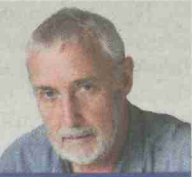


Tower block idea for young and old

John Cousins



A PLAN to mix seniors with university students in a \$45 million high-rise development in Tauranga's downtown has been floated by architect Mark Wassung.

He wants to give retired people the housing option of rubbing shoulders with students in a tower block built on the council-owned site in Durham St, opposite Baycourt.

"We are going to have a quadrupling of seniors over the next 20 years. Seniors don't always want to live in retirement homes — we need to change our approach."

The registered architect, who ran for a seat on the council last year, has announced his latest vision for the future, Tauranga Together. It included giving the elderly an alternative to retirement villages that clustered seniors together.

Mr Wassung was struck by how the largest demographic from the 49,000 people that attended the Paradox exhibition were in their 70s, 80s and 90s.

"That means retirees were coming in their droves to support an exhibition of street art."

He said some seniors felt disengaged from the community, so why not bring them into the city in a 200-unit development that brought students and



VISION: Architect Mark Wassung is advocating the \$45 million project.

retirees together. The students studying at the nearby campus now under development would rent 30sq/m units while seniors lived in 80 to 100sq/m apartments.

There could be different ownership options, like a co-operative rent-to-own model. "A lot of singles can't get into the housing market," he said.

Mr Wassung has searched the web to see if anyone else was mixing retirees with young people and found a nursing home in the Netherlands that

allowed students to live rent-free alongside elderly residents as part of a project to ward off the negative effects of ageing.

The students got a small apartment in the Humanitas retirement home in exchange for spending at least 30 hours a month being a "good neighbour". Students joined their neighbours in activities like watching sport, celebrating birthdays or offering company when seniors fell ill.

International studies were finding more social isolation and

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- 550-room halls of residence style communal homes
- For cash-strapped millennials
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- Alternative to flat sharing for graduates

— Mark Wassung

loneliness as people lived longer. The Humanitas project showed how students brought the outside world in by providing warmth and contact for elderly, with the only rule that students must not be a nuisance.

Similar inter-generational programmes existed in the French and American cities of Lyon and Cleveland.

Mr Wassung took the concept to Tauranga Mayor Greg Brownless who responded to the *Bay of Plenty Times* that the site opposite Baycourt was earmarked for an internationally-branded hotel and he did not want to throw that out.

However, if someone came along with a fully-funded project for the site then the council would look at it.

"I embrace Mark's innovative

thinking," he said.

"We have got to have people coming up with ideas but translating ideas into action is not easy."

Mr Brownless said he was not so sure that mixing university students with the elderly would work.

University students were noted for noisy parties and that could conflict with elderly neighbours, he said.

Mr Wassung said the essence of Tauranga Together was good and sustainable growth by design. The city should become socially and economically inclusive and environmentally sustainable.

He proposed to set up an urban design panel similar to Hamilton's panel. It would set ambitious design standards, review designs and investigate the challenges facing Tauranga's built environment.

The CBD was going through a renaissance and the design panel would ensure that the city centre did not end up looking like a fruit salad, he said.

Mr Wassung also proposed to launch a new social enterprise called Public Practice to put designers and planners into the Tauranga City and Western Bay District councils for a minimum of one year.

Tauranga Together was envisaged as a partnership between the public and private sector involving a long-term approach to investment.

It fed into his vision for the future of transportation in the city, Tauranga Connect.

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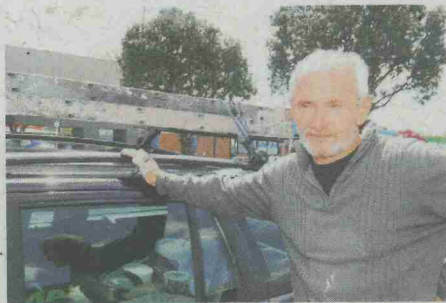
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RAIN: Strong winds and heavy rain caused chaos around Rotorua last week.

PHOTO/FILE

Soaking July not over yet

Georgina Harris



It's been a wet old July in Rotorua — with more rain falling in the first 19 days than is average for the whole month.

Rotorua has been cleaning up after wild weather last Thursday sent trampolines flying, brought down trees and took out power to hundreds of homes.

MetService forecaster Tuporo Marsters told the *Rotorua Daily Post* on Friday there had been more than 100mm between 1pm and midnight on Thursday.

Wind gusts of up to 144km/h were recorded in exposed areas.

A Rotorua Lakes Council spokeswoman said contractors had been busy

yesterday clearing away trees and debris left around the district after last week's weather.

"Only a few minor issues remain around the district. A few small slips are yet to be cleared but have safety signage in place."

Those slips are on Endeane Rd, Te Kopia Rd (also a small underslip), Okaro Rd,

and Lake Okataina Rd. On Okareka Loop Rd, Totara Rd and the Hossack Rd extension, there are trees that had fallen during the storm.

"These have been pushed to the berm and require more tidy work."

MetService meteorologist Tom Adams said for the next few days there would be a westerly wind leading to the odd shower.

"From Thursday there will be a bit of rain coming through, mostly on Friday. However it should be

clearing up to be a nice weekend."

He said while locals could look forward to a fine weekend, it would bring some chilly mornings.

"There had been lots of low-pressure systems bringing northeasterly winds, which in turn brought in piles of rain," Mr Adams said.

He said the rain gauge at Rotorua Airport had been broken since midnight on Wednesday "so it didn't capture the rain over the past few days" but from July 1 to July 19, 137.4mm of rain had fallen there.

Mr Adams said with the 10-year average July rainfall at Rotorua airport being 123mm, the current month had already "quite a lot" in comparison.

The rain gauge was in the process of being fixed yesterday.