

CASE 6

Auckland, New Zealand

Regional Collaboration, Including a Planning Framework

The Auckland metropolitan area is New Zealand's largest and most populous urban area (figure 3.32, map 3.8). The Auckland Region is home to over 1.3 million people, about one-third of the national population. The region's population grew by 12.4 percent between the 2001 and 2006 censuses. Auckland is characterized by ethnic diversity; 37.0 percent of the region's residents were born overseas. In the region, there are four cities and three districts, each with its own council; there is also one regional council.

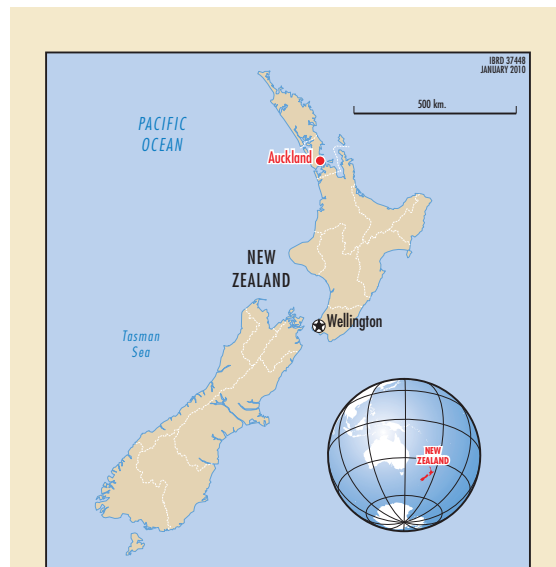
Currently, each council develops its own plans and strategies. This results in areas of overlap and competing priorities. Collective regional strategies for growth, the urban form, economic development, and transportation planning have been devised. However, they do not have common goals or principles to ensure their alignment.

The lifestyle typical of the Auckland Region and the employment opportunities there continue to attract new inhabitants, but drawbacks have also become evident, namely, a lack of a cohesive and effective approach to ongoing transportation problems and concerns about the pattern and nature of urban growth. The Auckland Regional Growth Forum was therefore established in 1996 as a cooperative meeting place for political representatives of the Auckland Regional Council and the local terri-



Figure 3.32 Auckland Harbor Viewed from the East

Source: Photo by Sebastian Moffatt.



Map 3.8 Location of Auckland

Source: Map Design Unit, General Services Department, World Bank.

torial authorities in the region. The aim of the forum is to develop and implement a strategy for managing the effects of growth.

Governments at every level recognize the need for a collaborative, regional process

The interconnectedness of national and local Auckland issues (such as housing and education) with growth and innovation and the major required investments (particularly in land transport) have created complex and difficult issues among multiple authorities. Despite Auckland's importance to the New Zealand economy and the areas of common interest, such as transportation and energy provision, the national government did not initially play a close role in directing regional and local government planning. Concern emerged that, without agreement on an overarching regional strategy and framework, decision making in the region could become ad hoc and adversarial if each stakeholder tried to have a say from a narrow perspective and without viewing the region as a whole. As a result, there was a clear need for coordinated strategic planning across the Auckland Region to ensure that Auckland would be able to remain competitive in today's globalized world. The response involved a process undertaken in 2001 to prepare a regional growth strategy that aimed to provide a vision of what Auckland could be like in 50 years. This was backed by the adoption of a spatial growth plan and a legislatively binding limit on the extent of the metropolitan urban area.

In parallel with the work on a regional growth strategy, a three-year Auckland Sustainable Cities Programme was initiated in 2003. In 2006, as a result of the program, the eight local authorities (Auckland City, Auckland Region, Franklin District, Manukau City, North Shore City, Papakura District, Rodney District, and Waitakere City), at the instigation of a forum of territorial chief executives, engaged with the central government to develop a long-term sustainability framework. Initially called START

(Sustaining The Auckland Region Together), the approach represented an attempt to evaluate how forces of change (such as climate change, global resource depletion, and changing demographics) might impact Auckland and how the local and regional councils and the central government might align their efforts and create strategic directions to ensure the region's long-term success (figure 3.33).¹ The engines of START included the need to develop resilient and adaptive systems able to respond (1) to persistent pressures over short and long time horizons with no obvious alternative solutions and (2) to many vested interests with apparently irreconcilable demands.

