

## **Katikati Community Board**

### **Submission to Smart Growth Strategy 2023**

We submit as follows:-

#### **1. Katikati region**

Katikati is defined as the geographic region from the Pahoia to Athenree and from the Kaimai to the sea.

Katikati is the Avocado Capital of New Zealand with 2100 ha of orchards which is a mix of avocado and kiwifruit. There are sophisticated post-harvest facilities. Dairy farming, beef and sheep farming, forestry, wood processing, manufacturing and service industries round out a strong economy. The industrial park / technology park is seeking to expand due to local pressures with phased expansion of this area. Growth projections are positive.

The Katikati region has well established and connected communities, all with their own identity, social infrastructure and a history of economic and social progress. Katikati celebrates its 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the arrival of the Ulster Irish in 2025. Schools, community halls, sports & recreation facilities and industry are the norm. Centrally located, it has close proximity and easy connection to Tauranga and the State Highway is improving. Katikati region is a key economic town at the most northern point of the Western Bay of Plenty.

Katikati has significant economic drivers and is focused on developing capability to grow and prosper. Through changing economic cycles it has built resilience and an enviable reputation for innovation and outstanding achievements across multi disciplines on the world stage.

With a population of approximately 15000 residents and GDP in excess of \$2b, our contribution to the national economic effort is both important and impressive. Whilst this capability is strong the challenge is the aging population of the region. There is a need for further economic development to attract younger families and skilled employees into the region for economic well-being and social continuity. Katikati will continue to grow.

#### **2. Our view of Smart Growth**

Smart Growth should encourage economic and social continuity **and** good planning for sustainable growth. Not more and more people that will negatively impact lifestyle and wellbeing. Not growth that is at odds with sustainability. Not growth for growths sake. Rather, growth that is beneficial for all of the communities of the Western Bay of Plenty sub region.

It is critical that all of our communities have voice and local knowledge is listened to. For many years, a Strategic Partners Forum was successful. It afforded selected interest groups the opportunity to share local aspirations and knowledge, needs based assessments and well thought out ideas. The termination of the Forum was very disappointing and has resulted in a disconnection to industry sectors, communities and local knowledge.

We are fully aware that Smart Growth is a planning framework only and approval and implementation processes for growth initiatives sit with the territorial authorities and central government. In our view, the Smart Growth strategy must be connected to

communities and interest groups and their local knowledge. We urge you to re-establish the strategic partners forum and to listen to an abundance of local knowledge and ideas that will be invaluable in making sure we achieve the positive 5S's - Strategic, Sustainable, Serviced, Successful and Satisfied.

### 3. Economic growth

Katikati needs to renew its economic drive. Our key economic driver is the Avocado industry but kiwi fruit is important and is growing but projected to only add 17 permanent jobs over the next 5 years. The Katikati Community Board has identified 3 legs to this economic renewal – being a destination town, the Business Park and an environmental hub with a focus on eco-agriculture development. The Katikati Business Park will create more jobs and added value and the full scope of eco-agriculture will create new jobs and innovation.

With such strong economic drivers, new housing & industrial and commercial zones will need to be planned and delivered in close proximity to our economic activity. The Katikati region must be categorised as high priority.

We encourage Smart Growth to listen to and work with Business and Industry groups that bring knowledge and direct connection to economic sectors and local communities. Smart Growth management has detailed projections for both industry and population growth. We have developed detailed strategic plans in which we highlighted future needs and introduced them to local people with considerable local knowledge.

### 4. Housing

We support the plan to explore and potentially develop in the longer term a new 500+ settlement west of the Katikati township. In planning this development we must be mindful of the impact of rising sea levels due to climate change and the potential of a tsunami. It is better to plan correctly today rather than a managed retreat in say 50 or 100 years time.

Katikati is well established and central to our economic drivers. It is not a case of one or the other. Katikati is an attractive area to live and there is pressure on both the housing stock and rentals. We need housing now to match economic growth. We need to progress both initiatives.

Central government support is important for success. Timing is everything and with a change of Government the time is **now**. The incoming Government are very clear on 3 points:-

1. The MDRS or Sausage flat law designed to prevent urban sprawl will be gone in 100 days. They have a preference for greater focus on greenfield developments which will allow conversion of farmland to new residential settlements.
2. Repealing Three Waters reform and a return to local management is positive.
3. RMA reform will remove red tape and hindrance to progress.

Additionally, decentralisation will encourage localism and a 'can do' attitude. Distant bureaucrats with no local knowledge making decisions from afar does little for sensible progress.

This is a terrific opportunity for Smart Growth to impress upon central government the need for access to infrastructure funding. Smart Growth must **establish** a program for the Katikati region to deliver new housing in the township and in the rural settlements

we have identified. With green lights instead of red and clearly defined pathways for swift progress, land owners and housing developers will act quickly. It should also be noted that this can be a sensible and balanced program of rural land conversion in sync with economic growth.

## **5. Industrial land and zones**

Smart Growth has identified shortages in industrial land and the need for new industrial zones. The Katikati Business Park is an important part of the solution particularly for light innovative and clean industry. The township has a wealth of small to medium industrial businesses and is a strategic location for more growth. The existing Katikati industrial zone. Willing land owners, a willing developer and a business investor wanting to make this happen. Unfortunately, the consenting process is slow and frustrating for over 20 years. This is a perfect example of how Smart Growth can make a positive difference by endorsing a sensible growth initiative that will deliver economic benefits. A 'make it happen' attitude, a sunrise frame of mind as opposed to a sunset mentality and a sense of urgency will be warmly welcomed.

Enabling swift consenting for the Katikati Industrial Zone will inspire investors & developers and will lead to the identification of other suitable land for development.

We acknowledge that climate change is real and risks must be mitigated. Waterways, flood prone areas and roading challenges highlight the need for fit for purpose infrastructure. Overcoming challenges and finding solutions is what Katikati does best.

## **Demographics**

We encourage Smart Growth to be mindful of :-

- An ageing population
- The incredible opportunities that will emerge with the growth in eco-agriculture
- Growth in immigration

Specific planning and swift delivery of housing, transport and accessibility solutions for these demographics must be elevated to high priority.

## **General**

We wish to develop strong relationships and learn through the strategic partners forum should this be re-established. There has been a noticeable shift toward city needs and a prioritisation to Tauranga and it's near west. This is how we see it. Our perception is our reality.

Smart Growth is important but needs a balanced view across the whole region. Smart Growth as a body with an overarching approach to enabling progress across all of our sub-regional communities can be powerful.

Our submission is focused on infrastructure delivery and improved processes to enable new housing and industrial land availability for the Katikati region. What we seek is achievable. It is not complicated. Smart Growth endorsement and support will help make it happen.

In closing we draw your attention to the make up of the Katikati region. Well established, connected and successful communities, all with strong identity and a history of innovation and success.

Yours sincerely,

John Clements

Katikati Community Board