

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, a 200ha subdivision accommodating 2000 residents, a business and retail centre, as well as parks and reserves, on the western side of Pyes Pa Rd.

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 12 years and is likely to be dominated by modern urban housing and lifestyle blocks. Sections start at \$60,000 with those in the high price bracket costing as much as \$250,000.

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 26, where Route K begins, along the sloping valley between the Kōpūmātau Stream and the Pyes Pa ridge to the crest of the 1041-foot Kennedy Rd.

The company is also working in with selling 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 invited to a public meeting to discuss the proposal. The large parcel of development sits on the Tauranga and Western Bay of Plenty districts. The mayors and councillors were also briefed this week.

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

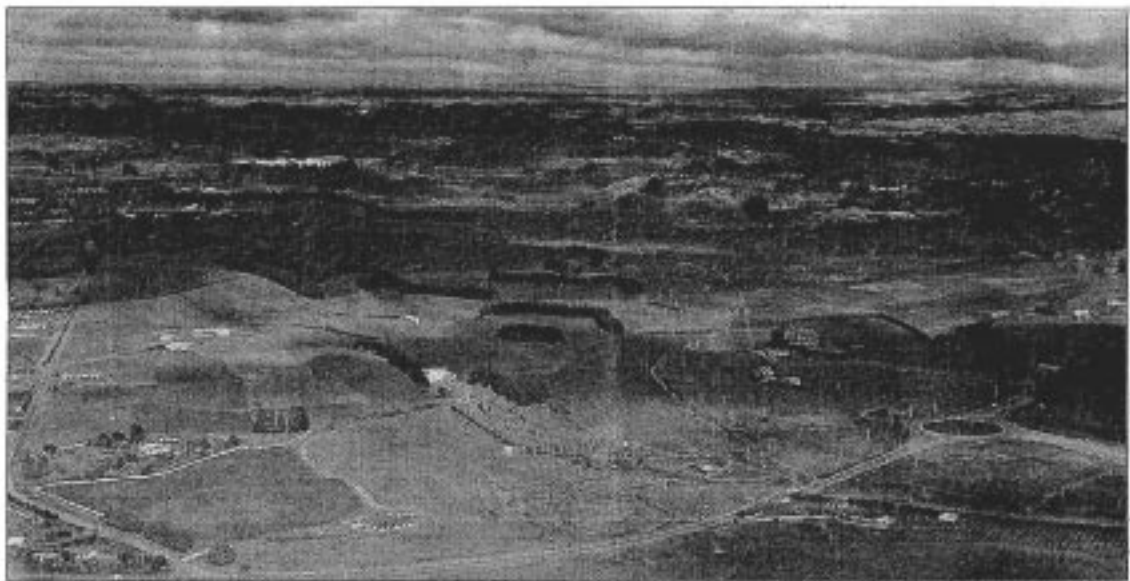
The development is likely to include:

- A gas 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 size to "Citycentre", and professional services.
- A primary school (the developer has had a favourable response from the Ministry of Education).
- Up to 25 hectares and more for reserves such as neighbourhood playgrounds, a sportsfield larger than Bergin Park in Mahoe and cycle and walkways that connect to both circuits.

Grasshopper director Graham 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



SUBURBS 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 Kōpūmātau Stream to the crest of the 1041-foot Kennedy Rd. The new 3km 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 to 315,000 by 2011, and experts say that to cope with that projected population between 2000-2005 hectares of development land would be needed.

Western Bay Mayor Graeme Lewis said the council had a lot of merit, considering the new road connection was needed in the bottom of Route K.

He said the council was zoning new territory as there were cross-boundary issues but to doubt the lease would be flushed out as the proposal moved along.

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"It is 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

How it all adds up

- A 200ha subdivision to cater for up to 2000 people.
- Development to stretch from State Highway 26, between the Kōpūmātau Stream and the Pyes Pa Ridge to the crest of the 1041-foot Kennedy Rd.
- Project to be completed within 12 years.
- Total cost of the development around \$100 million.
- The 2000 sections to cost between \$60,000 and \$250,000.
- Development dominated by modern urban housing and lifestyle blocks.
- Up to 25ha for reserves such as playgrounds and a sportsfield.

Tauranga Mayor Joe Swainson also backed the plan, saying the development had a lot of "good fits for the city" — it was well located near Route K and provided a great opportunity to rezone the arterial highway to motorway.

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

"It's an integrated plan and not a patchwork type development trend — 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 two main areas of interest to work through such as infrastructure, residential and community development.

"It is 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 track conditions attached to the resource consent of the State.

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 zoned "residential" and "business", and a new special zoning over 2000m below K that was successful, Mr Clarkson and Grasshopper would then make a joint application for resource consent for subdivision, earthworks and appropriate flashings.

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

Development is in talks with the two district councils, Environment Bay of Plenty and Western Bay Council about how best the could be met and funded.

Ken Trembley, project director for the Smart Growth planning study, said the development provided increasing linkages and opportunities between the regional settlements of Tauranga and Pongaroa.

"It will be a Hamilton in Auckland situation of one again," he said.

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