

**Spatial Plan for the**  
Western Bay of Plenty

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## **SmartGrowth** Strategy 2013

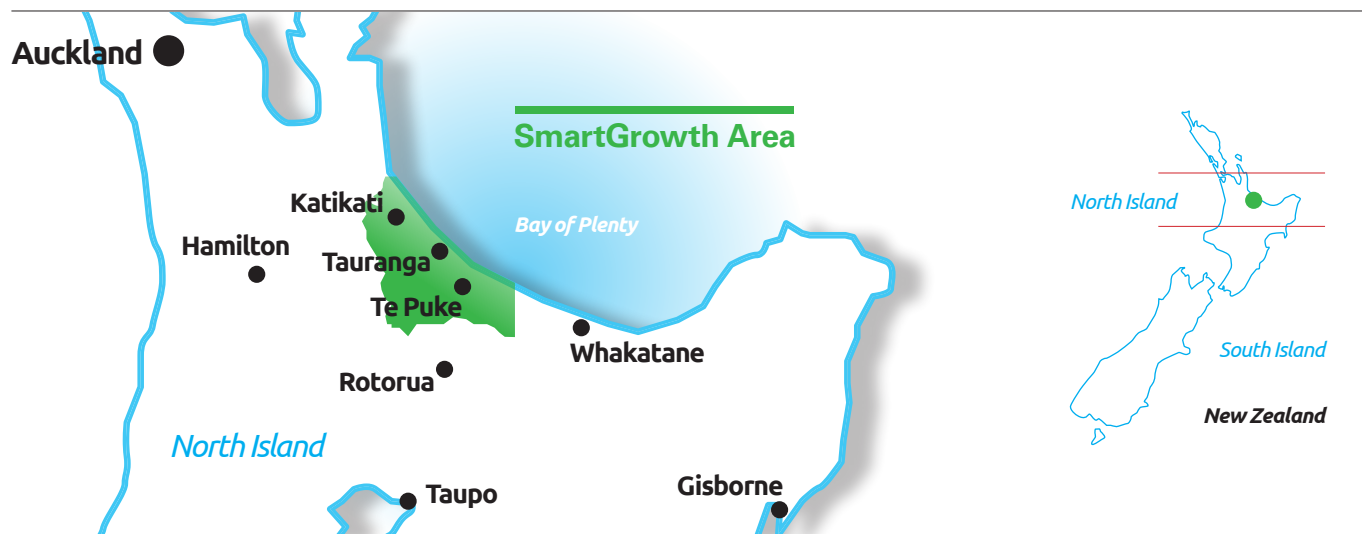
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October 2013



# Foreword



1.1

**This updated SmartGrowth Strategy and Implementation Plan has been developed over the last 18 months with the update having been initiated in late 2011. The Strategy which was adopted by the partners in August 2013 now moves into implementation. SmartGrowth brings together the strategy partners (Councils and Tangata whenua), the SmartGrowth Partner Forums and other sectors, agencies and groups in the community. The strategy has a 50 year horizon with a strong focus on the next 20 year planning period.**

The previous strategy had a growth management focus. This strategy

has built on this while a wider, more comprehensive approach has been taken. It considers a range of environmental, social, economic and cultural matters. The strategy identifies short, medium and long term opportunities for 'building the community'. It is not about local government doing everything, but is about fostering and recognising the importance of others that have contributed to strategy development and who have a clear role in effective implementation.

It is the spatial plan for the western Bay of Plenty sub-region within the context of the wider Bay of Plenty region and Upper North Island. A key example of this, are the linkages and interactions between the 'neighbours'.

The spatial planning emphasis of SmartGrowth has a number of elements;

- having a shared vision and direction which is progressed by everyone involved working collaboratively on the agreed implementation plan
- collaborative thinking across agencies and boundaries and across the spectrum of environmental, cultural, community and economic interests
- providing aspiration for the longer term
- an evidence base and use of common data between all agencies involved
- strong engagement with and representation from community
- integrated long term planning for land use, infrastructure and funding
- a recognition of the importance of



**Bill Wasley**  
SmartGrowth Independent Chair



**Mayor Stuart Crosby**  
Tauranga City Council



**Mayor Ross Paterson**  
Western Bay of Plenty District Council



Kia Tu Pakari ai Tatou



- effective Government engagement
- avoiding duplication of effort and making the best use of resources
- implementing the clear input from the well-informed SmartGrowth advisory groups and utilising such groups to assist with implementation

The strategy is a practical response to the collaborative approach which it has fostered since it was first adopted in 2004. One of the key factors for achieving effective input into the strategy update has been the range of SmartGrowth Partner Forums. Originally two forums were established in 2001 being the Combined Tangata Whenua and Strategic Partner Forums. As a result of the broader spatial plan approach,

further forums covering the broad range of social, economic, cultural and environmental matters have evolved and been established. The Partner Forums have provided well thought through and effective input both in the formative stages of the update process and the more formal submissions and hearing processes. The forums will continue having a key implementation role and this reinforces the strategy in having much more than just a local government focus.

Ongoing dialogue, shared information, quality thinking and collaborative implementation, are key success factors. The opportunity to work together, across a range of implementation agencies including central Government

is also critical to successful strategy implementation.

We commend the strategy to you as the western Bay of Plenty spatial plan that provides the basis for a unified vision and direction through a collaborative and partnership approach.

Finally, we would also like to acknowledge those who have contributed to this updated Strategy through your input, submissions, and willingness to engage. The Strategy is all the better for it.



**Chairman John Cronin**  
Bay of Plenty Regional Council



**Karora Te Mete (Smith)**  
Combined Tangata Whenua Forum Chair

## 1.2

**E papaki kau ana nga tai ki Mauao**

**I whakanukunukuhia**

**I whakanekenekehia**

**I whiua reretia a Hoturoa**

**Wahinerua ki te wai**

**Ki tai wiwi, ki tai wawa**

**Tihe mauriora, ki te whai ao, ki te ao marama**

He honore ki te Atua, he maungarongo ki runga i te mata o te whenua, he whakaaro pai ki nga tangata katoa. He mihi ki to tatou kaihanga, nana te timatanga me te whakaotinga o nga mea katoa. Ka huri nga whakaaro ki a ratou kua hoki ki tua o te arai, nga tini wairua kua wheturangitia, kua haere ki te putahitanga o Rehua, ki te huihuinga o Te Kahurangi. No reira, moe mai, moe mai, haere atu ra. Kia piki te ora, kia piki te kaha, kia piki te maramatanga kia tatou. Ko tenei te mihi rangatira kia koutou katoa.

*Honour and glory to the Lord, let there be peace on the land, good thoughts to all people. We acknowledge the Creator of all things from the start of time to this point. We turn our thoughts to those you have departed beyond the veil of Antares, to the gathering of the illustrious who have become twinkling stars in the heavens. Be at rest and farewell. Let us be well, full of vigour and understanding. This is our greeting to you all.*

Tenei ra taku mihi atu kia koutou katoa nga karanga whanau, hapu whanaui o Tauranga Moana, mai nga Kuri a Whare ki Wairakei, nga papaka o Rangataua, huri atu kia ai Tuawhenua, Otanewainuku, Puwhenua, Kaikaikaroro, Ngatamahinerua, ki Hikurangi. Ko te kaupapa kua whakatauiria i a tatou i roto i nga huihuinga me nga wananga o nga tau kua pahure. He kaupapa tenei hei tu hono, kia mahi tahi ai tatou ki nga kaunihera a Tauranga Moana ki te uru o te Moana o Toi. Anei nga wawata, nga whainga hoki o nga hapu me nga iwi, otira, nga poutokomanawa o tēnā, o tēnā o nga marae mo te huarahi i mua i a tatou. Ahakoa nga pikinga me nga

hekenga, ko tenei te ara mo matou, he ara mo nga whakatipuranga kei te haere mai. Ko te mea nui, kia whakapiri matou i runga i te whakapono, te aroha o te iwi, te manaakitanga o te tangata, me te maramatanga a o tatou tupuna mai nga wa o mua ki tenei ra.

*This is the special greeting to you all, families, hapu of our area. We acknowledge the learning's from the many meetings and workshops over many years, this work requiring us to work collectively and in unison with our local authorities. These are the aspirations, our objectives also of our hapu and our iwi, the collective voice of our marae for this a pathway forward for us all. And although we will have trials, tribulations and successes, this is the legacy we give to our next generations. The most important thing is that we believe in ourselves, we care for our people, and we continue to understand and reflect the teachings of our ancestors.*

Ka mihi ka whakawhetai kia koutou katoa i tu ai kia oti pai te kōkiri o tenei kaupapa. Kia piki ake to tatou Mana Motuhake ki te taumata o nga whakapaparangi tuku iho me nga moemoea hei oranga mo nga whakatipuranga kei te heke mai huri haere te ao. Kua tautoko tenei pūrongo rautaki hei whakapiri, whakatotahi ai tatou i roto i nga mahi a rohe. He ora te whakapiri, he mate te whakariri.

