

Population 8000: the city's newest suburb

By GRHAM SELLERS

A NEW suburb housing a bigger population than Te Puke is set to sprout on the southern outskirts of Tauranga, helping to cater for an expected population explosion in the region over the next 30 years.

Tauranga-based Grasshopper Properties is proposing a \$100-million plan for a 2000-subdivision encompassing 2000 residents, a business and retail centre, as well as parks and reserves, on the western side of Pyes Pa.

It has just begun the lengthy planning process and expects up to 250 sections to be available by the end of the year.

The entire development — the largest in Tauranga — should be completed within 18 years and is likely to be dominated by modern urban housing and lifestyle blocks. Sections start at \$20,000 with those in the high price bracket costing as much as \$25,000.

The developer would establish a pumping station and standard services such as sewerage, water reticulation and power — and a new \$20-million Pyes Pa bypass road could be built through the development to improve access to the area.

Grasshopper has conditionally bought two dairy farms to house the development. Combined, they cover 200 hectares and stretch from State Highway 29, where Route K begins, along the sloping valley between the Rongotea Stream and the Pyes Pa ridge to the crest of the 1041-foot Kennedy Rd.

The company is also working in with fellow developer Bob Clarkson who owns the front block of 12 hectares alongside the state highway.

Pyes Pa and road by accident were informed of the development yesterday by letter and limited to a public meeting to discuss the proposal. The large parcel of development land sits on the Tauranga and Western Bay of Plenty districts. The experts and councillors were also briefed this week.

The developer will apply to both councils for a district plan change to secure the rural land.

The development is likely to include:

- A car station and service centre at the front near the state highway, followed by commercial and light industrial buildings, developed by Mr Clarkson.
- A community shopping centre of similar class to Cherrywood's, and professional services.
- A primary school (the developer has had a favourable response from the Ministry of Education).
- Up to 35 hectares and more for reserves such as neighbourhood playgrounds, a sportsfield, larger than Bergamot Park in Mahoe and cycle and walkways that connect to Route K.

Grasshopper director Graeme Lee said Tauranga was running out of places to develop and Pyes Pa was a logical growth area.

"We want it to be a community where you can live, work and play in, similar to the council's plan for Papamoa East."

Mr Clarkson said: "I've had a dream out there for five years. It's a massive undertaking — another Te Puke — but



SUNBURN IN WAITING: This rolling farmland west of Pyes Pa Rd will be transformed into a modern suburb with around 2000 homes. If developer Grasshopper Properties can safely handle all the planning issues, the development site starts near the new Route K roundabout and sweeps up the valley between the Pyes Pa ridge and the Rongotea Stream to the crest of the 1041-foot Kennedy Rd. The new State Pyes Pa bypass road would follow the stream on the western boundary of the development.



Tauranga can handle it no trouble at all; the city is growing that fast."

It is predicted that the Western Bay of Plenty population will increase by more than 50 per cent in 315,000 by 2010, and experts say that to cope with that projected explosion between 2000 and 2010 hectares of development land would be needed.

Western Bay Mayor Graeme Wood said the development had a lot of merit, considering the new road connection was meeting in the bottom of Route K. He said the council were securing new territory as there were cross-boundary issues but no doubt the leases would be flushed out as the proposal moved along.

How it all adds up

- A 200ha subdivision to cater for up to 8000 people.
- Development to stretch from State Highway 29, between the Rongotea Stream and the Pyes Pa ridge to the crest of the 1041-foot Kennedy Rd.
- Project to be completed within 15 years.
- Total cost of the development around \$100 million.
- The 2000 sections to cost between \$20,000 and \$25,000.
- Development dominated by modern urban housing and lifestyle blocks.
- Up to 25ha for reserves such as playgrounds and a sportsfield.

Tauranga Mayor Joe Whanga also headed the plan, saying the development had a lot of "good fire for the city" — it was well located near Route K and provided a great opportunity to reshape the arterial highway to Moturoa.

"The town is growing and we have to accommodate the people somewhere," she said.

It's an ill-fated plan and not a patchwork type development need — but we have to ensure it's within the footprint of urban development and we are not losing producing, economically rich land."

Grasshopper has set aside the next 12 months to get through the planning process.

Mr Lee said there were a huge number of issues to work through such as infrastructure, rehousing and community consultation. "It's not a given until we work through the whole process," he said.

Seven years ago Grasshopper — which recently completed three subdivisions of 400 sections in Hamilton — planned to open up 400 sections on the

western side of Pyes Pa Rd, near the area where the new Anglican College was built. However, it pulled out because of the harsh conditions attached to the resource consent of the plan.

Grasshopper will take possession of the 200-hectare property in marked for the subdivision during the weeks of next year. Following a series of public meetings — the first on June 26 — Grasshopper will apply to the two councils to have the "rural" land rezoned "residential" and "business", and a lease special hearing will follow.

If that was successful, Mr Clarkson and Grasshopper would then make a joint application for resource consent for subdivisions, earthworks and economic discharge.

Tied in with the development could be an urban improvement alongside the Rongotea Stream that would effectively become an extension to Route K.

Grasshopper is in talks with the two district councils, Environment Bay of Plenty and Western Bay of Plenty about how best that could be sold and funded.

Ken Tremble, project director for the Grasshopper planning study, said the development provided housing, business and opportunities between the regional settlements of Tauranga and Hawke.

"It will be a Hamilton to Auckland extension of over again," he said.

Is this development desirable for Tauranga? Email your views to editor@tao.co.nz