

Whakatane Subdivision Rules Allow Sustainable Growth

Published April 2010

“It’s just so enjoyable advising people on subdividing in rural Whakatane because the rules generally make sense”, says Surveyor David Laing of Surveying Services, who has been advising clients across the Bay of Plenty and Waikato regions for over 30 years now. “The rules allow varied activities to establish and are in line with current expectations under the Resource Management Act.”

For example, on the plains you need 8 hectares per new lot unless the land is poorer quality – then you can reduce to a 2 hectare average lot size with a minimum of just half a hectare. These smaller sizes are also used in the foothill and coastal zones. We believe that this principal allows the land to be best utilised. On the plains you also have the ability to subdivide Dwelling Lots where you have managed and lived on the site for 15 years. This is sometimes referred to as a Retirement Lot and ‘for the time being’ operates also in Waipa District – watch this space! Lifestyle Lots up to half a hectare can be established by adjustment of boundaries when you own more than one title or two farms are amalgamating land.

Opotiki District has similar rules, having been drafted by the same consultant I believe, however their minimum lot size for ‘non versatile soils’ is set at 4 hectares. Of note also is that Opotiki allows up to three houses depending on title area; however Whakatane limits you to one without a discretionary application.

Both Councils allow additional ‘Residential Lots’ in the rural area when you legally protect an identified natural, cultural or ecological feature including bush and wetland. Up to four lots could be created this way under Opotiki’s generous rule. This rule now operates in almost every district we work in, including Western Bay, Hauraki, Waikato, Waipa and Thames Coromandel.

Although Councils have differing attitudes to growth and landowners’ right to diversify, District Plans are tending to adopt similar principles. The 8ha minimum lot size is currently being proposed by Western Bay of Plenty District Council for horticultural land and Hauraki has had a 6ha minimum for some time. The idea of treating the ‘plains’ differently to the ‘foothills’ is currently being promoted by Hauraki in an effort to put more lifestyle farmers onto the hill country, thus preserving the plains specifically for large dairy farmers – yet to be tested is their proposal for a minimum area of 40ha on ‘the plains’.

Currently many Councils have proposed changes underway, so don’t rely on hearsay – talk to a professional subdivision company before cementing any plans to subdivide.

By David Laing - Director