Making a START: Gathering information

The START working group developed a prototype framework with a cascading set of deliverables, including a vision, goals, initial foundation, process principles, initial themes, and some potential responses (which included catalyst projects, long-term sustainability goals, and the development of indicators to measure progress). Critical to progressive development was consideration of the forces that would shape Auckland's future over the next 100 years. Also significant to the development of the framework was the involvement of expert groups that included academics and experts from the business and community sectors, who, through facilitated



Figure 3.33 The START Logo in the Auckland Region

Source: ARC (2006).

workshops, developed theme papers on key issues identified in the prototype framework—the built environment, urban form and infrastructure, energy, economic transformation, social development, cultural diversity and community cohesion, and environmental quality. Each group deliberated around four sustainability principles—resilience, prosperity, livability, and ecology—and considered how these might be influenced by the forces that would shape the future.

In a linked, but parallel process, a working group representing all Maori tribes (New Zealand’s indigenous people) of the Auckland Region developed its own collective long-term framework, the Mana Whenua Framework. The working groups involved in these processes built links between the two frameworks, including a basic common structure; common analysis via the forces and theme papers; a Maori goal in the overall framework; and an indigenous concept of sustainability, which fed into the definition of sustainability in the overall framework.² Meanwhile, the overall framework acknowledges Mana Whenua as the first peoples of the region and as an intimate part of the region’s ecological and cultural fabric.

In August 2006, a three-day START design workshop enabled 120 representatives of local authorities and the central government, academia, and the community and business sectors to contribute expertise and perspectives to the development of the draft 100-year framework. The methodology drew heavily on the Vancouver CitiesPlus model, which progressed from a high-level vision to responses and indicators through an adaptive management approach to the development of a resilient urban planning framework able to address future challenges (CitiesPlus 2002). The workshop relied on a charrette format, a process whereby new design ideas emerge and evolve quickly (figure 3.34). The process is interactive and harnesses the talents of a range of parties to resolve planning challenges. The charrette format is particularly



Figure 3.34 Strategic Planning among Many Stakeholders at a Three-Day Regional Charrette, New Zealand

Source: ARC (2006).

successful in helping local government authorities engage communities in planning. The product is usually a tangible plan ready for immediate implementation.

Stakeholder consultations and interagency coordination

As a result of feedback and wider strategic discussions following the START workshop, it was decided that the framework should include the following:

- A shift from business as usual as a key component of the framework
- The addition of integrated goals, key directions, leadership goals, and Maori goals
- The adoption of a revised version of a regional vision developed by a youth contingent
- The development of a draft set of indicators
- The development of a process and tools for the application of the framework

A governance and reporting structure was set up whereby the project was overseen by a steering committee of the council officers that was sponsored by the chief executives forum responsible for final approval of the framework.

Consultation with stakeholders and the public took place from February to May 2007 through 19 workshops involving around 200 participants, plus written submissions from several individuals, four organizations, and two regional councils.

A revised version, the Auckland Sustainability Framework (ASF), was endorsed in September 2007 by the Auckland Regional Growth Forum after it had been endorsed by all member local authorities and government agencies. It also received high-level support within the central government. The ASF goals and visions were consistent with central government priorities, especially in the substantive shifts that would be required (box 3.4). In turn, the ASF was expected to provide a tool to review the effect of national policies on Auckland. However, it was also clear that a better understanding was needed of the methods for achieving goals and of the proper indicators for assessing progress.