*We give special thanks to those who have worked with us in the past who have aspired to providing a platform of strength from which to give meaning and substance to our dreams for the next generation. We have supported this strategy that brings us together to work as one. Together we prosper, divided we fall.*

*No reira, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou katoa.*

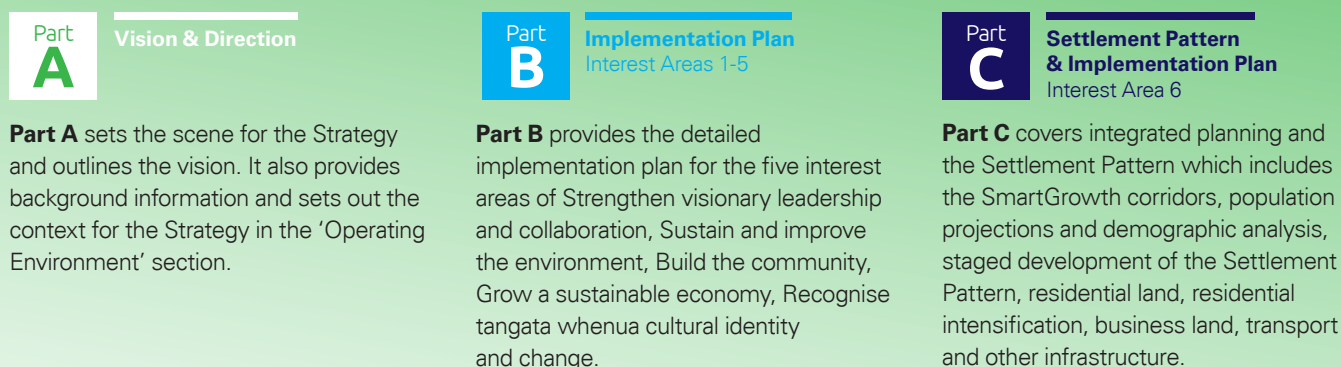
Nā te Tiamana,  
Combined Tangata Whenua Forum  
**Karora Te Mete (Carlo Smith)**



## 1.3

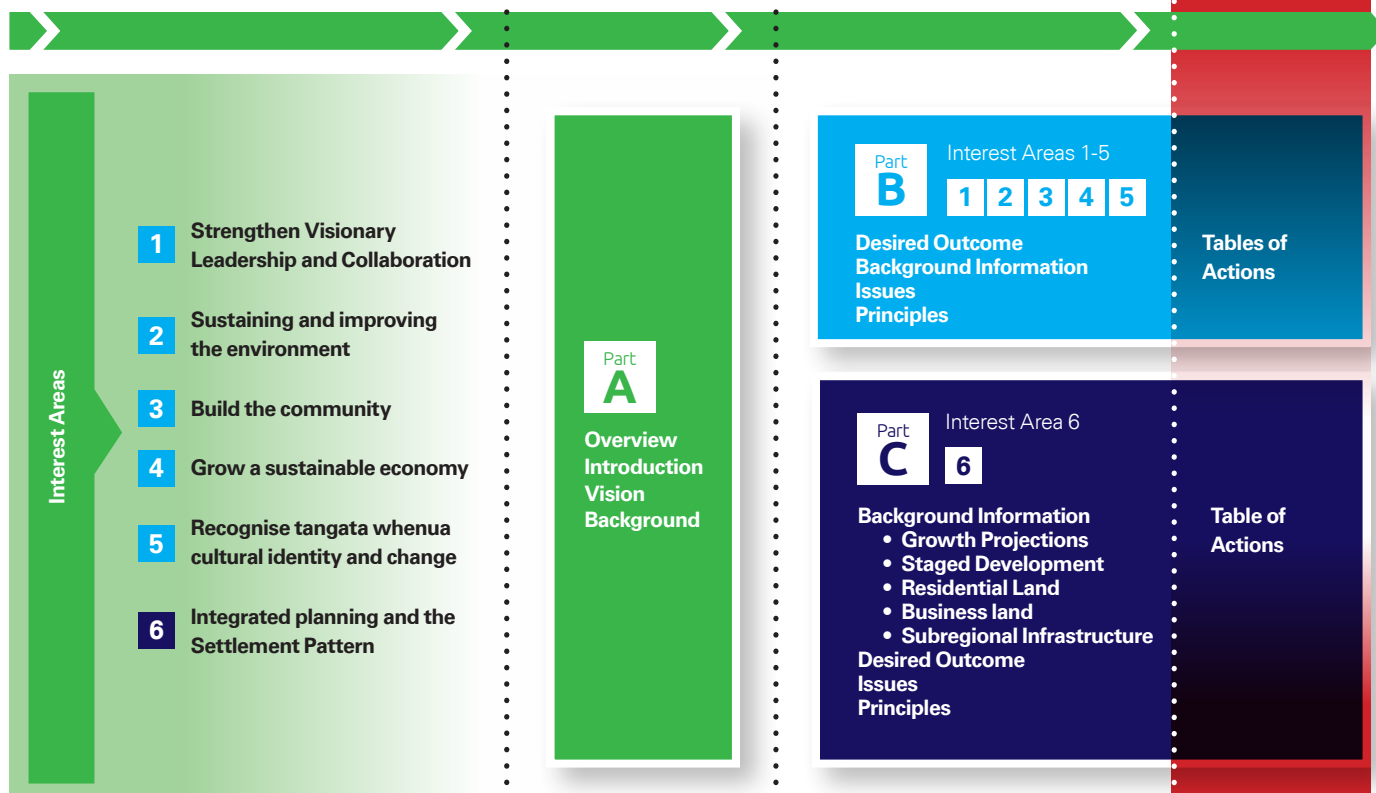
**Structure of the Strategy**

The SmartGrowth Strategy contains three parts:



The content of these parts of the Strategy and how they related to one another is illustrated below:

Figure 1.

**Document Structure**

# Contents

## Part A

### Vision & Direction

<b>1 Welcome</b>	<b>2</b>
1.1 Foreword	2
1.2 Mihi	4
1.3 Structure of the Strategy	5
1.4 Contents	6
<b>2 Vision, Purpose and Desired Outcomes</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>3 Introduction</b>	<b>10</b>
3.1 What is SmartGrowth?	10
3.2 The SmartGrowth Pillars	13
3.3 Evolution of SmartGrowth	15
3.4 The SmartGrowth Value Proposition	18
<b>4 Background</b>	<b>20</b>
4.1 Past Approaches to Growth Management	20
4.2 SmartGrowth Reviews 2007 and 2010	22
4.3 SmartGrowth Update 2013	22
4.4 2013 Strategy Update Process	22
4.5 Legislative Mandates	23
<b>5 Operating Environment</b>	<b>25</b>
5.1 International Trends	25
5.2 National Context	26
5.3 Upper North Island Context	26
5.4 Regional Context	27
5.5 The western Bay of Plenty Context	27

## Part B

### Implementation Plan

<b>6 Introduction</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>7 Strengthen Visionary Leadership and Collaboration</b>	<b>41</b>
7.1 Desired Outcome	41
7.2 Background	41
7.3 Issues	41
7.4 Principles	42
Actions: Strengthen Visionary Leadership and Collaboration	43
<b>8 Sustain and Improve the Environment</b>	<b>53</b>
8.1 Desired Outcome	53
8.2 Background	53
8.3 Issues	53
8.4 Principles	54
Actions: Sustain and Improve the Environment	55
<b>9 Build the Community</b>	<b>59</b>
9.1 Desired Outcome	59
9.2 Background	59
9.3 New Research Informing the Update	59
9.4 Issues	59
9.5 Principles	62
Actions: Build the Community	64
<b>10 Grow a Sustainable Economy</b>	<b>71</b>
10.1 Desired Outcome	71
10.2 Background	71
10.3 New Research informing the Update	72
10.4 Issues	72
10.5 Principles	74
Actions: Grow a Sustainable Economy	76
<b>11 Recognise tangata whenua cultural identity and change</b>	<b>83</b>
11.1 Desired Outcome	83
11.2 Background	83
11.3 New Research informing the Update	83
11.4 Issues	83
11.5 Principles	84
Actions: Recognise tangata whenua cultural identity and change	85

## Part C

### Settlement Pattern

<b>12 The SmartGrowth Settlement Pattern</b>	<b>90</b>
12.1 Introduction	90
12.2 Background	90
12.3 The Settlement Pattern Review	90
12.4 Key changes to the 2013 Settlement	90
<b>13 SmartGrowth Corridors</b>	<b>92</b>
13.1 Sub-regional corridors	92
13.2 Spatial corridors	92
<b>14 Growth Projections and Demographic analysis</b>	<b>95</b>
14.1 Revised SmartGrowth Population Projections	95
14.2 Demographic Drivers	95
14.3 Revised approach to development triggers	96
14.4 Capacity of the Settlement Pattern long term	96
14.5 Capacity of identified Urban Growth Areas	96
<b>15 Staged Development of the sub-regional Settlement Pattern</b>	<b>97</b>
15.1 Background	97
15.2 Reasons for staging development	97
15.3 The impact of urban expansion on productive rural land	98
<b>16 Residential Land</b>	<b>99</b>
16.1 Background	99
16.2 Research informing the Update	99
16.3 Generations of Growth	99
16.4 Capacity within zoned Urban Growth Areas	100
16.5 Challenges to full development of Identified Urban Growth Areas	102
16.6 Managing the risk of natural hazards on the Settlement Pattern	103
16.7 Residential Infill and Intensification	107
16.8 Identification of future Urban Growth Areas (Generation 5)	109

