Bringing Whanau ora into urban design processes: the Manukau experience

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Introduction

Urban design can fundamentally affect the choices people make in how they live, work and play, and in turn, a population's wellbeing. Whanau Ora Health Impact Assessment (WOHIA) is a new tool that can be used to give Māori a voice in urban design and planning.

WOHIA has been used to facilitate Māori partnership and participation in local government consultation processes. WOHIA are important to ensure Māori world views are incorporated into planning and, to help gauge and support the impact on Māori wellbeing.

WOHIA uses Māori concepts of health. Hauora or health is an all-embracing concept which embodies the importance of wairua (spiritual), whanau (family), hinengaro (mental) and tinana (physical aspects). Te whenua (land), te reo (language), te ao turoa (environment) and whanaungatanga (relationships, kinships, whanau are central to Māori culture, and hauora Māori.

Whanau is widely recognised as the core social unit of traditional and contemporary Māori society. The belief is that if whanau health is protected so will the health of the hapu and iwi. It is from this premise that Māori live full and active lives. He Korowai Oranga, the Māori Health Strategy, describes whānau o ra as Māori families being supported to achieve their maximum health and wellbeing.

The WOHIA tool has been used on two Spatial Structure Plans in Auckland – for Manukau City Centre in 2009 and for Wiri in 2010. The work was led by Hapai te Hauora Tapui, working alongside Synergia Ltd.

This paper describes WOHIA, and how it had been used to facilitate the Māori role in these two spatial structure plans, and to enable the Māori world view to influence and enhance urban planning and design.

Approach

Both WOHIA processes were undertaken as part of broader Health Impact Assessment (HIA) projects exploring the two spatial structure plans. The engagement with Māori communities and other stakeholders in the district during the WOHIA complemented consultation with other local stakeholder interests, and analysis of population, social and health statistics for the region, alongside literature analysis.

Organisations and interests brought together for the two WOHIA processes included Te Ora o Manukau, Papakura Marae, Treaty of Waitangi Committee – Manukau City Council, Hapai Te Hauora Tapui, Te Oranga Ake, Plunket, Counties Manukau District Health Board, Manurewa and Pukaki Marae, New Zealand Food Safety Authority, Auckland Regional Transport Authority (ARTA) and Te Roopu Waiora.

The WOHIA processes used the Te Pae Mahutonga framework. This is a model for health promotion developed by Professor Mason Durie (Durie 1999). The model brings together significant components of health promotion as they apply to Māori health. A symbolic representation of the Southern Cross, the four central stars are used to represent the four key tasks of health promotion: Mauriora (access to Te Ao Māori), Waiora (environmental protection), Toiora (healthy lifestyles) and Te Oranga/Whaioranga (participation in society). The two pointers are Nga Manukura (leadership) and Te Mana Whakahaere (autonomy). Whanau Ora themes from the consultation workshops were grouped using the headings from this framework. This framework was also adopted by Waitakere City Council for the Maori Outcomes process for its previous Long Term Council Community Plan.

Following presentations which outlined the context of Whanau Ora Health Impact Assessment and the spatial plans under development, participants at each consultation forum were asked the following questions:

- What are your aspirations for Manukau City centre/ Wiri?
- What are the needs of whanau in Manukau City centre/ Wiri?
- What are the most important issues for whanau ora in the area?
- What parts of the long-term plan for the area can support whanau ora?
- To improve whanau ora, what needs to change in the plan?
- How can we make those changes happen?

Te Pae Mahutonga was then applied as an analytical framework for the responses given, and for developing the recommendations emerging from the consultation.
Findings
Access to Te Ao Māori - Mauriora
The importance of cultural connectedness was a key theme identified by participants. The Manukau landscape lives through the stories and histories of the tangata whenua/mana whenua who first occupied the area. These stories captured the meaning of the land and the relationship of people to it - the notion that when the landscape is well designed and cared for then people would naturally be "well beings".

Participants suggested a need for more Māori signage which also identified original place names. There is an increasing awareness that such an imprint provides important design for both tangata whenua well being and the overall well being of a community.

Environmental Protection - Waiora
The connectedness and relationships between humans and the natural environment, and the role which we play as Kaitiaki (guardians) of the environment is important to our wellbeing. The restoration of the Puhinui stream from river to moana (sea) is important. Wai (water) is an important lifesource, and the Puhinui is at a local level an important life source and food basket. Wairua, the spiritual wellbeing of our landscapes is an important component of wellbeing, and the word itself derives from the reflection of oneself in water. How we treat the Puhinui and the Manukau is similarly a reflection of ourselves in a modern-day environmental sense.

Participants also identified the importance of re-connecting tamariki with the natural environment, and planting more native trees and shrubs will assist in creating pride in the area.

Healthy Lifestyles- Toiora
Participants identified a number of key whanau ora issues that impacted on Toi Ora. In lower income housing areas where Māori and Pacific whanau are more represented, air pollution and noise are often more prevalent. Furthermore, the high cost of housing affecting whanau ability to own their own homes has led to increased overcrowding in the Manukau City area. A potentially deadly combination of poverty, poor housing conditions (lack of insulation) and exposure to poor air quality mean tamariki, kaumatua and kuia are more vulnerable to suffering respiratory issues.

