to sell things. Residents may fear that encouraging business growth will encourage neighbourhood pollution and traffic.

The Costs

Low-cost neighbourhood sponsorship ideas may be as simple as providing small grants to schools for needed supplies. For neighbourhood groups, the costs of such alliances is usually volunteer time. For City government, the cost is in staff time devoted to linking businesses and neighbourhood groups.

Reality Check

Distrust between business and neighbourhood groups could be tough to surmount in some areas, and the general stress of running a business in a currently low-growth economy may prohibit many well-meaning business owners from getting more heavily involved in their communities.



Well, there's a few ideas. You will have your own. I want to hear them.

I am particularly pleased that the level of debate at Council meetings is of a quality that it has not been for many years, and that in return the officers are challenging us with honest advice. This is a welcome change from the moribund and largely vacuous Council of the previous term, in which officers had to live in a siege mentality. More! More!

CONCLUSION

It is time to move beyond strategy and into core projects that get this City what it wants to achieve the lifestyle it wants. I want less committee projections and more commitment to projects. I am very clear about what I want to achieve in order to improve the City, and I am prepared to be held accountable to achieving them. We must all draw up our own totally do-able priorities, in whatever scale we can manage. And hold ourselves accountable to them.



It is time to re-invent the Eco-City in the same robust manner in which we started it all. New thinking is needed to get over the nostalgic illusion of Auckland as an idyllic seaside port or Waitakere as an apple-blossom filled leafy small town. No working family making their way in life through the routines, bills and traffic see it that way. This is not a village in Fiordland or the Manawatu or the Kaipara. It is Waitakere City. And it is Auckland.

MILE STONES

I would have loved to include some, but I simply ran out of time.

RECOMMENDATION

1. That the report of the Mayor be received.
2. That the lease or sale of the Corbans Estate site to either UNITEC or the Auckland University of Technology be fully and finally determined at the March Council meeting.

RA Harvey, QSO, JP

MAYOR OF WAITAKERE CITY

To Alan

*Just to say
Thankyou*

for listening to me with a
sympathetic ear, while I poured
out my woes and for helping in
any way you could. The Tui Glen
Cats are all happy and healthy and
will continue to be so, as long as
I can keep looking after them.
I'm settling into my new home OK
although I'm still homesick its
not too bad. I'm enclosing a
photo of some of my cats and
one of my favourites, Bobby

Thanks once again
Wenke Ellis.





M2