

The City of Hamilton New Zealand

Profile

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Population 103,000 **Budget** U.S. \$55 million **Land Area** 94 square kilometers
Hamilton is situated inland in the northern half of the North Island of New Zealand and is located on the Waikato River. Although approximately 80% of the City is urbanized, the surrounding areas and the broader Waikato Region are rural, with a strong agricultural base.

Programme Name

Hamilton's Local Agenda 21 and Strategic Plan Development Programmes

Implementing Agenda 21

In New Zealand, Agenda 21 is seen as providing a focus for current activities of local government, rather than a new function to be assumed. For example, many local authorities are incorporating some of the principles of Agenda 21 into their long term strategic plans, while other principles are already inherent in the New Zealand Resource Management Act of 1991.

In March, 1993, Hamilton City Council formally endorsed the principles and objectives of Agenda 21. Hamilton is participating with New Zealand's Ministry for the Environment in a pilot project for developing a Local Agenda 21, and is also a participant in the Local Agenda 21 Model Communities Programme of the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI). Hamilton's programme places great emphasis on community consultation and strengthening the involvement of indigenous people and their communities in the process.

Hamilton's Strategic Plan Development and Local Agenda 21 Programme address objectives identified in Agenda 21, Chapter 7, (promoting sustainable human settlement development) and Chapter 28, (local authorities initiative's to undertake a consultative process). Hamilton's approach to sustainable development also specifically addresses the objectives set forth in Chapters 25 and 26 (strengthening the role of children and youth in sustainable development, and recognizing and strengthening the role of indigenous people and their communities). Hamilton has instituted an extensive consultation process with the local Maori population, and with other groups that are often left out of the consultation process, such as the elderly and the youth.

Abstract

With the support of the national government, Hamilton Council is in the process of creating a Local Agenda 21, by incorporating the concepts of Agenda 21 into their existing long and short term planning policies and programmes. This differs from the approach of many other local municipalities, who often choose to initially carry out their sustainable development initiatives separately from their traditional planning programmes, only to integrate them at a later time.

Hamilton already has a history of consulting with the public in the development of municipal policies and action plans. An annual survey of community needs and priorities is used to develop an annual municipal Action Plan. This plan is reviewed extensively by the public before being adopted by Council. At the end of each year, Council must report back to the public its progress in relation to the plan back to the public.

Council also consults extensively with the indigenous Maori population. Representatives of both the Runanga (an agency representing the multi-tribal Maori population) and the Council constitute the Nga Hui Haumi Committee, a Standing Committee of Council which considers matters of interest to the Maori, and facilitates Maori input into the policy making process. Other unique community consultation approaches include the Council of Elders and the Community Environment Programme, where volunteer members of the community work together to address particular environmental issues or projects.

Case

Hamilton is situated in the northern half of the North Island of New Zealand. The City is located inland, within the heart of the Waikato basin. The area is flat with rich alluvial and volcanic soils, making the region one of the most productive agricultural and pastoral areas in the world. Hamilton is renowned for its natural beauty, and the picturesque Waikato River dominates the City's environment. The City also contains several natural lakes and an abundance of open space.

Hamilton is the eighth largest City in New Zealand, with a population of 103,000. Approximately 40% of New Zealand's population lies within 150 kilometers of Hamilton. Twenty percent of Hamilton's land area is rural. Hamilton, along with Waikato and Waipa, make up the Region of Waikato.

The land that now forms the City of Hamilton was once occupied by the indigenous Maori people, or Tangata Whenua, from the Tainui iwi tribe. This group was divided into three Maori hapu, or subtribes, living in well established communities. The Waikato River was of great spiritual significance to the Maori people, as well as being a source of food and transportation. The Treaty of Waitangi (1840) accorded rights to the Maori people, which provided for their sovereignty over traditional lands and resources. Currently 11% of the City's population is recorded as being Maori.

On a global scale, the degree of degradation of the natural environment (air, land and water) in Hamilton is relatively minor. However, international statistics indicate that New Zealanders are among the highest per capita waste producers in the world, and the rate of energy consumption is increasing at a much higher rate than economic growth.

Hamilton's economic well being is directly linked to the economic health of the Waikato Region. Business and consumer confidence in the Region has risen substantially in recent years, which reflects improvements in the agricultural sector, particularly the dairy industry. Research and development is also very strong in Hamilton, due to the presence of a large local University and several research institutes.