## Appendices

<b>17 Business Land</b>	<b>110</b>
17.1 Background	110
17.2 Research Informing the Update	110
17.3 Financial viability of industrial development	110
17.4 Long term requirements for Industrial land	111
17.5 Assessment of land availability for industrial building with high floor loads	111
17.6 The approach to commercial activities	112
<b>18. Sub-Regional Infrastructure</b>	<b>113</b>
18.1 Location and Alignment of Sub-regional Infrastructure in relation to Corridors	113
<b>19 Transport</b>	<b>114</b>
19.1 Background	114
19.2 Statutory and policy environment for transport	115
19.3 Transport infrastructure within SmartGrowth corridors	118
19.4 The role of western Bay of Plenty as a significant freight transit centre	120
19.5 SmartGrowth Aspirations for strategic transport infrastructure	122
<b>20 Infrastructure Funding</b>	<b>124</b>
20.1 Background	124
20.2 Investment approach	124
20.3 Funding options	124
20.4 SmartGrowth approach to infrastructure funding	125
<b>21 Settlement Pattern Implementation Plan</b>	<b>129</b>
21.1 Desired outcome	129
21.2 Issues	129
21.3 Principles	130
Actions: Integrated planning and the Settlement Pattern	131

<b>Appendix 1. Glossary of terms</b>	<b>143</b>
<b>Appendix 2. Acronyms</b>	<b>145</b>
<b>Appendix 3. Research</b>	<b>146</b>
<b>Appendix 4. Priority Actions</b>	<b>153</b>
<b>Appendix 5. Residential Intensification Work Programme</b>	<b>155</b>
<b>Appendix 6. Governance &amp; Advisory Forums Terms of Reference</b>	<b>159</b>
6.1 SmartGrowth Implementation Committee (SGIC)	159
6.2 SGIC Independent Chairman	159
6.3 Combined Tangata Whenua Forum	160
6.4 Strategic Partners Forum	161
6.5 Social Sector Forum	162
6.6 Property Developers Forum	164
6.7 Housing Affordability Forum	165
6.9 Population Ageing Technical Advisory Group	166
<b>Appendix 7. Management and Technical Terms of Reference</b>	<b>168</b>
7.1 Chief Executives Advisory Group (CEAG)	168
7.2 Strategic Implementation Management Group (SIMG)	168
7.3 Technical Implementation Group	168
7.4 Tangata Whenua Implementation Group	169
7.5 Communications Team	169
7.6 Programme/Implementation Manager	170
7.7 Tu Pakiri Adviser (TPA)	170
<b>Appendix 8. SmartGrowth Implementation Committee Memorandum of Agreement</b>	<b>171</b>
<b>Appendix 9. SmartGrowth Implementation Committee Operational Protocol</b>	<b>173</b>
<b>Appendix 10. The SmartGrowth Way</b>	<b>174</b>
<b>Appendix 11. Acknowledgements</b>	<b>176</b>

## Maps

<b>Maps</b>	<b>192</b>
Map 1. SmartGrowth Sub-region: Upper North Island Context	
Map 2. Inter-regional Connections	
Map 3. Regional Context and SmartGrowth Corridors	
Map 4. Northern Corridor	
Map 5. Central Corridor	
Map 6. Eastern Corridor	
Map 7. Western and Southern Corridors	









# Western Bay - a great place to **live, learn, work AND play**

Part  
**A**

**Vision & Direction**

**Horahia o mata ki a Meremere-tū-ahiahi**

Cast your eyes to Venus , the evening star

## 2. Vision, purpose & desired outcomes

### Vision

Western Bay - a great place to **live, learn, work AND play**

### Purpose

**SmartGrowth** provides a unified vision, direction and voice for the future of the western Bay

### Desired Outcomes

Interest Area	Desired Outcome
Strengthen Visionary Leadership and Collaboration	We have visionary, collaborative leadership, a strong partnership and provide effective advocacy
Sustain and improve the environment	We work together to protect and enhance our distinctive natural environment.
Build the community	We work proactively and in partnership with the community to make western Bay active, vibrant, connected, caring, healthy and safe.
Grow a sustainable economy	Our economy is thriving, growing, diverse and sustainable.
Recognise cultural identity and change	We realise economic and social opportunities for tangata whenua while protecting cultural identity.
Integrated Planning and the Settlement Pattern	We all work from the same long term planning blueprint which incorporates planning for land use, transport and other infrastructure in an efficient and affordable way.

## 3. Introduction

### 3.1 What is SmartGrowth?

SmartGrowth is the spatial plan for the western Bay of Plenty sub-region which connects people, places and activities. It is a comprehensive, long term strategy which sets the strategic vision and direction for the growth and development of the western Bay, on key issues across the spectrum of social, environmental, economic and cultural objectives.

The key aspects of a spatial plan include:

- a shared vision and direction which is progressed by everyone involved working collaboratively on an agreed implementation plan
- collaborative thinking across agencies and boundaries and across the spectrum of environmental, cultural, community and economic interests
- a strong evidence base and sharing of common data between agencies
- strong engagement with and representation from community
- integrated long term planning for land-use, infrastructure and funding
- effective engagement with Government
- avoiding duplication of effort and making the best use of resources
- implementing the clear input from the well-informed SmartGrowth Partner Forum advisory groups.
- long-term investment certainty in land and services for both the public and private sectors to support growth and development.

The SmartGrowth maps illustrate sub-regional features and show the linkages between the SmartGrowth sub-region, the wider Bay of Plenty region as well as adjacent upper North Island regions. The SmartGrowth Strategy will help to inform and be part of wider regional and Upper North Island spatial planning initiatives.

The purpose of SmartGrowth is to provide a unified vision, direction and voice for the future of the western



Figure 2.  
**Strength of  
SmartGrowth**



Bay through strong leadership and commitment on behalf of the people of the sub-region.

SmartGrowth is a collaboration between Tauranga City Council, Western Bay of Plenty District Council, Bay of Plenty Regional Council and tangata whenua, working in partnership with central Government (particularly the NZTA), businesses, education groups, industry and the community.

The 'SmartGrowth Partnership' refers to an alliance between local and territorial authorities and tangata whenua. However SmartGrowth is wider than local

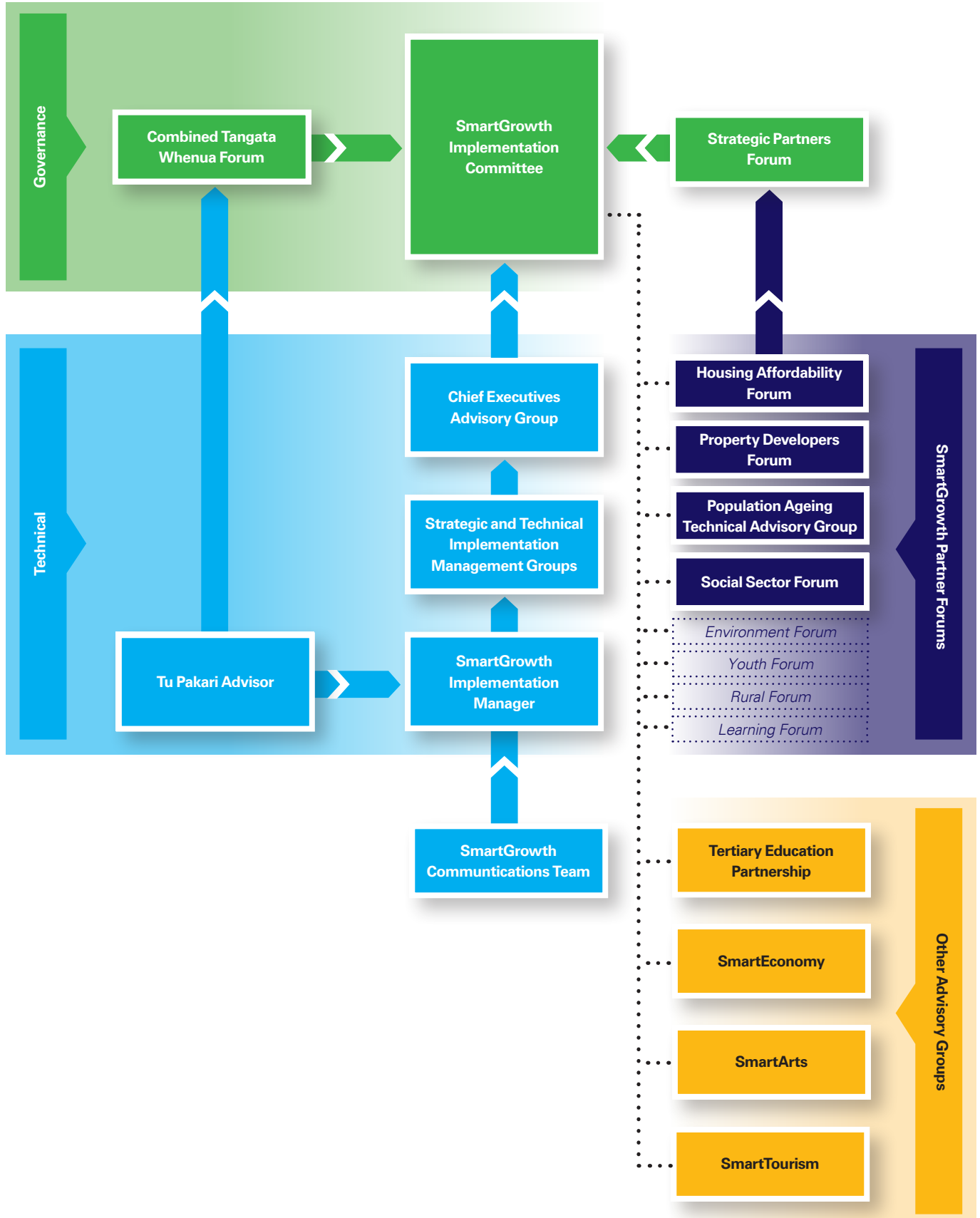
government. The strength of the Strategy is in large part due to the proactive role of community and strategic partners. The partnership is heavily dependent on a range of Government and non-Government agencies and community groups to help with implementation. Figure 2 provides an overview of all of the different groups that contribute to the strength of the SmartGrowth Strategy and its implementation. The SmartGrowth governance and management structure is illustrated in Figure 3.