Safety was also seen as an important issue. A lack of safe spaces for our tamariki (children) to play, and for rangatahi (young people) to be themselves was identified with the current area. Injuries caused by poor footpaths, lack of safe places to cross the impact of our ‘car culture’, and the increasing levels of noise and air pollution (with motorways on either side) impact on the ability of whanau to lead healthy lifestyles.

The way houses are designed for whanau and the way in which the houses face the street and areas where tamariki can play and become more active is important for future consideration. Facilities need to be provided which support and encourage active recreation amongst whanau of all ages.

Participation in Society – Te Oranga
Te Oranga is about whanau participation in the economy, employment, education, knowledge society and decision making. Participants discussed the re-development and identified the importance of enabling whanau to better access services, and participate in what the city has to offer. Will whanau be able to participate in the facilities, in jobs that the re-development will create, in opportunities to attain further education?

Māori demographic patterns are changing, and the large number of tamariki and rangatahi for example will mean increased demand on services, education and need for employment. The provision of venues – community spaces which enable community cohesion is also an important part of Te Oranga.

Importance of Leadership – Nga Manukura
Strong community partnerships and shared models for working together were identified. Encouraging and supporting local Māori community leadership is an important activity. Nga Manukura also reinforces the leadership role local community leaders play for example (but not limited to) Māori health and education providers, rangatahi leaders, Māori politicians, and iwi liaison leaders.

Groups such as Te Ora o Manukau provide important collaboration activities which enable Māori perspectives to be heard across a range of issues which impact on Whanau Ora.

Autonomy – Te Mana Whakahaere
Mana Whakahaere – the ability for Māori to exercise control over the direction and shape of their institutions, communities and development – is influenced through Māori participation.

Participants identified the importance of Māori participation in the policy making process, and in particular whanau living in the Wiri area. This should be both at the local (Wiri/Manukau city) board level, and also more broadly at the governance of the Supercity.
Previously, Maori councillors at the former Manukau City Council, along with the council’s Treaty of Waitangi Standing Committee, and Te Ora o Manukau Roopu; played an important role in ensuring mana whenua and tangata whenua perspectives were incorporated into decision making. These representatives continually advocated to ensure the involvement of whanau, hapu and Māori communities in developing a sense of ownership, community and belonging.

Concerns were expressed regarding the future of involvement of Māori at a governance level on the Auckland Council. The decision to not allow Māori seats means that participation by Māori as councillors is not guaranteed. Since the WOHIA completion, the Auckland Council has now come into being and the Maori Statutory Board has been formed.

Needs of whanau

When asked about the needs of whanau in the areas covered by the spatial plans, the key identified needs included:

- Provision of employment opportunities for whanau which were nearby
- Education – access to quality early childhood and learning centres, as well as homework centres
- Cultural Connections – access to kaumatua and marae, connection of whakapapa, and the provision of kaumatua flats
- Community Spaces where the community can get together
- Safety – provision of a safe neighbourhood where the community takes ownership and everyone feels (and is) safe; provision of alcohol, drug and gambling free spaces and ensuring shops do not sell alcohol
- Housing – creating opportunities for home ownership so whanau can stay longer in the area – creating a sense of community stability, larger homes which accommodate whanau, with house fronts facing onto a park/area where tamariki can play safely, the provision of well insulated homes
- Recreation areas and spaces which nurture rangatahi talent e.g. cultural and youth art
- Access to services catering to young mums, including transport
- Good footpaths and seats to enable whanau to stop and have a breather – and with something nice to look at such as art, and plantings
- Cultural landscaping – how we reflect our heritage within these communities.

Outcomes of the processes

Both HIAs were endorsed by Manukau City Council in 2009 and 2010. The 2009 Manukau City Centre HIA was able to inform the development of the Public Domain Manual, and was itself the catalyst for the HIA in Wiri in the following year. A key value of the WOHIA component of the HIAs was the involvement of Maori stakeholders in the development of spatial plans, and in identifying potential pathways forward to support the wellbeing of people in the area.

The Wiri HIA led to specific changes in the further development of the spatial structure plan, including the following:

- Maintain suggested orientation of buildings
- Suggest appropriate landscape treatments for the area to reflect the cultural diversity
- Consider in more detail the use, location and size of commercial and community facilities
- Consider in more detail orientation of housing to ensure warm, healthy living environments
- Mixture of land use
- Increase safe pedestrian areas and plan for active transport options
- Improve general safety through good urban design

The HIA recommendations will be incorporated into the next phase of the spatial structure plan’s development, at which point another round of community consultation will begin. Continued communication with sectors and other departments of the new Auckland Council will look at implementing some of the recommendations of the HIA, including the possibility of a feasibility study for a leisure centre to be built in Wiri, improved pathways along the Puhinui stream, and increased transport options to Counties Manukau District Health Board Super clinic. (A range of health services are provided on this site, including outpatient follow up consultations). Bonds with associated networks and relationships have been strengthened through these projects and will allow for better consultation and outcomes for other projects moving forward. Embedding health and community opinion in local planning continues within Council.

Discussions with Council are underway on the potential for HIA and WOHIA to be undertaken as part of new initiatives, such as the Auckland Spatial Plan, with a view to embedding these processes across Auckland.