Planning and Policy Framework

New Zealand's Resource Management Act (1991) replaced or amended many existing statutes governing resource use. The purpose of the Act is to promote the sustainable management of natural and physical resources. It brings together the laws governing the land, air and water resources, and deals with issues of noise, land, air and water pollution.

The Act requires local authorities to consider the environment as an integrated whole when they are making planning decisions.

Prior to the effectuation of that Act, Hamilton became the first local authority in New Zealand to develop and adopt a Corporate Environmental Policy. The overall goal of this policy is "to enable, regulate and deliver services in a manner that promotes harmony between the citizens of Hamilton and their natural environment." The policy addresses the need to reduce pollution levels, reduce the emissions that contribute to global warming, reduce the use of non-renewable resources and ensure the efficient use of renewable resources, and maintain the ecological balance between nature and natural processes, humans and the built environment. Examples of some of the enabling policies that have resulted from the Environmental Policy include:

ensuring that Council's service delivery or corporate actions provide an example to the community on how to reduce pollution;

liaising and assisting industries involved in the recycling of ozone depleting substances;

investigating measures that Council could take under existing and future town planning legislation to enforce the reduction of energy use and encourage the use of non-polluting energy sources; and,

producing local by-laws where necessary to ensure that waste reduction techniques are adopted.

Although the intent of the Corporate Environmental Policy was to provide for a corporate municipal commitment towards environmental aims, substantial local and national consultation was undertaken to obtain community input into the process.

Even though the policy was developed before the Resource Management Act, it does partially fulfill Hamilton's statutory responsibilities under that Act. The Policy addresses environmental responsibility on three fronts - service delivery, enforcement and enabling. Council recognized the potential for developing further community links to enable the community to meet their own environmental goals.

Like most local authorities, Hamilton has a framework of objectives, policies and rules for guiding development within the City, as laid out in Hamilton's District Plan. With the introduction of New Zealand's Resource Management Act in 1991, many local authorities have updated their plans to focus on the sustainable management of natural and physical resources. However, Hamilton's District Plan was developed under the old legislation, and a review under the Resource Management Act is not due until 1996. At that time, the process will take full account of sustainability issues.

Historically, Hamilton City Council has generally taken a reactionary approach to service delivery, and the basic elements of the planning framework have traditionally not been coordinated or formalized within the organization. However, recent institutional and legislative reforms identified the need for a strategic focus, and a New Strategic Planning Unit was formed within the City Council. A major function of this Unit will be to develop and reform policy that is essential to the future role of Council and to the needs of the community.

Hamilton's Local Agenda 21 and Strategic Plan Development Programmes

In March 1993, Hamilton City Council formally endorsed the principles and objectives of Agenda 21. However, Council felt that, to some degree, the sustainable development and

policy concepts arising from Agenda 21 were lofty ideals. Similarly, Council's responsibility to "promote sustainable management" as mandated by the Resource Management Act was seen to provide a challenge that would be hard to meet.

Hamilton Council recognized that in order to start turning ideas into policy and policy into practice, commitment from all members of the community would be required. To meet this challenge, the Council committed itself to a "Local Agenda 21" pilot project, to be implemented with the assistance of the national Ministry for the Environment. In addition, Council initiated a process that would result in the development of a Strategic Plan to take Hamilton into the 21st century.

An Agenda 21 Staff Steering Committee (SSG) was formed, consisting of representatives from all groups within Council. The purpose of the SSG is to consider various issues pertaining to Agenda 21, its incorporation into Council activities, including the Strategic Plan, and the proposed pilot project.

The short term goal of the Local Agenda 21 programme is to promote the assimilation of Agenda 21 principles into the practices of Hamilton City Council, and then to work towards the implementation within the broader City. A number of objectives were set to help meet this goal. These objectives are listed below, and are followed by a discussion of how they are being addressed by Council.

Process and Responsibility: Establish political and management responsibility through and appropriate committee structures and clearly define the roles and responsibilities of Agenda 21 staff, SSG members and department managers.

Education: Develop an awareness campaign to ensure that a comprehensive understanding of Agenda 21 is achieved within Council. Ultimately, it is hoped that this will motivate staff to take ownership of Agenda 21 and the issues related to building a sustainable future.