The Settlement Pattern is an important component of the SmartGrowth Strategy. It provides a blueprint for growth and

development which identifies the existing and future location of residential and business land and considers the mix of land-use, transportation and other infrastructure in an integrated manner.

The original 2004 SmartGrowth Strategy focused on the philosophy of "live, work and play" in order to create liveable communities and emphasise the need for a balanced approach to growth management within each corridor and subsequently across the sub-region. The concept of "learn" has been added to the updated 2013 Strategy to emphasise the importance of education and lifelong learning to individuals and the community.

Figure 3.  
**SmartGrowth Governance, Advisory and Management Structure**





This change is reflected in the vision and the implementation plan.

The SmartGrowth Strategy is a component of a wider Bay of Plenty regional framework which has an emphasis on natural resource use, economic development, energy management and transport planning.

### 3.2 The SmartGrowth Pillars

SmartGrowth has been founded on 5 key pillars which underpin the Strategy and its implementation. These are outlined below.

#### 1. Partnership

The SmartGrowth Strategy has fostered a unique approach based on developing good relationships, building trust, and advancing a new way of working together. As positive relationships have developed, this has led to the formation of the SmartGrowth partnership, recognised for the strength of collaboration between the councils, tangata whenua, strategic community partners and Government agencies, particularly NZTA. Collaboration, trust, confidence and mutual respect are the hallmarks of SmartGrowth. This partnership includes active engagement with people and communities to ensure their aspirations are reflected in the growth of the sub-region.

The SmartGrowth partnership is:

- Voluntary - to enable local authorities and the community work together to achieve mutually beneficial goals while retaining independence and autonomy.
- Wider than local government – to encourage the contribution of strategic community partners and central Government agencies, and recognise the degree of significance the community plays in planning for the future.
- Built on relationships – to recognise that relationships are built on trust, confidence and mutual respect. This means taking time to work through and resolve issues.

The SmartGrowth partnership is also

unique in that it is an early example of a partnership between local authorities and tangata whenua. Several mechanisms are in place to ensure active tangata whenua engagement and participation in SmartGrowth at the governance and management and operational levels of the partnership.

#### 2. Collaborative Leadership

Collaborative leadership is about recognising that the western Bay community needs to plan together as a sub-region, rather than as separate authorities and districts. SmartGrowth provides a collaborative leadership approach to the management of key issues facing the western Bay. This benefits the community by increasing efficiencies in how we plan for growth and resolve the challenges we face. Working together from one blueprint also enables our community to punch above its weight in attracting central Government investment and to have a collective voice to Government and others on key issues.

#### 3. Integration

An integrated approach to planning is a fundamental component of the SmartGrowth Strategy. The success of the SmartGrowth Strategy to date has in part been due to anchoring the Strategy's strategic direction and implementation actions in key policy and strategic planning instruments throughout partner organisations.

The basis of this approach is that land use should be contemporaneous with the provision of infrastructure, and with timely and equitable funding. This helps to anticipate growth, coordinate development and ensure that infrastructure and facilities are developed in an effective and affordable manner.

SmartGrowth partners have a formal commitment to Strategy implementation which has so far resulted in implementation through the Regional Policy Statement, District and City Plans, Long Term Plans, the Regional Land

Transport Strategy, the Regional Land Transport Programme and various other strategies and studies.

The benefits of an integrated planning approach include:

- Enables consideration of the most efficient use of public resources so that infrastructure costs over the long term across the whole of the Settlement Pattern can be kept as low as possible by planning for and providing infrastructure in a logical, sequenced manner.
- Integration of land use and infrastructure planning aims to ensure the optimisation of infrastructure investment.
- Enables growth impacts, risks and the cost of development to be identified early.
- Ensures all the SmartGrowth partners are making decisions using a common set of sound and agreed data.
- A comprehensive sub-regional picture of existing infrastructure services and future demands is essential for prudent asset management and budgeting.
- A collaborative sub-regional approach to planning for and providing infrastructure will become increasingly important as we explore collective and alternative approaches to funding.

#### 4. Evidence-Based

SmartGrowth takes an evidence-based approach to strategy development and implementation. Appendix 3 details the significant amount of research underpinning both the 2004 Strategy and the 2013 Update and providing a solid platform for strategy development and implementation.

#### 5. Live, learn, work AND play approach

The concept of live, learn, work AND play is anchored in the SmartGrowth Strategy and Settlement Pattern and emphasises the need for balance within the management of growth. It has relevance at different levels:

- At the sub-regional level, it articulates the vision for the western Bay of Plenty







to be a great place to live, learn, work AND play.

- In terms of its practical application, the concept ensures the provision of land and services for housing, business, education, rural production, community activities and recreation and emphasises the interrelationships between these activities.
- At the local level it aspires to provide opportunities for people to meet most of their daily needs within their own communities and promote community cohesion. It supports the design of neighbourhoods and communities in a way which promotes social interaction, connectivity, access, a strong sense of place and sufficient housing choice to cater for a range of ages, incomes and household sizes.

### 3.3

## Evolution of SmartGrowth

### SmartGrowth – The first decade

The focus of the SmartGrowth strategy during the first decade included:

- Identifying opportunities to live, work AND play in order to ensure a balanced approach to growth management through identifying sufficient quantities of residential and industrial land within the Settlement Pattern
- Providing Government with land use certainty, particularly for transport investment, education facilities and other infrastructure and services.
- Anchoring the Settlement Pattern, for example through the Regional Policy Statement, district and city plans, the Regional Land Transport Strategy and Programme.
- Progressing the establishment of tertiary education facilities in the sub-region.
- Understanding the need for alignment of development with infrastructure planning and investment.
- Establishing key transport infrastructure, eg the Tauranga Eastern Link.
- Encouraging more development to locate away from the coast given the sensitivity of this environment and

issues around natural hazards.

- Promoting a more compact urban form by establishing urban limits, encouraging higher density in greenfield subdivisions and identifying potential areas for residential intensification to occur.
- Providing a platform for a collaborative approach to managing growth across the sub-region

### Lessons Learnt

The project has gained a lot of experience in growth management, strategy development and implementation since the inception of the original SmartGrowth Strategy in the late 1990's. Some of the lessons learnt from the first Strategy, include the importance of:

#### A. Responding to changing circumstances

- An ability to be flexible and adaptable to changing circumstances.
- Aligning both current and planned infrastructure investment with growth, taking account of potential changes in population growth and rates of development against forecasts.
- Building triggers into the Strategy which serve as early warning signals if things are not progressing according to plan.
- Adapting for changing demographics including the ageing population.

#### B. Natural hazard risk

- Integrating natural hazard management into our thinking about the Settlement Pattern.

#### C. The economics of development

- Carefully considering the economics of development before selecting and investing in growth areas.
- An awareness of the significant effects that the economy can have on growth rates, development feasibility and infrastructure investment.

- Aligning land use, infrastructure and funding and the need to better align infrastructure capacity with development.
- The need to explore alternative funding approaches.
- Greater emphasis on improving housing affordability to enhance workforce and community wellbeing.

#### D. Thinking bigger than the western Bay

- The role of western Bay of Plenty in the Bay of Plenty context and the Bay of Plenty region in the wider Upper North Island context.

#### E. Relationships

- Partnerships and collaboration with the community and key stakeholders.
- Maintaining strong relationships with implementation partners.
- Effective engagement with Central Government.
- Increased community engagement and involvement on key issues including intensification given that there has previously been some community resistance to higher densities in some areas and achieving higher densities in greenfield areas can be difficult.
- Tangata whenua involvement in governance and implementation.
- The need for a wider spatial planning approach which recognises all of the well-beings rather than focussing solely on growth management.

