

COUNCIL REVIEWS CBD PROPERTIES

Hamilton City Council (HCC) is reviewing the District Plan. This is big news, even though most people probably haven't heard of the District Plan, let alone know what it says.

But you will have heard of its consequences in the news headlines.

Hillcrest people know a lot about the planning process for Te Hurihanga Youth Facility, Melville people know about consents for asphalt plants, Temple View people are learning about historic protection planning with Church College, and CBD people are getting very experienced over parking.

The District Plan defines what we want Hamilton to be. The review process allows you to have your say. Your silence means your acceptance of what other people want.

When you think of your ideal community most of us envisage cute European villages with narrow lanes, corner pubs, and street cafes. Yet these break every single rule in the District Plan. Height limits, site coverage, boundary setbacks, privacy, parking, access, living courts, activities, subdivision, etc. So are the rules stopping us from getting what we want?

Let's face it, there are some bad developers out there and these rules go some way towards setting minimum standards. HCC is doing a good job, with leeway for better projects.

The current review of Variation 21 (Hamilton Central Business District) is raising the standards, particularly in regards to urban growth, but in doing so is going to make it harder for a lot more projects, including the good ones. Variation 21 also impacts greatly on Industrial zoned areas (Big-box retail won't be allowed, forcing it back into the CBD region). Every property owner and developer needs to take a good long look at Variation 21 as it will make your permitted options far fewer.

Design Management Consultants Ltd (DMC) is preparing significant submissions over Variation 21 and are still involved with Variations 7 and 15. We have built a good relationship with Council working together toward the common goal of a better Hamilton for all to enjoy.

Variation 21 will result in the requirement for more Land Use Resource Consents. For this process you will need to get a wider range of Consultants involved in new projects earlier. These are likely to include Consultants in planning, civil and traffic engineering, noise control and landscaping to work alongside the Architect, Project Manager, and Quantity Surveyor. Coordinating these people at a fluid stage in the project will take greater effort.

Although the Resource Consenting process can be complicated and long, the good news is it does not have to be daunting or expensive when those involved know what they're doing.

You know when you get it right because your project won't hit the headlines.

Submission forms for comments on Variation 21 are available from HCC, and submissions close on Monday 1st February, 2010. Council will notify submitters of a hearing date and there will be the opportunity to present your case in person. Be sure to have your say as this is your City.

Full details are available on www.hamilton.co.nz/districtplan.