

A new attractive land zoning
for landowners to create...

Biodiversity and Community Enhancing Parks and Corridors

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Beautiful Gardens of Wanaka

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Context

Climate change, biodiversity crisis and community issues

Climate change is now happening, and great efforts and expenses are spent in mitigation and adaptation.

The biodiversity crisis is also well-known with high alerts and solutions well documented, in short: stop destroying nature, it will replenish itself.

Community issues in our district include affordability and isolation.

Our suggestions for the need to implement a new zoning criteria is for a district-wide implementation to preserve and enhance biodiversity and community well-being, with little change and cost.

Huge housing development in Wānaka

Wānaka growth is now extending private property development beyond reserves, rural lifestyle blocks and nature public spaces set aside close to town. We therefore need a new way to keep open spaces and nature accessible.

In the current system, the approving of new subdivisions breaks up blocks ONL views, ecosystems, access and beauty.

Our proposal will ensure development is done with respect to the environment and community needs.

Regenerative Tourism

Covid-19 has stopped tourism industry, creating time to reflect and redefine the tourism experience we, as Aotearoa tourism operators and resident Kiwis, wish to offer. The “[Back to Life Program](#)”¹ started a regenerative tourism exploration in Wānaka (and other territories) where we, tourism operators, can give back to the land we make profit from and to the community we operate within. The resulting [Destination management plan](#) is imminent².

I believe it is the role of tourism operators to protect the beauty, improve local environment and access. As Beautiful Gardens of Wānaka owner operator, I have the privilege to access many private lands with high biodiversity and beauty value that I believe are worthy of protecting and enhancing with the ideas included in this report.

Elegant and cost-effective solution

A new land zoning

We have been working with the council to **invent a regenerative and climate-responsible land zoning that creates an attractive network of parks and wide nature corridors where biodiversity and ecosystems, resilience and wellbeing are enhanced, the hosting of local food AND creating safe bike/walk/horse/ public transport options.**

While 5000 dwellings are proposed in the 2050 plan in an area labelled Wānaka South, most landowners in the areas have chosen a lifestyle property with rates that reflect the use of their land. Changing to an urban land zoning would make their rates unsustainable or change the land use to smaller lots and destroy the beautiful treescape they have created in the last 30 years or more. We propose that a new rating allows landowners who wish to, to retain the lifestyle property size and rating in exchange of:

- Commitment to keep the land as whole (can be sold whole but not split)
- Commitment to develop on these lands, biodiversity enhancing areas AND / OR access to the community

This solution would not only incur no cost to the council with no need to purchase the space (e.g., Mount Iron) to keep it as a natural reserve but would also meet the current Council mandate to provide green spaces and recreational facilities for the well-being of the community and reflect real change answering to its climate crises promises. Once the new zoning

¹ <https://www.backtolifenetwork.co.nz/>

² <https://www.lakewanaka.co.nz/regenerative-tourism-by-2030>

established, the Council role would be to encourage the uptake of such a scheme and help landowners with safety and infrastructure as required.

The proposed zoning allows landowners to propose compatible land use of their choice: eg. a forest, a park, a lake, a wetland, community gardens, gardening classes or garden plots etc. as long as it is regenerative, defined as the [17 UN sustainable development goals](#)³.

Well supported by the council and the community, this simple regenerative land zoning has the potential to create a network of green parks and corridors. Wānaka will be known for its beautiful large natural areas connected by tracks, full of trees and birds. The community will enjoy connection and local food. This is great [kaitiakitanga](#)⁴ / guardianship and [manaakitanga](#)⁵ / hospitality, care.

All it requires a culture shift, philanthropy, and to redefine what place nature hold in our collective imagination. It starts within each of us.

Excellent new developments rules

For years, we have been recommending, via submissions and direct conversations with council staff and councillors, to improve the environmental and community design of subdivisions:

- Keeping existing trees during construction as much as possible. It will take 30 years for any planting to become a mature tree again.
- Creating a compulsory large public reserve with planting of a forest zone for birdlife. Sections are too small to hold hedges and trees large enough for wildlife.
- All new streets and access to have separate connected bike-lanes and separate footpaths
- All streets and dead ends to be connected with at least foot access to adjacent streets
- A viewpoint to be preserved for public access.

³ <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

⁴ <https://www.kaitiakitanga.org/>

⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oQ2vXEMYM0A>

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- All rainwater to be slowed down with planted drains (and roof rainwater) and other features in sustainable subdivisions frameworks...