#### F. Implementation

- Maintaining efficient and effective governance structures.
- Anchoring the Strategy under the Resource Management Act 1991 to provide a legal mandate for the Settlement Pattern.
- Anchoring the Strategy within the culture of organisations.
- Taking a pragmatic approach where possible by ensuring actions are realistic and achievable and that there is real commitment amongst partners to their implementation.

Figure 4.

**The Evolution of SmartGrowth****SmartGrowth - The next decade**

The original 2004 Strategy had a primary focus on providing a robust framework for future land-use and growth management. The 2013 Update takes a broader approach. The vision, issues and implementation plan set out in this Strategy are based around six interest areas or components of the SmartGrowth vision, which cover the range of social, cultural, environmental and economic well-being's. The interest areas are:

1. Strengthen visionary leadership and collaboration
2. Sustain and improve the environment
3. Build the community
4. Grow a sustainable economy
5. Recognise tangata whenua cultural identity and change
6. Integrated planning and the Settlement Pattern

Giving consideration to social, economic, cultural and environmental outcomes clearly recognises a wider land-use planning and growth management perspective which is influenced by and impacts on the economy, environment and social and cultural wellbeing of communities. Spatial planning enables all of these elements to be considered together in an integrated manner. This approach maximises the benefits and reduces the

negative impacts of land use planning on the economy, the environment and social and cultural wellbeing.

This approach enables the Strategy to:

- Recognise and build on a partnership approach with the community by providing leadership and advocacy on issues which may extend outside of the traditional scope of local government
- Take a more comprehensive approach to issues and advocacy across the spectrum of well-beings on a sub-regional basis
- Enable a better understanding of the communities which make up the western Bay of Plenty and their key issues.
- Play a role in contributing to meeting the needs of future generation in the western Bay of Plenty
- Promote a sense of place and a sense of pride in our place
- Build on the relationships with and between the SmartGrowth Partner Forums

This more comprehensive approach to strategic planning means that partnerships with communities, the community sector and central Government agencies are vital to the success of SmartGrowth. It is about sharing a commitment to achieving the outcomes that will make the western Bay

of Plenty a great place to live, learn, work and play.

In response to both the lessons learnt during the first phase of Strategy implementation and the desire of the community and the SmartGrowth Implementation Committee for SmartGrowth to take a broader approach, the focus of the next phase of SmartGrowth over the next decade (2013-2023) will be around the broad action areas in figure 5.

Several of the actions within the Implementation Plan have been identified as priorities for SmartGrowth. Completion of these actions is considered essential if the SmartGrowth Strategy is to be successfully implemented. The SmartGrowth partners are required to develop and agree a detailed 3 yearly implementation and funding plan in accordance with action 711. Actions contained within this implementation and funding plan will be drawn from actions identified as priorities. Appendix 4 contains a list of priority actions across all 6 interest areas.

Figure 5.

**The focus of the SmartGrowth Spatial Plan****Strengthen Visionary Leadership and Collaboration**

- a. Strengthen relationships with the community
- b. Strengthen and maintain relationships between implementation partners
- c. Strengthen our relationship with central government
- d. Strengthen our relationships with the upper North Island
- e. Strengthen our relationships with the wider Bay of Plenty
- f. Align the implementation toolkit
- g. Provide guidance
- h. Investigate collaborative funding options
- i. Greater accountability, reporting and review

**Build the Community**

- a. Build and value partnership with the community
- b. Plan for infrastructure to support communities
- c. Consider the implications and opportunities of an ageing population
- d. Provide tertiary education opportunities
- e. Promote arts and cultural initiatives
- f. Provide transport to connect communities

**Grow a Sustainable Economy**

- a. Create an enabling business environment
- b. Strengthen connections
- c. Encourage a thriving city centre
- d. Consider the implications and opportunities of changing demographics on the economy
- e. Improve housing affordability

**Recognise tangata whenua cultural identity and change**

- a. Recognise tangata whenua interests and values
- b. Provide for the use of tangata whenua lands and waters
- c. Plan for changing Maori demographics

**Sustain and Improve the Environment**

- a. Promote sustainable use of resources
- b. Protect, restore and maintain the amenity of our unique environment
- c. Environmental Monitoring

**Integrated Planning and the Settlement Pattern**

- a. Demographic analysis/modelling
- b. Residential land
- c. Business land
- d. Managing the risk of natural hazards on the settlement pattern
- e. Strategic transport
- f. Cost effective infrastructure

## 3.4

**The SmartGrowth Value Proposition**

The following section sets out the needs and expectations of various interest groups in terms of planning for and managing growth and the value of the SmartGrowth Strategy in responding to these needs.

**Needs and Expectations****A. Community and Ratepayers**

- Expect local government to show visionary and committed leadership and take a proactive approach to growth management by ensuring that physical, economic, cultural and social factors have been taken into consideration rather than leaving it for the development community to determine priorities and shape the future of the sub-region
- Expect local government to plan ahead for well-located sites and facilities to meet the needs of the community
- Expect a level of partnership and involvement in decisions that affect the future of the sub-region and their communities including active participation in planning
- Expect local government is planning in a streamlined and efficient way
- Need a degree of flexibility to respond to changing circumstances that impact on the sub-region as a whole.

**B. Land Developers, service providers, business and industry**

- Need certainty over the form and location of development
- Need cost effective infrastructure.

**C. Tangata whenua**

- Expect that the potential impact of growth on the environment in its broadest sense, including tangata whenua values, will be protected at a high level by establishing and implementing an agreed Settlement Pattern
- Expect to be able to develop tangata whenua lands.

**D. Central Government**

- Expect clear signals from the sub-region as a whole, about the form and location of development as future demand patterns will provide an opportunity to examine the most cost effective service delivery options
- Need to ensure the most efficient use of public resources so that infrastructure costs over the long term can be kept as low as possible and public investment in infrastructure is optimised
- Expect local government to explore collective and alternative approaches to funding and co-investment.

**E. Local Government**

- Need to show leadership and be proactive
- Need to take a more integrated spatial approach to considering and addressing issues
- Need to ensure the infrastructure required to deliver the Settlement Pattern is provided in the most efficient and affordable way so that infrastructure costs and development contributions are kept as low as possible to enable growth to continue
- Need to plan for land use, infrastructure and funding in an integrated, sub-regional way that transcends both political and administrative boundaries to optimise of infrastructure investment and its efficient, effective and safe use
- For asset management purposes, need to have a comprehensive picture of existing services and likely future demands
- Is required legally to identify, for at least the next 10 years, the impacts of future development on Councils' budgets
- Need quality information to meet (as a minimum) the requirements of Section 32 of the Resource Management Act 1991 and to underpin and defend any specific

growth implementation measures, as Councils proceed to implement these

- Need to welcome and enable the contribution of other non-government agencies in the future of the sub-region
- Need to think about planning for the environmental, cultural, economic and social factors that contribute to community wellbeing and aligning needs and implementation across agencies.

**F. Inter-Regional Stakeholders**

- Better linkages between regions promote collaboration on key cross boundary issues and a wider Upper North Island approach to economic development
- Working together and using shared services improves efficiency and effectiveness.

**What SmartGrowth delivers**

In response to the needs and expectations set out above, SmartGrowth is a vehicle for the western Bay of Plenty to:

- Address issues collaboratively and present one strong, united voice outside the western Bay, including to central Government and adjoining districts and regions
- Advocate collectively on agreed issues and directions gaining a strength that is greater than the sum of the individual parts, including advocacy for a range of matters beyond the traditional role of local authorities
- Use a single framework and blueprint that transcends jurisdictional boundaries and is implemented through regional, city and district planning documents and through community groups and non-government agencies; promoting more streamlined and efficient planning processes and decision making
- Obtain quality evidence to inform decision making and ensure central Government, non-government agencies, local authorities and



community groups all have access to uniform data to plan and act collectively

- Establish an integrated and agreed growth management framework for the western Bay, facilitating the efficient and effective provision of infrastructure and providing certainty for public and private investment
- Establish strong partnerships with tangata whenua through the Combined Tangata Whenua Forum and enable tangible involvement in decision making
- Establish strong partnerships with the community through the SmartGrowth Partner Forums network which ensures involvement with the Strategy implementation, monitoring and reviews
- Contribute to a better understanding of the social needs of the communities within the western Bay and align with key central Government priorities in the social arena
- Assist with creating linkages to neighbouring sub-regions and regions.





## 4. Background

### 4.1

#### Past Approaches to Growth Management

The western Bay of Plenty sub-region has a history of rapid population growth since the 1950s. Impacts from growth resulted in local government taking an increasingly proactive approach to managing growth. The most significant of these were:

- Formation of a Regional Planning Authority for the Bay of Plenty in 1963 to cope with growth issues.
- The Local Government Commission in 1968 setting a general direction for growth known as “The Eastern Option”.
- The Papamoa Urban Growth Cell within which planning took place in the mid-1970s.
- Central Government in the mid-1980s undertook a comprehensive sub-regional Urban Development Study in collaboration with local councils (Te Puke Borough, Mt Maunganui Borough, Tauranga County and Tauranga City).
- The Local Government Commission 1989 Final Reorganisation Scheme, which put in place new Local Government boundaries and functions.
- The Tauranga District Council in 1990 initiating the Tauranga Urban Growth Study for the period through to 2001. This had a focus only on land within the Tauranga District and particularly land that had been in the former County.
- The Western Bay of Plenty District Council in 1991 developed it’s “Towards 2000” growth strategy.
- The Tauranga District Council and the Western Bay of Plenty District Council in 1994 collaborated on a sub-regional





industrial growth study. The Regional Council also participated in this project.