The ASF is also intended to guide and align regional strategies (such as the Regional Growth Strategy, the Regional Land Transport Strategy, and the Auckland Regional Economic Development Strategy). The process of developing a framework was therefore highly inclusive, with

many conversations feeding into the framework and the emerging responses. The Auckland Regional Growth Forum, for example, facilitated regionwide discussions, joint political decision making, and the establishment of a reference group of council members to provide direction and support. Similarly, local authorities and the central government formed a senior officers steering group and an officers working group. Key collaborative elements were the relationship between the central government and local governments and the common governance elements, primarily because of the involvement of the Government Urban and Economic Development Office, including a joint commitment to the development of a shared long-term view of a sustainable Auckland.²

The final framework that was adopted consists of the following (figure 3.35):

- The identification of key challenges to sustainability that the region will need to address
- A 100-year vision
- The eight long-term goals
- Eight shifts from current practice that are required to meet the goals
- Suggested strategic responses
- A measurement framework and monitoring process
- A toolkit to apply the framework to strategies, significant decisions, and plans and to integrate regional planning

The framework's role consists of the following:

- To align existing regional strategies and projects, for example, the Regional Growth Strategy, the Regional Land Transport Strategy, and the Auckland Regional Economic Development Strategy
- To align future regional strategies and projects
- To guide the development of a single regional plan (the One Plan; see the following section)

BOX 3.4

Eight Goals Direct the Auckland Sustainability Framework

The ASF is built around eight interrelated long-term goals that will enable the region to take a sustainable development approach:

- Goal 1 A fair and connected society
- Goal 2 Pride in who we are
- Goal 3 A unique and outstanding environment
- Goal 4 Prosperity through innovation
- Goal 5 Te puawaitanga o te tangata (self-sustaining Maori communities)
- Goal 6 A quality, compact urban form
- Goal 7 Resilient infrastructure
- Goal 8 Effective, collaborative leadership

Source: RGF (2007).

