



Valuable Advice from Workshop 3

Growing Auckland Successfully – Pathways to a First Class City

Held on Wednesday 10 August 2016

Executive Summary

Auckland has one of the most spectacular natural settings of any city on the planet. It's the commercial powerhouse of one of the world's best performing economies. And, compared with many other fast-growing cities around the world, its infrastructure is performing reasonably well.

By any measure, then, Auckland should be seen as one of the most desirable cities, anywhere, to live or work.

In many ways, however, that's also the source of some of Auckland's greatest challenges. The city is growing by 896 people a week, and – put bluntly – we're not sure where to put them all. Or how to ensure everyone will be able to move around freely, not just tomorrow, but in 30, 40 or 50 years.

How do developers, investors, business people and advisers harness the opportunities that growth presents, while also ensuring we build a city of the future that our children will be proud and happy to live and work in?

That was the question we put in early August to three of Auckland's leading experts on the growth and development of large cities.



(L-R) Ludo Campbell-Reid, Peter Clark and Angela Bull with Kathryn Hickling (Chair)

The Speakers

Ludo Campbell-Reid is Auckland Council's Design Champion and General Manager of the Auckland Design Office, a department of design and activation professionals charged with spearheading Auckland's design-led renewal. His 22+ years' experience includes transformation and regeneration projects in London, Cape Town and Auckland. He has a Master of Arts/Diploma in Urban Design (Oxford Brookes University, Oxford) and a BA Hons Degree in Urban Planning (Westminster University, London).

Angela Bull is Chief Executive of Tramco, a property investment company with holdings across Auckland, the Viaduct Harbour and elsewhere in the North Island. Angela was previously General Manager of Property Development for Foodstuffs North Island, where she was responsible for site identification, acquisition, design and construction of new supermarkets, and the refurbishment of existing stores. Angela holds degrees in Arts and Law.

Peter Clark, Chief Strategy Officer for Auckland Transport has been involved in the transport sector for 30 years and has held roles in research, lecturing, consulting, local and regional government. He holds an Honours degree in Economics and Master's degrees in City & Regional Planning and Transport Engineering from Imperial College, London. Peter also sits on the Advisory Boards for the Centre of Infrastructure Research and the Department of Civil Engineering at Auckland University.

CHAIR

Kathryn Hickling, Principal, Lowndes

Kathryn is a specialist property lawyer with over 13 years' experience with leading commercial law firms in Melbourne and Auckland. Kathryn advises on acquisitions and disposals, property development, commercial, industrial and retail leasing, due diligence appraisals and franchising. She holds a LLB (1st class honours) and BA (English & History) from Waikato. She has acted for developers, major banks, councils, educational institutions, landlords, tenants and international franchisors.

What They Said

Let's start with what everyone agreed on: In the words of Ludo, Auckland is "going off".

Each speaker pointed to different measures to make the point. Only a few cranes in Auckland's CBD a few years ago, to over 30 now (Kathryn). Or, as Peter put it, Auckland's population growth between 2013 and 2043 is projected to exceed the *total* population of Canterbury in 2043.

No surprise, then, that to accommodate this growth Auckland must go up and go out. No surprise, either, that growth is about much more than just housing – there's a massive appetite for investment and infrastructure, and the need for good design principles to ensure we don't create a city that can house millions, but is unattractive and unliveable.

And, everyone agreed, creating a city that's easy to move around in is one of the great challenges of the next few decades.

Ludo Campbell-Reid: Psychology before planning and design

In 2009, Auckland had a reputation for dull, uninspired design. Four short years later, the new Auckland Art Gallery had won "World Building of the Year", O'Connell Street was being transformed into a pedestrian-friendly heritage area with a vibrant retail sector and Parisian sidewalk café atmosphere, and the Wynyard Quarter development was steaming ahead, opening up more of the central waterfront to foot traffic.

One factor in these exciting developments has been the boom in central city apartment dwellers – from 1800 people in 1991 to 42,000 in 2016. Another has been a focus on people (versus car) focussed developments, like the Nelson St "Lightpath" cycleway with its brilliantly illuminated section across a former motorway off ramp.

Equally, said Ludo, business developments are injecting life into the city – downtown Auckland alone has \$16.5 billion in projects underway, with another \$2-3 billions' worth in the pipeline.



If you're starting to think that Ludo is no fan of building roads to solve growth problems, you're right. "Trying to solves congestion by building roads is like trying to solve obesity by loosening one's belt," he quipped, before driving the point home by quoting studies that show each extra hour spent in a car is associated with a 6 per cent increase in the likelihood of obesity – and each extra kilometre walked each day is associated with a 4.8 per cent decrease.

Instead, Ludo argued, we must build up and build more densely.

That approach doesn't have to be ugly or create ghettos, he added. Think Beacon Hill, Boston, cited by Wikipedia as "a neighbourhood of Federal-style rowhouses... known for its narrow, gas lit streets and brick sidewalks [and] regarded as one of the most desirable and expensive neighbourhoods in Boston."

Only slightly tongue in cheek, Ludo argued that every new building – residential or commercial – should have the architect's contact details permanently engraved on it so that residents could call on them to express their pleasure (or displeasure) at the result. Do that, he said, and you'd see fewer developments with houses jammed together and nowhere for children to play.