While progressive for their time, these initiatives did not take a sufficiently long-term, cross boundary view of growth issues and failed to place adequate emphasis on the relationships needed for successful implementation.

The SmartGrowth project was initiated in 2000 when it was recognised that the work underlying existing strategies was becoming outdated, and weaknesses

were beginning to show.

The SmartGrowth Strategy was a cohesive, sub-regional response to the pressures of growth on rural land, the natural and cultural environment, roads and other infrastructure, amenities, facilities, planning regimes and relationships between local authorities.

A joint committee was formed in 2001 comprising representatives from each of the local authorities and tangata whenua with the purpose of drafting a sub-regional

growth management plan. The Strategy was officially launched by the Prime Minister in May 2004 and subsequently adopted by the partners, being Councils and tangata whenua. The SmartGrowth Implementation Committee was established in 2004 as a joint governance committee comprising 3 representatives each from Tauranga City Council, Western Bay of Plenty District Council, Bay of Plenty Regional Council, tangata whenua and an Independent Chair.



## 4.2

**SmartGrowth Reviews 2007 and 2010**

An action review was completed in 2007 in order to ensure that the actions contained in the implementation plan were still relevant and able to contribute to delivering on the vision and overall principles in each area of the Strategy. A review of the form and function of the SmartGrowth implementation structure was completed in 2010 to ensure it remained fit for purpose.

## 4.3

**SmartGrowth Update 2013**

The strategy was comprehensively reviewed in 2012/13 to ensure the information base remains sound and the long term plan is kept current. The SmartGrowth Implementation Committee resolved to take an extended four well-beings approach to the 2013 Update to broaden the Strategy from being primarily a growth management plan to one that addresses the relationship between growth and the social, cultural environmental and economic well-beings. The Updated Strategy interprets the four wellbeing across a spectrum of six interest areas.

The 2013 update comprehensively considered the Strategy's strategic direction, issues, principles, and implementation methods, including all of the actions. The triggers initiating the

2013 Update include:

- Significant time had passed since the last Strategy action update.
- Changes in Government policy and legislation.
- A substantial slowing of growth and development in the western Bay of Plenty as a result of the economic slowdown began impacting on our national economy in 2008.
- The economics of development becoming increasingly difficult.
- A growing importance of considering the wider Upper North Island growth area.
- A desire by the SmartGrowth partners to take a wider approach to the Strategy in terms of growing the economy, sustaining the environment, recognising cultural identity and building the community.

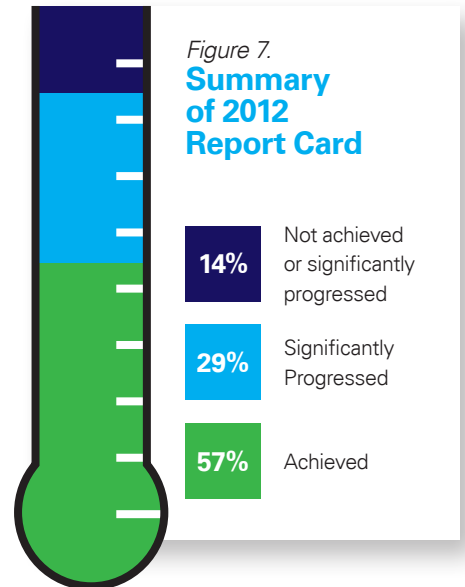
## 4.4

**2013 Strategy Update Process**

The project plan for the 2013 SmartGrowth Update was adopted by the SmartGrowth Implementation Committee in November 2011 and was subsequently ratified by each of the 3 partner Councils in early 2012.

The phases of the 2013 SmartGrowth Update project are summarised in *Figure 6*.

The 2013 Update of the SmartGrowth Strategy was informed by three main work programmes:



1. Report Card
2. Community Engagement Programme
3. Research Programme

**A. Report Card**

As part of the 2013 Strategy Update the inaugural SmartGrowth Report Card was completed to monitor progress on Strategy implementation between 2004 and 2012.

The Report Card is an audit of all the actions contained in the original 2004 SmartGrowth Strategy. All specific project actions in the Strategy were scored against the progress made on implementation. The Report Card was a

Figure 6.

**Phases of the 2013 SmartGrowth Update Project**



key input into the SmartGrowth Update by identifying completed action from the 2004 strategy along with actions where on-going efforts are required.

Overall, the 2012 Report Card illustrated a high level of commitment to SmartGrowth by the implementation partners with over 85% of actions either achieved or significantly progressed (*Figure 7*.)

The Report Card was completed in collaboration with implementation partners (staff and governance) and SmartGrowth Partner Forums.

## B. Community Engagement

A comprehensive two phase community consultation and engagement programme was undertaken to inform the update of the SmartGrowth Strategy.

Phase 1 involved conversations with the community and using the feedback to inform the content of the Draft SmartGrowth Strategy 2013. During this phase over 40 community meetings were held over a three month period centred around the members and wider networks of groups affiliated to the SmartGrowth Partner Forums including:

- Strategic Partners Forum
- Housing Affordability Forum
- Population Ageing Technical Advisory Group
- Combined Tangata whenua Forum
- Property Developers Forum
- Social Sector Forum

The feedback received from the community engagement assisted with the identification of issues and the development of principles and actions to respond to those issues.

Phase 2 of the community engagement programme consisted of formal submissions and hearings on the draft Strategy.

## C. Research Programme

A comprehensive research programme

was undertaken to inform the 2013 Strategy. A Research Working Group was established to oversee this process. An External Reference Panel which included representatives from the health sector, the development community, planning specialists and an economist was also established in order to peer review the research, provide input and identify challenges for implementation.

New research was undertaken in the following areas;

- Growth management key issues
- Business land
- Residential land
- Residential intensification
- Housing affordability
- Social and community wellbeing
- Population ageing
- Development viability
- Infrastructure
- Transport
- Tangata whenua aspirations
- Tsunami hazard

SmartGrowth 2013 was also informed by the 2013 updates of both the Smart Arts and Smart Economy Strategies.

In addition to the new research, the 2013 Update was also informed by the substantial amount of research which underpinned the 2004 Strategy. Where necessary, implementation updates were prepared to revise previous reports. SmartGrowth 2013 is also informed by various reports prepared independently by the partner Councils since adopting SmartGrowth in 2004.

Research reports are listed in Appendix 3. The full reports are available on the SmartGrowth website: [www.smartgrowthbop.org.nz](http://www.smartgrowthbop.org.nz)

### 4.5

## Legislative Mandates

SmartGrowth seeks to provide a consistent knowledge base and vision for the SmartGrowth partners and other agencies to plan for, and sustainably manage, growth in an integrated manner. In doing this, processes have been

designed to be consistent with the key planning statutes: the Local Government Act 2002, the Resource Management Act 1991 and the Land Transport Management Act 2003. This will support the partner Councils in achieving compliance obligations during implementation.

These three statutes are important to the SmartGrowth Strategy in the following ways:

- The Local Government Act 2002 sets out the purpose of local government, which, as a result of the 2012 amendments, emphasises local decision making on behalf of communities, meeting the current and future needs of communities for good quality local infrastructure, local public services and performance of regulatory functions in a way that is most cost effective for households and businesses. The Act also identifies key principles and provides for important implementation tools such as long-term plans, development contributions policies, annual plans and reports, triennial agreements and the authority to establish joint governance committees. It also outlines consultation and decision-making processes which were used for the 2013 Strategy Update.
- The Resource Management Act 1991 is concerned with the sustainable management of natural and physical resources. The purpose of the Act confirms the importance of sustainability in the environmental sense as well as in its broader purpose of social, economic, and cultural well-being. To enable sustainable management, the Act provides key implementation tools which are important to SmartGrowth e.g. Regional Policy Statements and regional plans at the regional level, and district plans at the local level.
- The Land Transport Management Act 2003 (LTMA) governs the way the New Zealand land transport system is developed, managed and funded. The purpose of the Act is to contribute



to the aim of achieving an affordable, integrated, safe, responsive, and sustainable land transport system. The LTMA also provides important implementation tools such as the Government Policy Statement on land transport funding, national and regional land transport programmes, regional land transport strategies, tolling and public-private partnerships.

The 2013 Strategy Update was undertaken at a time of significant legislative change which may necessitate subsequent amendments to the Strategy. It is important that the Strategy is flexible enough to align with legislative changes. As a long term spatial plan, it is necessary for the SmartGrowth Strategy to be broadly based. The Strategy is wide enough to cover the purpose and principles of the three key planning statutes and to respond to any change as a result of legislative reform.



