

Draft **Unitary Plan** for Auckland has nationwide benefits

Following much public debate, Auckland now has a legally notified Unitary Plan. Designed to replace over a dozen legacy plans, the Draft Unitary Plan makes a major step forward for the new governance model for Auckland.



While there will be significant numbers of submissions to the draft plan, and no doubt a high degree of public angst over much of its content, a single land use document for the city will bring significant benefits. A single set of policies, applying from Wellsford in the north to the Bombay Hills in the south, and a common language of definitions and activities will make life a bit more intelligible for residents, builders, developers and investors alike. There will no longer be the artificial distinctions between Waitakere and Manukau or Papakura and Auckland - there will be one Plan. The next three years will see the plan being developed into a final adopted Plan. New legislation has been introduced to manage and expedite the process. It is not too dissimilar from the

Board of Inquiry process introduced for matters of national importance, the special legislation for Auckland may well provide a template for the rest of New Zealand in the future. A hearings panel of central government appointed commissioners will need to work through the submissions expeditiously to meet the legislative deadline set by parliament. Far better a legislated timeframe to complete the hearings process than the often horrendous time taken to make district plans operative in the past. In its broadest sense, if New Zealand is to lift its productivity as a nation, then it needs to achieve far quicker and efficient policy definition, as required now for the Auckland Unitary Plan. The implications of the Auckland Unitary Plan are likely to be

significant for New Zealand. A successful Unitary Plan outcome for Auckland, which seems more than likely, will place pressure on other communities to move to more regional scale planning instruments. In some places this will be an inevitable outcome of local government reform, maybe a Wellington super city, but could happen by co-operation and agreement within regions under current legislation. Unfortunately such latter arrangements are unlikely without strong central government pressure, given the lack of historical co-operation between units of local government. Back to Auckland. The council - both its political leadership and its official - deserve accolades for getting the Draft Unitary Plan notified within three years since its formation.

The Unitary Plan has been developed within the strategic framework of the Auckland Plan, a huge task in its own right, and alongside the myriad of other consolidation issues the Auckland Council has had to face and address. Congratulations to all involved. And now the stage is set to deal, within a legal context, the substantive issues already highlighted in political and public debate: density issues, upward or outward, heritage protection, the list is extensive. But that's another story for later.

Leigh Auton has been advising local government for more than 30 years including periods as chief executive for Tauranga and Manukau. ■

FLOWERDAY ENTERPRISES LTD
09 239-2671 : 021 951010 : office@flowerday.co.nz

* Members of Site Safe
* Eco Warranty Certified
* ACC Tertiary Level

Drainage & Infrastructure Specialists

Small Enough to Care.
Large Enough to Perform

Solution Design : Infrastructure Installation : Open Cut : Trenchless Technology : Pipe Jacking