Planning: Integrate Agenda 21 core principles into the Hamilton's Strategic Plan. Establish clear links between the corporate Strategic Plan, the Annual Plan process and the District Plan review. Develop a clear vision of the place of Agenda 21 within this process.

Maori: Develop a holistically based partnership with the Maori population, to ensure that treaty issues are addressed at every stage.

Implementation Plan: Develop an action plan, to be adopted by Council, for implementing the Agenda 21 philosophy in a manner that addresses the internal needs of Council as well as the needs of the community.

Auditing: Establish an ongoing auditing process to rationalize and review Council policy, operations, initiatives and proposals to ensure consistency and to allow for modifications where necessary.

Stakeholders: Develop a process for identifying all stakeholders to ensure full participation in the development of a sustainable future through the planning process.

The first three objectives have been addressed in part through the formation of the Strategic Planning Unit and the Staff Steering Group as discussed earlier, as well as by the completion of an internal strategic planning seminar and a formal consultation with key political partners in late 1994. This internal consultation and review process will be maintained throughout the development of the Strategic Plan.

Council is addressing the fourth objective by building on an existing partnership with the

Maori, as discussed in detail later in this case. The last 3 objectives are being addressed by the Strategic Planning Framework that has been adopted by the City Council. This framework includes the following components:

Phase 1 Strategic Planning Seminar (September 1994)

Phase 2 Consultation with Political Partners (November 1994)

Phase 3 Consultation with Key Stakeholders (workshop with 'planning' partners, including health, education, business, research, Maori and social agencies, November 1994)

Phase 4 Consultation with Community Partners to raise awareness of Agenda 21 and identify potential issues (small forums, November 1994) Consensus Forum for all Parties (December 1994)

Phase 5 Task Forces (with internal and external advisors) on each of the main issues (February to April, 1995)

Phase 6 Community Consultation to raise awareness, to consider scenarios developed by Task Forces, and to achieve some understanding of the financial implications

Phase 7 Review and Evaluation of Consultation

Phase 8 Preparation of Specific Strategies, confirming them with key stakeholders and the Tangata Whenua, and assessing the developing Plan against Agenda 21 ideals

Phase 9 Completion of Draft Strategic Plan (June 1995)

Phase 10 Consultation with the Tangata Whenua, key stakeholders, community partners, Task Forces and the wider community, in part to raise awareness of stakeholder implementation, including local Agenda 21 initiatives

Phase 11 Consultation, Review and Evaluation

Phase 12 Completion of Final Strategic Plan (December 1995), to be integrated with Council's annual plan and financial framework adjustments, and aligned with the plans of other stakeholders

Phase 13 Implementation, including strategy based budgeting

Phase 14 Monitoring and Review, to assess performance against expectation, to be undertaken by stakeholders

Community Consultation and Partnerships

Hamilton's City Council has recognized that community participation is essential to building a commitment to sustainable development. In order to accomplish this, the Council is fortunate to be able to build upon several existing consultation programmes, including:

Annual Planning

Hamilton has been seeking public input to its local decision making process for quite some time, in an endeavor to encourage municipal accountability, and to enhance the two-way flow of information and ideas. All local authorities in New Zealand are required to prepare an annual corporate plan, which outlines significant policies, objectives and performance targets, as well as the nature of any specific activities that will be undertaken in the coming year. Once a draft plan is considered by Council, it is made available for public review. All submissions are considered at an open meeting, and the plan is finalized before it is adopted by Council. At the end of the year, Council must report its progress in relation to the annual plan back to the community.

In addition to this required annual planning consultation process, Council carries out an

annual survey of community needs. Seven hundred residents over the age of 18 are surveyed "face to face" in their homes, to determine their use of municipal services and facilities and their satisfaction with those services, including a comparison with previous years to identify trends.

The survey helps identify the community's needs and priorities, and highlights specific issues that the community feels that Council should be addressing. The results of the community needs survey are used to assist Council in various decision making processes, including setting priorities. They are also used as a measure of Council's performance, for its Annual reporting and auditing purposes.

Indigenous Maori Population

Hamilton has devoted particular attention to working with the indigenous Maori population. Council consults with the Tangata Whenua through Te Runanga O Kirikiriroa, which represents the multi-tribal nature of the Maori people of Hamilton. Runanga representatives and Councillors form the Nga Hui Haumi Committee, a Standing Committee of Council which considers matters of interest to the Maori to develop related policy. In addition, the City has several funded staff positions to provide for formal liaison and consultation with the Maori. Several partnership proposals are currently being investigated with the aim of improving social economic development for the Maori. At least US \$ 160,000 was invested in projects specifically for the Maori in 1993/94.