## 5. Operating Environment

### 5.1 International Trends

There are a number of international trends that the SmartGrowth Strategy needs to be aware of. Decisions are made globally which affect New Zealand and the western Bay of Plenty sub-region. These are large-scale international influences that in the most part are beyond our control. The SmartGrowth Strategy assumes that the trends identified in this section will continue, and that the Strategy and its implementation will need to be flexible in order to be able to respond and adapt to these changes. The types of global trends and impacts which the SmartGrowth Strategy needs to be cognisant of are:

- Increased economic volatility

- Finite resources and increased difficulty accessing resources (especially land, water and energy)
- Price and availability of fuel
- Climate change
- Increasingly urbanised populations
- Unaffordable housing
- Science and technological advances and changes
- Global insecurities around economic instability and inequalities, food and resource shortages as well as political situations
- Ongoing globalisation
- Increasing awareness of natural hazard risk due to major natural disasters and extreme weather events
- Significant demographic changes driven by worldwide population ageing which

is characterised by a dramatic projected worldwide increase in population growth in people over 65 years coupled with a decline in other lower age groups. By 2031, the population of over 65 year olds is projected to increase by 98 million while all other age cohorts combined are projected to decline by 41 million. This is expected to drive increasing international competition to attract young employees.

The trends and impacts noted above are becoming an increasing concern for communities world-wide. The SmartGrowth Strategy needs to be resilient, adaptive and responsive to emerging issues, challenges and changing trends. This will be achieved



through the action framework contained in Parts B and C of this Strategy, in particular monitoring and review.

## 5.2 National Context

The most recent estimate of the New Zealand population, released by Statistics NZ in 2012, was 4.4 million. Projections covering the period 2011-2061 suggest that figure will increase to 5.4 million by 2036 and reach 6 million by 2061.

New Zealand's population grew at an average rate of 1.3% a year between 1951 and 2012. The growth rate has generally been slowing as fertility rates have fallen and the population age structure has changed. Population growth averaged 2.2% during the 1950s but only 0.7% during the 1980s. Growth averaged 1.2% in the decade ending 2012.

Slower population growth is predicted over the next 10-40 years, with growth predicted to occur as follows:

- 0.9% during the 2010s
- 0.8% during the 2020s
- 0.6% during the 2030s
- 0.5% during the 2040s
- 0.4% during the 2050s.

There is roughly a 1 in 6 chance that the population will be declining by 2061.

Future population in New Zealand, like the majority of the developed world will be ageing driven as opposed to the youth driven growth of the past. The 2011 median scenario projections released by Statistics NZ indicate:

- Population growth will slow as New Zealand's population ages.
- The gap between the number of births and deaths will narrow.
- There is roughly a 1 in 3 chance that deaths could exceed births in 2061.
- The population aged 65+ (600,000 in 2012) will increase to 1.2 million in 2036 and 1.5 million in 2061.
- The proportion of the population aged 65+ (14 % in 2012) will increase to

23% in 2036 and 26% in 2061.

Declining birth rates, longer life expectancy, net migration loss of young people and net migration gains of retirees all contribute to the process of population ageing which is characterised by more elderly than children, more deaths than births, and ultimately a natural decline in population numbers. In New Zealand, the shift to natural decline is not expected to occur nationally until the second half of the Century. However, the crossover is already occurring in three Territorial Authorities (Waitaki, Thames Coromandel, and Horowhenua) and is projected to be the case in 22 Territorial Authorities (30%) by 2031. New Zealand is not alone in the phenomenon of population ageing and there will be increased competition amongst developed countries to attract and retain young people including skilled migrants<sup>1</sup>.

Other issues facing New Zealand as a whole that may have a bearing on the SmartGrowth Strategy include:

- The effects of economic conditions and increasing debt levels.
- Improving economic productivity.
- A focus on the wider Upper North Island land use and transport influences.
- Significant ongoing funding challenges for local government, particularly in growth areas and also for transportation.
- A number of social issues in part related economic conditions such as a lack of economic confidence, reduced job opportunities, increased housing costs, and income inequality.
- A very uneven spread of future growth across New Zealand with the majority of growth expected in Auckland and Waikato, Bay of Plenty, Canterbury and Wellington also predicted to experience growth to a lesser extent.

## 5.3 Upper North Island Context

The significance of the Upper North

Island is becoming increasingly important from a national perspective as evidenced by the following:

- The three regions of Auckland, Waikato and Bay of Plenty are expected to grow at a greater rate than the rest of the country. By 2031 it is expected that together they may account for 53% of New Zealand's population.
- The three regions are responsible for the production and attraction of over half of all road and rail freight in New Zealand. The forecast growth in freight traffic generated in the Waikato region is expected to double by 2031. The majority of this freight traffic is between the Waikato and Auckland.
- Auckland, Waikato, and the Bay of Plenty currently generate over 45% of the nation's gross domestic product, this is likely to continue to grow and is projected to account for half of New Zealand's total economic activity by 2025.
- The significant role played by the Port of Tauranga, the Ports of Auckland and their associated freight hubs.
- There is high growth forecast in retail trade for the Auckland, Waikato and Bay of Plenty regions.
- The integration of economic activity between Auckland, Tauranga and Hamilton is likely to increase as transport corridor improvements are completed and travel times reduced.
- In addition to transport linkages, there are also spatial linkages between land and infrastructure required to support social and economic wellbeing in the western Bay of Plenty sub-region, the wider Bay of Plenty region and the adjacent upper North Island Regions.

Key issues for the Upper North Island include a lack of shared information and resources, no clear Upper North Island port strategy or Coastal Shipping Strategy, serious rail capacity issues for the Auckland rail corridor, a lack of inter-regional collaboration on key decisions, lag infrastructure and a lack of funding. Various initiatives are currently underway to address these issues. Such initiatives include the establishment of a joint Bay

<sup>1</sup> Jackson, N, 2007. Population ageing in a nutshell: a phenomenon in four dimensions. *People & Place* 15(2): 12-21.



of Plenty / Waikato State Highway 1/29 Working Group as well as work being undertaken by the Upper North Island Strategic Alliance.

#### 5.4 Regional Context

The Bay of Plenty region is New Zealand's fifth most populated area. The region encompasses 12,486 square kilometres and in 2001 had a population of 240,000. By 2006 the population had increased to 257,379. About 80% of the region's population live in urban areas.

There are marked differences across the region in measures of social, economic and cultural well-being.

Key issues for the Bay of Plenty region include:

- Reconciling urban growth needs with impacts on the natural environment, in particular productive rural land, natural hazards and harbours and lakes.
- Integrating land use planning with sub-regional, regional and national transport systems and investment eg through the Regional Land Transport Strategy, Regional Land Transport Programme

and National Land Transport Programme to achieve optimisation of investment and the efficient, effective and safe use of the network.

- Understanding the contribution the Bay of Plenty region makes to the rest of New Zealand, including its regional and national economic drivers and the provision of infrastructure.
- Understanding the contribution of the wider Bay of Plenty region to the western Bay sub-region particularly in terms of securing the supply chain for exports through the Port of Tauranga and establishing regional catchment frameworks for environmental management.
- Providing opportunities for recreation, parks and other facilities on a regional scale
- Providing a breadth of quality educational opportunities for people of all ages including an expansion of research capacity and capability in the region.
- Increasing the knowledge capacity of the region through access to lifelong learning.

Major environmental issues facing the region include the deterioration of water quality, loss of wetlands, and growing pressure on the marine environment

from recreation, aquaculture, coastal development and sedimentation.

Key factors contributing to the demographic structure of the region include;

- The Bay of Plenty is currently the third 'oldest' region in New Zealand, and is a significant 'age driven growth' region. At 2013, 16% of the regional population are over 65 years as compared to 13% nationally. However over the next 20 years, 90% of the growth projected for the Bay of Plenty region will be in the 65 plus age group. By 2031, 25% of the regional population will be over 65 as compared to 21% nationally.
- 25% of the population is Maori and approximately 1/3 of all children aged under the age of 19 are Maori.

#### 5.5 The western Bay of Plenty Context

To understand a place it's important to understand its history, people, geography, climate and economic base which all contribute to making the western Bay of Plenty what it is today.



Captain Cook recognised the fertility of the land when he named the area the Bay of Plenty. The stunning natural environment of the western Bay of Plenty (or Tauranga Moana) including the Tauranga harbour, estuaries and forests sustained tangata whenua from the earliest times to the present generation who have benefited from the temperate climate and soil for horticulture, in particular kiwifruit and avocados.

The boundary of the sub-region extends from Waihi Beach to Otamarakau (east of Pukehina) and is bounded by the Kaimai Range to the west and the Pacific Ocean to the East. The landform is rolling to steep with extensive coastal plains. The total area of the sub-region is 2289 km<sup>2</sup>.

The sub-region has a long history of human settlement. Tangata whenua of the western Bay of Plenty - Mai Nga Kuri a Whare ki Otamarakau, have occupied the area for dozens of generations. Great migration waka were attracted to this area, its fertile soils, rich sea resources and forests. Early Ngamarama kin groups, Tainui, Te Arawa, Takitimu and Mataatua descent groups all came to Tauranga Moana and made this their home. They constructed huge pa, villages, camps, gardens, burial grounds, utilised fishing and shellfish gathering areas and explored great forests.