Mixed developments are also key. Right now, big box retail developments tend to become wastelands at night, as well as eyesores during the day. Build apartments above them, however, and not only do the retailers now enjoy instant foot traffic, but the whole area comes alive and the land shortage problem for housing is that much less.

Good examples of what's possible include developments at The Warehouse in Newmarket and at 206 Victoria St West.

Both were ugly, depressing sites – both are now becoming vibrant, attractive centres that draw people in.

We need to take a similar approach to the port ("what are we doing greeting visitors with cars?" he asked).

And we need to understand that Auckland is not an island. Ludo's final recommendation for the city was a rail link between Auckland and Hamilton, Tauranga and Wellington. The thing is, he said, Auckland's not competing with those cities – it's competing on a global stage against other global centres. To win, Auckland needs to connect with the rest of New Zealand, not cut itself off.

Angela Bull: Collaboration, collaboration, collaboration

How do you fund a city's growth when income from rates is clearly not enough to do the job? That was the main question posed by Angela. What made her talk especially interesting was that it was from a practical perspective. While others debate the question, hoping policy makers will find an answer, developers like Angela are actually working with Council to create solutions.

Like Ludo, Angela is positive about Auckland's future. "We're becoming a truly international city," she said, with obvious enthusiasm. "Unlike the 1990s, people are using public transport. Apartments are becoming desirable." We're growing up, and Angela likes it.

But with a population that's growing by over 600 people a week, we have to keep growing – up and out. And Angela's clear that one of the keys to the future is a strong property development sector, led by people with the courage, clear-headedness and stamina to see major projects through to fruition.

In this regard, she has politicians on her side. Mayoral candidate Phil Goff has publicly stated that position. His main right-leaning opponent, Vic Crone, [has promised to hold rate increases to a maximum 2%](#) – a policy clearly unaligned with funding development from rates.

Consequently, much of Angela's advice was directed towards developers. But not always exclusively so.

For example, she said, don't just be a recipient of information. Be a stakeholder. (The relevance of this comment was driven home when she asked who in the room had read the Unitary Plan from cover to cover. Only one hand went up, despite most attendees indicating they owned their own home and/or were property investors.)

Smart property developers will take a non-litigious approach to development, she went on. Property development is inherently fraught, and disputes are common. But a commitment to resolving issues out of court is almost always more productive than litigation.

In that vein, she continued, developers must always deliver on their promises. Council will not work with those who don't – or those who are not transparent in their dealings, or are not good at working collaboratively.

Finally, she said, have a vision. (We're pretty sure Ludo broke into a happy smile at those words!). And stamina. Know what you want to achieve, and stick with it.

Auckland's future will be shaped by how well the private and public sectors engage with one another. "[The two sectors] have shared objectives," Angela said, "and Council does engagement well."

Likewise, NZTA and Watercare have "significant infrastructure projects about to hit. So many projects, and so little money to deliver on them."

Peter Clark: Building a better public transport network

Peter Clark is a graphs and numbers man. And we mean that as a compliment.

For the next 20 years, Peter showed us, over 70% of growth in New Zealand will happen in Auckland.

Where Ludo focussed on pedestrian and bike traffic, Peter's attention was more given to how people will get across this ever expanding city – from home to the CBD, for example, or from the CBD to the airport.

His key message? Buses, great as they have been, don't have the capacity to do the job.

The Northern Busway, for example, will reach capacity sometime around 2030. Likewise, Symonds St can handle 130 buses an hour at best – but by 2030, it'll take the equivalent of 180 buses an hour to carry people through that part of the city.



Clearly, those numbers don't compute. By 2030, then, rail will almost certainly be needed from the North Shore to the city. And around the CBD itself, the City Rail Link is critical to future growth.

We're going to see more rail elsewhere too, including along the CBD-Auckland Airport route. One as yet unresolved question is whether that should be light or heavy rail.

The airport is rapidly becoming a commercial centre in its own right – [it already accounts for 33,000 jobs and \\$3.5 billion GDP, making it one of Auckland's largest employment areas](#). Right now, however, only 2% of airport employees and 7% of passengers use public transport.

Furthermore, Auckland Airport, as many readers will know, is planning to combine its international and domestic terminals to cope with an estimated rise in passenger numbers from 17m this year, to 24m in 2025 and 40m by 2044. That development, estimated to cost around \$2.4 billion over the next 30 years, will include a railway station.

Light or heavy, folks? (Auckland Transport have created a 3.5 minute video that shows what the light rail option would look like. You can view it at <https://youtu.be/RKdybt7F4os>).

As the city grows, public transport has become – and will continue to become – more attractive, said Peter. One reason is reliability. During peak hours, it can take anywhere from 30 to 75 minutes to get from Albany to the CBD. That's a lot of unpredictability. On the Northern Busway, the trip is a steady 20 minutes – with little variability.

But here's an intriguing question for crystal ball gazers. Difficult as population numbers are to accurately predict (in 1996 we thought Auckland's population would reach two million by 2063, and today we think it'll be more like 2033), technology's even more unpredictable.

Who knows what impact driverless cars will have on cities of the future? Who knows what other technologies could emerge that completely disrupt current ideas about how to move people around the city?

Like any good visionary, Peter (and our other speakers) didn't just leave us with answers, but also with questions to ponder as we headed off to work – on foot, by car, by bus and, in some cases, by rail.

Watch video interviews with our speakers, [click here](#).

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