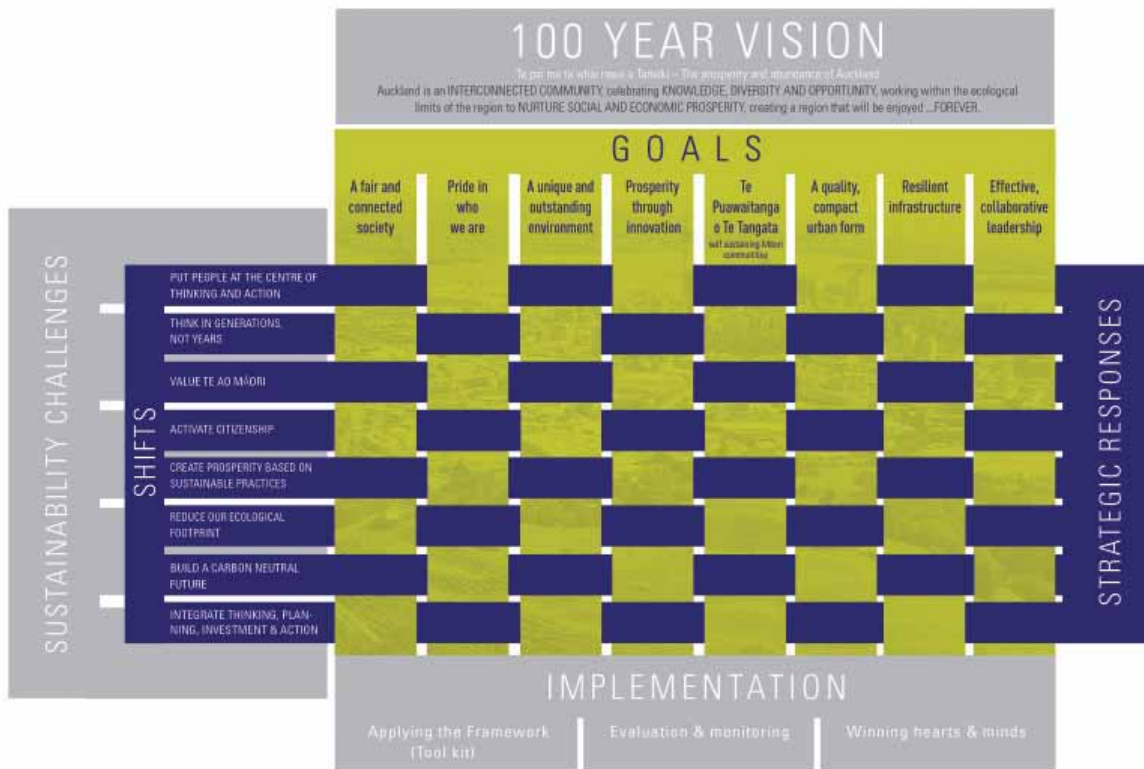


Figure 3.35 The Auckland Sustainability Framework

Source: RGF (2007).

- To provide methods to adapt business-as-usual scenarios, for example, the 10-year community investment plans of a local council
- To identify strategic responses that must be undertaken to achieve sustainability goals

The ASF “will provide direction so that our local authorities and central government agencies can work together with a common purpose to embrace the opportunities and face the challenges associated with developing a truly sustainable region” (ARC 2008).

Keys to Success

Extended peer communities

The overall process created considerable buy-in at political and administrative levels, and the resulting framework is owned by all parties. However, there has been a considerable change in political representation at the local and

national levels since the adoption of the ASF. Many new council members have not been involved in the development of the framework, and the national government has redefined sustainability into the narrower concept of natural resource management.

Nonetheless, the ASF has been used to develop a collective investment plan, which is referred to as the One Plan, as well as a number of local council plans, including the Manukau City Council’s 2060 Strategic Framework and the Waitakere City Council’s social strategy.

Stretched thinking

The framework and, especially, the participatory process have stretched the thinking of many participants with regard to the following topics:

- Recognizing that the world and Auckland are going to experience exponential change over the next 50 years and that they have limited time to prepare for this change

- Recognizing that many business-as-usual practices will have to be altered or abandoned
- Understanding the meaning of sustainable development, especially by bringing in a Maori perspective
- Developing the Mana Whenua Framework

The development of a separate, but linked Maori framework has ensured that the long-term planning for Maori is being undertaken by Maori. The depth of indigenous understanding of generational thinking and the holistic and spiritual understanding of the relationship between the environment and people are fully realized in the Mana Whenua Framework and have challenged and stretched the thinking on the ASF.

Lessons Learned in the Auckland Case

Two groups appear to have been less well represented in the process of the development of the ASF: business representatives and the developers who would eventually implement the strategies and activities based on the ASF. A special process may be needed to engage these groups because they are typically reluctant to attend open meetings and because they require a process that is especially efficient.

After the ASF was adopted, the region quickly focused on new priorities. As a consequence, one component of the framework—winning hearts and minds—did not achieve progress (see figure 3.35). Winning hearts and minds acknowledged the importance of the social learning that council members, key staff members, and stakeholders experienced through the development of the ASF. Continued dialogue and education on the challenges and solutions involved in achieving sustainability are required among these key decision makers and the public.

While the ASF has been adopted as a guiding framework, no hard targets have yet emerged

for planning and strategy making. Likewise, no bottom-line thresholds for public sector decision making have appeared. Without these elements, the ASF may become a useful tool for some parties, but may be ignored by others. The new national government is restructuring the eight local government bodies within the region into a single unitary council, and it remains to be seen whether this new council will adopt the ASF as the guiding regional framework.

Notes

1. The government of New Zealand is in the process of restructuring the Auckland local government and plans to replace the existing seven local councils and one regional council with one super council and 20 to 30 local community boards.
2. See Frame (2008) for a critical analysis of the regional planning process and outcome.

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