

*The "Tasman Leader" asked Vision Motueka to submit an article for an occasional column the paper publishes about the activities of key community groups. This one was published on September 24 2015.*

## Planning for a strong community

*By David Armstrong, Vision Motueka Chairman*

Developing strong communities is vital in these uncertain times, but how do you know what developments are actually wanted by the people who make up those communities?

Which projects offer the most bang for buck? How can limited community resources - human and financial - be best applied?

This was the challenge that Vision Motueka took on in its Motueka 2030 consultation programme, which was run during May.

This community development group has a specific aim of evaluating and planning strategic, long-term developments of the town and surrounding area, which is the home to total of a bit over 10,000 people.

Seeking both effectiveness and efficiency, we decided to dedicate one month to engage as many people in our area as possible in activities and forums that would elicit community views about what they love about our slice of paradise and what would make it even better.

I won't say it was easy; a lot of work went into planning meaningful events and promoting discussions on Facebook and other forums, while manning a booth outside the Motueka Museum on most days certainly required some dedicated effort by our team of surveyors.

We discovered how many people never read the local newspapers or shop-window posters, and so had no clue what we were on about - but most cheerfully took part anyhow.

In the end, roughly 1000 people took part in events or offered ideas and opinions over the month of May.

We hope that the resulting report, which was made public a few weeks ago, will provide a wealth of reliable information for our district council and community board as well as our own community leaders and organisations.

For those wishing to read it, three copies of the report, titled "Community Priorities for Motueka", are available in the reference section of Motueka Library, and a PDF version can be downloaded from the Vision Motueka website at [www.visionmotueka.org.nz](http://www.visionmotueka.org.nz)

What have we learned? Well we have a very clear steer on up to a dozen developments that are unarguably popular - and while some are largely out of our hands, many are achievable by an active, forward-thinking community that does not expect council to do everything for them.

At the unveiling and presentation of the report the document writer, Eva Lawrence, said it

does not present a plan for the future of Motueka, but rather a good view of what the community wants the town to be like in future.

What happens next is up to a wide variety of Motueka's community groups and political leaders who can now base their future planning on more solid and meaningful information.

Community board chairman Paul Hawkes has told us that the board will be weighing the results as they undergo their own annual planning and long-term planning activities.

He added that Tasman District Council is also taking great interest in the findings and learning more about what the Motueka community really wants.

Vision Motueka believes that the most effective results in community development will happen through partnerships between our political masters (TDC) and the people they serve - that's us.

We hope that the Motueka 2030 programme will give both ourselves and council the information needed to plan and execute effective development initiatives.