Council of Elders

Hamilton City Council also recognized that the views of the older population can make a valuable contribution to the well being of the City. The Council of Elders for Hamilton City was established in 1992 to provide Council with information, ideas and advice. Members of the Council of Elders are voted in at a public forum, and are independent from the Council organization. Each member can serve for a maximum of two years, and must be 60 years of age or over.

Other Partners

In addition to the full partnership with the Maori, Hamilton is seeking to create or reinforce partnerships with a number of other groups or agencies for the purpose of implementing Agenda 21. The Waikato Regional Council is responsible for overseeing environmental management within the region, and the Department of Conservation is responsible for the management, protection and enhancement of the Region's flora and fauna. Although Hamilton is located in the broader Waikato Region, along with the communities of Waikato and Waipa, there is no formal partnership arrangement between these organizations. However, there has always been some degree of cooperation, particularly with respect to one-time projects of mutual concern. Representatives of these organizations have met to discuss environmental issues and agreed that closer cooperation would be required to address a number of the Agenda 21 issues.

This Council has an existing informal partnership with the University of Waikato, which has a strong practical and research focus on sustainability issues. Council fosters a number of additional community partnerships, primarily through volunteer groups and agencies, such as the Keep Hamilton Beautiful Programme, the Hamilton City Community Environmental Programme, the Hamilton Volunteer Agency, etc. It is expected that these and other agencies will have an integral involvement in the development of a Local Agenda 21.

Other potential partners include the local Police Department (through the adoption of a safer communities programme for Hamilton), the local health authority and the business community.

Results

Hamilton Council has endorsed the principles and objectives of Agenda 21, and is now beginning to incorporate those principles into the City Council's philosophy and long term planning projects.

A Council Working Party was set up to consider staff reports on how the issues of environment, culture, economic development and social needs can be addressed in an integrated manner through an overall strategy that is based on sustainable development principles. The preparation of a Strategic Plan in the near future and the revision of Hamilton's District Plan in 1996 are major steps to be taken on the path to a sustainable future.

A series of environmental projects and programmes have been initiated that will begin to move Hamilton towards the goals set out in its Corporate Environment Policy. Some examples of these initiatives are provided below.

Energy and waste audits have been performed on all Council facilities.

A native tree planting project has been initiated, and includes planting of trees in gullies as well as the provision of a free native tree to all new house builders.

A management plan for an area of native bush within the City has been completed.

A Community Environmental Programme has been established, where voluntary members representing business, community groups, Waikato University, environmental groups, private citizens and councillors meet to address issues such as forming an eco-school, finding a solution to waste oil disposal, and investigating methods of promoting cleaner production processes.

Council has entered into a partnership situation with a private operator to provide an organic recycling centre in Hamilton.

These initiatives are not only continuing and expanding, but are also beginning to intertwine with Council's policies and initiatives in the social, cultural and economic areas.

Lessons Learned

In order to turn policy into practice, Hamilton City Council learned that everyone in the community must first make a commitment to change, and then to start making changes. Although there is a definite need for strategic planning, conceptual ideas and corporate and community visions, there is also a need to start achieving tangible results.

Actions and projects can begin before the long term planning is completed, if both are based on the principles of sustainable development. Involvement by the community and local government will lead them to take ownership of the principles of sustainability. An incremental approach may not be as dramatic as instant changes, but the effects will tend to grow exponentially as more and more people both within the local government and the broader community begin to realize that the goal of a sustainable future can be achieved. The City Council is committed to an "enabling" approach, that is, helping businesses and citizens take the responsibility for sustainability into their own hands.

Financing

The total funding for initiatives and projects with an Agenda 21 focus (social, economic

and environmental) is likely to be in excess of \$1.6 million US. The development of an integrated Local Agenda 21 is being funded from existing budgets in the short term. The development of Hamilton's Strategic Plan and the initiation of the Agenda 21 pilot programme will cost in the order of US \$65,000.

Staff and Local/External Partner Contributions

Eight staff are involved in the Strategic Plan Development. Over 100 external partners are also involved, including representatives from health, education, business, research, Maori and social agencies.

Source: <http://www.iclei.org/>

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