

# Retirement village concept mooted

TWENTY-ONE houses will be built in Te Kuiti if a proposed \$4.2 million retirement housing project goes ahead in the New Year.

A working party from the Waitomo District Council has recommended to the council that it uses existing land set aside for housing in the Parkside Subdivision.

However, the project will require agreement from current Parkside home owners. To date the council's 34 lot Parkside Subdivision has only had a 25% uptake on available sections.

## IDEAL LOCATION

Waitomo mayor Brian Hanna says: "Parkside is an ideal location for retirement style living because it's flat and secure, along with its close proximity to other aged care services."

The proposed style for the two bedroom houses would be similar to Beattie Village in Otorohanga. Affordable housing has remained a priority for the council and in the Parkside project, houses would possibly be priced around the \$200,000 mark," says Mr Hanna.

He dismissed the idea of having an outside developer undertake the project such

as a Ryman Retirement Village concept, saying that "would take away the goal of affordability."

"There's still a lot of issues to work through and although feedback is positive, first we have to have consent from established owners in the sub-division, we need to get a signed concession from each owner in order to proceed."

Home owners who have built in Parkside have, as a condition of sale, had to agree to a number of covenants relating to building values, square meterage and cladding formulas.

"The number of units the council will build as specs and then sell from a plan, and how the management structure of the whole proposal will sit, are yet to be decided," says Mr Hanna.

He says current market indications are that private units of a similar size are priced from \$145-\$185,000.

## OPINION DIVIDED

Real estate market professionals are divided about the proposal with Te Kuiti-based registered valuer Adrian Doyle urging caution.

"A retirement village and affordable housing for first home buyers are two separate markets," says Mr Doyle.

"Developments like Beattie Village sell incredibly well, but two bedroom accommodation has been notoriously difficult to sell in small towns. Beattie Village has expanded as demand dictated and Waitomo District Council should do the same. Ideally the 21 units should be sold prior to construction."

First National Te Kuiti owner, Bruce Spurdle says this type of housing definitely has a place and he thinks Te Kuiti would be well served by a development of this type.

While happy with developing housing stock in the town, he is also urging the council to be cautious.

"Housing built for \$200,000 would either be very small, or cheap and nasty, a very strict oversight is needed to ensure that what is to be erected is in keeping with the neighbourhood."

Mr Spurdle says he doesn't see this type of housing coming onto the market as being detrimental to housing values in Te Kuiti, but believes it may impact on the values of existing properties in the Parklands

Subdivision.

Harcourts owner Ken McGrath says a considered approach will be needed in order not to affect current property values in the town which are increasing.

He says as long as there is a staggered release of houses bought off a plan as the council is considering, the proposed development should not impact on values.

Mr McGrath says his company's sales in the Te Kuiti market are up by 74% on last year so there is plenty of demand for affordable housing, and he thinks that the trickle-down effect from the Auckland market should carry on into the New Year.

He agrees with Mr Doyle that two bedroom units have previously been hard to sell especially in places like Te Awamutu, however, he says real estate agents now "can't get enough of them".

Mr Hanna says the release of sections for the development would be staggered so as not to affect values. The council will seek consent in January from existing Parkside residents for a departure from the subdivision's existing covenants. Once that agreement is in place, the proposal can then proceed to the next stage.

## From the children ... thank you so much

THERE'S nothing like the face of a child opening a present on Christmas morning.

And thanks to the extremely kind hearted people of the Waitomo district and beyond there will be many children with smiles this year.

Founded more than two decades ago, by the late Maureen Wilkie of Te Kuiti to ensure children who might not receive a Christmas gift did, the children's toy appeal which has been adopted by the *Waitomo News* did not disappoint.

The generous number of gifts given

once again were so numerous that Te Kuiti Senior Constables Jacky Fitzgerald (pictured) and Steve Rickard required two cars to take them to their eventual recipients.

Managing editor Sue Sarich and sub-editor Jo Meads (who liaises with the police and agencies that distribute them) were thrilled with the response.

"Maureen would be so pleased to know that what she started so long ago continues," says Jo.

"People are incredibly generous." Sue says: "Every year, despite



IT'S A WRAP: Te Kuiti Senior Constable Jacky Fitzgerald with a boot load of gifts for distribution.

tough times for some, it never ceases to amaze me how giving people can be. We are very grateful

everyone who contributed this year and every year. "On behalf of the children we say thank you."

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## IN BRIEF

### Aotea playground opened

AOTEA'S first children's playground has opened in time for the summer holiday rush to the North King Country's west coast when the population swells to about 700. Kawhia Community Board's Aotea representative Annette Gane says the \$42,000 project struck a problem when the site on Otorohanga District Council's Morrison Dr beach reserve, was identified as a possible historical archaeological site - potentially a midden (containing shells, animal bones and other refuse indicating an historic human settlement). "We started working closely with local iwi around the harbour and Heritage New Zealand who both supported the initiative," she says. "So the discovery turned out to be fortuitous as is extended our wider linkage. Lo-

cal iwi blessed the land before the playground was created and again at the official opening." Funding the project was a two-year Aotea community effort, assisted by a grant, Otorohanga District Council and the Kawhia community.

### KCE directors decline share offer

TWO directors of King Country Energy - who collectively have interests associated with 9582 shares - are not intending to accept an offer of \$4.78 a share from Trustpower. Brian Gurney and Brian Needham have both advised the independent committee set up by King Country Energy Holdings Ltd (KCEHL) of their decision. A subsidiary of Trustpower Limited, KCEHL has made a full takeover offer for KCE Ltd.