The western Bay of Plenty has had its fair share of tribulations with intertribal wars between 1819 and 1821, 1832 and 1845 and land wars between Maori and the Crown during 1863/64 and 1866/67 resulting in significant tracts of land confiscated from Maori. Depression in the 1880's and 1930's contributed to hardship and lack of population growth amongst Maori. Today, there are some 15,000 resident tangata whenua members, 24 marae at least seven iwi and more than 25 hapu.

Since the arrival of tangata whenua many centuries ago, followed by the first European settlers in the 1820, our environment and the opportunities it affords has attracted

people from within New Zealand and around the world to Tauranga Moana or the western Bay of Plenty.

Tauranga is the only city in the western Bay with smaller settlements at Te Puke, Katikati, Waihi Beach, Omokoroa, Maketu Pukehina, Te Puna and Paengaroa. Tauranga was named after the harbour, meaning a resting place or anchorage for canoes.

The sub-region has been an area of rapid population growth since 1950. In 2006 the population was 149,900 a 13% increase from the previous census in 2001. The population data from the 2013 Census will not be available until early 2014, however Statistics New Zealand released some provisional figures in 2011 which provide a useful bridge between the 2006 census and the 2013 census. This data indicates that the sub-regional population is 161,500, an increase of around 8% since 2006. While population growth has slowed since the mid-2000s, the sub-region is still experiencing growth.

SmartGrowth partner Councils have collectively adjusted the original SmartGrowth projections to reflect the slowing of growth and development in the sub-region. These revised projections provide for a long term population of 275,000 at 2051 and will be reviewed once the census data is available in 2014. Population projections and demographics are discussed in more detail in section 14 of the Strategy.

The subregion has some specific characteristics in terms of its demographic makeup including;

- An ageing population and decreasing size of households
- As a sunbelt destination, the sub-region has a significantly older population than the national average
- Labour force participation rates, average incomes and spending are lower than the national average
- Historically, a significant proportion

of growth has been from net national migration with natural increase having a small influence

- A reasonable amount of 'churn' ie moving to and from the sub-region
- Different demographic patterns of fertility and mortality for Māori compared to non-Māori resulting in a relatively youthful Māori population as compared to non-Maori
- Seasonal increases in population due to horticultural workers and holiday makers.

Tauranga Moana is one of New Zealand's largest natural harbours and is home to the country's biggest port, the Port of Tauranga. The harbour and Port of Tauranga have encouraged burgeoning export focused industries, as well as attracting increasing numbers of international cruise ships. The iconic Mauao (Mt Maunganui), an extinct volcanic cone, stands alone at the southern entrance to the harbour dominating the surrounding landscape. These outstanding natural features have made the western Bay of Plenty a very popular tourist destination as well as attracting many people who have made the western Bay their home.

There are a number of challenges facing the western Bay of Plenty as set out in the next section in the context of the six SmartGrowth interest areas:

1. Strengthen visionary leadership collaboration;
2. Sustain and improve the environment;
3. Build the community;
4. Grow a sustainable economy;
5. Recognise tangata whenua cultural identity and change;
6. Integrated planning and the Settlement Pattern.

There is a limit to the extent to which a Strategy like SmartGrowth can directly address some of the issues outlined. However, there are a number of areas that it can give effect to through Strategy implementation, working with other groups and taking on an advocacy role.



## 5.6

**Strengthen Visionary Leadership and Collaboration**

While SmartGrowth has been successful at establishing a strong partnership approach, there is a need to strengthen the relationship with the implementation partners, the community and with central Government. In the past, there has also been limited opportunity for on-going cooperation with surrounding sub-regions or other regions, especially the Upper North Island, on matters of mutual interest.

SmartGrowth has achieved some significant gains in terms of anchoring policy at district and regional level as well as positive engagement with central Government around new infrastructure for transport and education within the sub-region. We need to ensure continued alignment both within the partnership and between key documents. We also need to retain a degree of flexibility in how these policies are applied so that we can adapt to changing circumstances.

There are limited funding tools available for Strategy implementation and the SmartGrowth Partnership has to find new and innovative ways of funding its implementation projects.

Part B contains the issues, principles and detailed actions required to ensure we have a strong partnership, collaborative leadership and provide effective advocacy.

## 5.7

**Sustain and improve the environment**

A key challenge for the SmartGrowth Strategy is reconciling urban growth needs with impacts on the natural environment. Ecological areas need to be protected and enhanced. Coastal land is under pressure from development which has to be balanced against the need to protect the unmodified coastal landscape. Water quality is an ongoing issue for the sub-region's harbours and estuaries. Water quantity is also an emerging issue

with competing uses for water leading to the need to better understand future water availability, demand and allocation.

The Strategy also identifies the need to improve the way we monitor the state of the environment across the sub-region and how we address critical issues which have the potential to impact on environmental wellbeing and amenity such as waste disposal and pollution.

Part B contains the issues, principles and detailed actions required to ensure that we work together to protect and enhance our distinctive natural environment.

Natural hazard management is also a key issue for the Strategy. The suitability of land for urban development has to be assessed against the risk of natural hazards. Like many other areas in New Zealand, the history of residential development in our sub-region has resulted in significant tracts of coastal land being utilised for urban development. Coastal land, by its nature is at risk from coastal hazards including tsunamis. Part C of the Strategy considers the risk of natural hazards on the Settlement Pattern and advocates for a precautionary approach to natural hazard management.

## 5.8

**Build the community**

There are increasing pressures on social infrastructure in the sub-region at all levels, particularly services such as healthcare and education which need to keep pace with growth and changing demographics. In the past, growth management has placed little emphasis on the need to provide additional community services and facilities to match the rate of growth. Changing demographics, particularly an ageing population, introduces a range of issues and opportunities, such as addressing housing needs of an older population, adapting to having older people in the workplace and ensuring that older people have access to services and facilities. The community increasingly wants to be involved in decisions which

affect them and are dissatisfied with the existing opportunities to influence decision making.

The availability of high-quality open space and leisure opportunities are key indicators of the quality of life that a community enjoys. Open space can be used as a method for managing urban form. The securing of land through purchase is key to ensuring that amenity, open space and leisure opportunities are provided and can also help protect ecological areas and define urban boundaries. However, securing land for open space, sport facilities and recreation has become a significant challenge over the last few years given the cost of land and the fiscal challenges facing local authorities. Each local authority sets a level of service for recreation (both passive and active) through their respective Long Term Plan processes. At present these have a heavy focus on maintaining existing amenities, sometimes to a reduced level of service.

It is important that existing open space and recreation areas are protected, that future provision is well planned for and keeps pace with growth and that there is continued and collaborative planning around open space, sport and recreation despite current financial constraints. The future provision of access to the harbour and ocean for active and passive marine-based recreation also needs to be planned for to meet the needs of the future population.

Part B contains the issues, principles and detailed actions required to ensure we work proactively and in partnership with the community, to make western Bay active, vibrant, connected, caring, healthy and safe.

## 5.9

**Grow a sustainable economy**

The sub-region is faced with a number of economic challenges, particularly following the economic slowdown, and it is important to adapt to the new

environment. The sub-regional economy is relatively low skill and low wage. The ageing population also presents challenges and opportunities to the sub-regional economy. Affordable housing is another area of concern as wage rates struggle to keep pace with house prices. Making the sub-region an attractive place for people to live, learn, work and play is an area that requires ongoing effort if we are to grow the sub-regional economy. We need to create an enabling business environment, attract relevant skill sets, build on our sub-regional strengths and grow our tertiary education capacity.

The Tauranga Central Business District is the commercial, civic and cultural heart of the sub-region with an emphasis on specialty shopping, entertainment, cultural facilities, residential living, tertiary education and employment. Ongoing effort is required to promote a vibrant City Centre. A well connected CBD and waterfront that provides for interaction with the harbour will enhance access and economic activity. Key cultural facilities also need to be developed and enhanced within the CBD to provide important social and cultural activities for the community to enjoy.

Town centres such as Katikati and Te Puke are principal service centres providing social and cultural facilities. Community initiatives are underway to further enhance these centres. There are also a number of smaller townships and communities in the western Bay of Plenty sub-region that play an important role in terms of providing local facilities and services.

The major towns in the western Bay of Plenty sub-region face a number of challenges as well as opportunities. These include:

- Conflict between heavy traffic and town centres where major highways bisect communities.
- The effect of major infrastructure projects, for example the transformation of Te Puke once the Tauranga Eastern Link has been completed.
- Loss of retailing opportunities if town centres aren't strengthened.
- The impact of large format retailing.
- The challenge of maintaining distinctive town centres to preserve and enhance the unique character of our communities.

There are also challenges around establishing viable town and neighbourhood centres for new growth areas given the impact of the economic slowdown.

The detailed actions required to promote these aims are contained in SmartEconomy – the sub-regional economic development strategy. SmartGrowth encourages a wider perspective on the meaning of a sustainable economy and contains the key actions required to anchor, support and enable the implementation of SmartEconomy to ensure our economy is thriving, growing, diverse and sustainable.

#### 5.10

#### Arts and Cultural initiatives

We place a lot of value on the arts as a way to express ourselves, our identity and our belonging. There is a strong desire to create vibrant places and lifestyles that are both valued by locals and play a role in attracting human capital, businesses and industry to our sub-region. International research on urban regeneration identifies cultural amenity as one of the fundamental cornerstones of attracting

