

TCC falls in line on SmartGrowth

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A blunt message from Tauranga City Council's SmartGrowth partners may have helped steer the authority back in line when it comes to fast-tracking land decisions.

Councillors yesterday voted 7-2 in favour of accelerating development decisions by rapidly rezoning land within the current SmartGrowth Settlement Pattern, plus a strategic assessment of the wider Tauriko (Western) corridor.



Tauranga City Mayor Stuart Crosby believes going away from the support of SmartGrowth partners will ultimately lengthen the timeline for freeing up land for future development.

The recommended and approved proposal will allow fast-tracking additional greenfield land supply for Tauranga City and Western Bay of Plenty sub-region growth.

A council report states the option is considered viable as it is consistent with the agreed settlement plan as it is SmartGrowth's job is to ensure there is always ten years of zoned housing land available for development.

But approval comes after Western Bay Mayor Ross Paterson and Bay of Plenty Regional councillor Paula Thompson addressed the chamber on the dangers of foregoing the years of collaborative SmartGrowth work.

Ross says in the past there has been fragmented growth and poor planning, but through SmartGrowth the trio has moved forward creating a strategy for long-term growth that is a real asset.

Last month [TCC broke ranks with its SmartGrowth partners](#) by directing staff to look at ways of fast-tracking development land decisions outside the partnership.

Paula bluntly says that throughout the process, Tauranga City has tried to address the issue of affordable housing through SmartGrowth, disregarding the input of the other two parties at the table.

“SmartGrowth is about collaborative effort, it's about a highly planned solution and a strategic one but more importantly an evidence-based approach,” says Paula.

TCC councillors Catherine Stewart and Rick Curach both supported a further option of rapid rezoning land within the current settlement pattern, plus a strategic assessment of the wider Tauriko (Western) corridor and rezoning of Tauriko West lands.

But to get the option across the line it would need the backing of the other SmartGrowth partners.

“Central government are saying to us they want to see more housing there. They want to see the removal of barriers,” says Catherine.

Tauranga City Mayor Stuart Crosby says the option the duo are supporting will ultimately push development further back than currently planned for, as without the support of SmartGrowth partners it can be appealed and taken to the Environment Court.

He says the due-processes associated will create a process encapsulating others views, causing future headaches coupled with “massive” financial risks.

“There will be considerable opposition and they have the ability to tie this up for a considerable amount of time,” he says.

“We must care for history and must understand there are tens of millions of dollars at stake. The Tauriko corridor will have its time in the sun.”