

Subdivision to be Restricted to Fewer

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Subdivision rules in Waipa and Waikato Districts currently allow for the creation of a variety of lot sizes that meet the market for mixed land use, including lifestyle blocks for those that don't fancy living in town or in denser rural residential developments.

Over the past month both Districts have moved closer to restricting much of this subdivision. I believe that these changes will push lifestyle blocks further out of town, but surely that shouldn't be the goal in this day and age. Councils are proposing to restrict subdivision opportunities to those with bigger blocks only.

As these Councils respond to the pressure from Environment Waikato to peg back subdivision and protect productive land, nothing is more certain than reduced opportunities for most landowners. How they achieve this is still open to debate as the proposals go out for public comment. If you have any interest in how your district develops or what you can do with your land then you must take part in this debate. So watch out for public notification of these District Plan changes and participate.

Waipa planners are considering clamping down on 'retirement blocks' by limiting them to those who have occupied a large block (40+ hectares) for over 25 years – currently there is no minimum area and 15 years. For a normal rural subdivision you will need 80 hectares to qualify for even one new lot if proposed changes go through. Both these rules must surely push development much further out or make it uneconomic.

Waipa's proposal for Transferable Development Rights (TDR) through amalgamation is untested. In this process you are required to amalgamate existing rural titles (often in different ownership) in order to subdivide in a designated area close to an existing settlement or on less productive soils. This radical idea has not yet been fully implemented anywhere, to my knowledge.

Rodney, Franklin and Western Bay have proposed this over the past ten years; however attempts to implement it have been frustrated by the perceived complexities and unsustainable returns. Waikato District are monitoring this TDR method but in the meantime they are proposing a change that will more than halve the number of lots that can be created. This will leave potential for only one lot to be created, and if you own less than 6 hectares to start with you will miss out all together.

With rules like this proposed it's no wonder I am being approached by many to get Council approval for their subdivisions before it becomes too complex or impossible to achieve. For further advice on subdivision you should immediately contact a professional surveying company very familiar with these proposals.

By Brent Trail – Managing Director