I believe we should do the best (not the minimum) for the environment and future generations when building new subdivision and housing. It is also more thrilling and beautiful. It requires the same mind-shift in values as the new land zoning proposal, from optimising the financial gain to prioritising nature and wellbeing.

What would a regenerative land look like?

There are already many rural lifestyle properties now on the perimeter of the urban zone which have invested heavily in tree planting, incredible gardens and open green spaces. It has taken at least 10 years of allowing pastured land to lie fallow to regenerate the soil which had previously been grazed and constantly treated with poisons and fertilisers. These properties are now assets which the Council can cooperate with to meet the sustainable growing needs of the community. They are ripe to become clean air lungs for the district, playgrounds for our tamariki, much needed local food supplies and mature places of rest and restoration. These green corridors already provide much needed habitats for wildlife, both above, on and below the ground.



These regenerative landscapes have been created by the love of the landowners and represent a significant financial investment that would take decades to recreate. It has now become critical to preserve, maintain and develop such landscape with the urbanisation that has already crept in. By inviting existing landowners to share these ideas, we can collectively foster biodiversity district wide. Finding a way that preserves and enhances this for future generations is essential. We can no longer afford to continue to destroy our wildlife habitat.

So, let's imagine what we could collectively create:



Community resilience

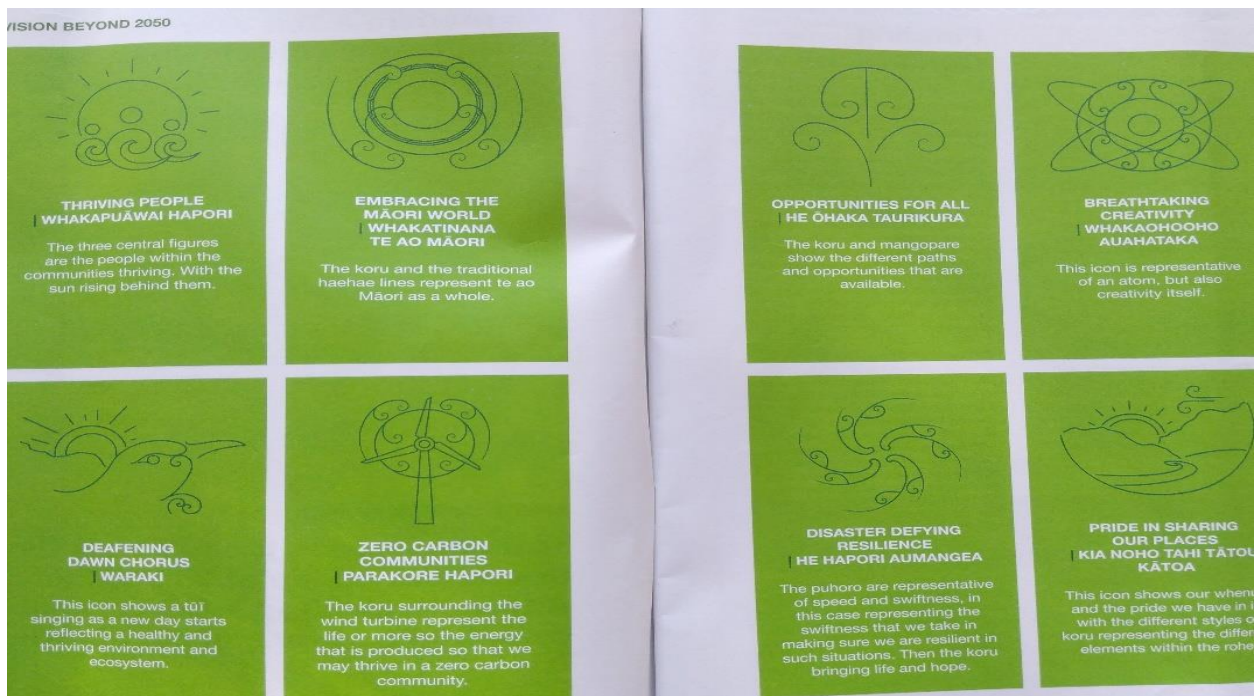


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Who would benefit?

The District Council

Enhancing biodiversity and community realizes each of the QLDC principles of community resilience, connection and wellbeing, bird chorus, zero carbon and pride in sharing, as detailed in the Vision Beyond 2050 document below:



The potential outcomes of the new land-zoning fits within each UN sustainable development 17 Goals, thereby meeting the duty of the local government to care for the people and the planet, and most importantly our future.

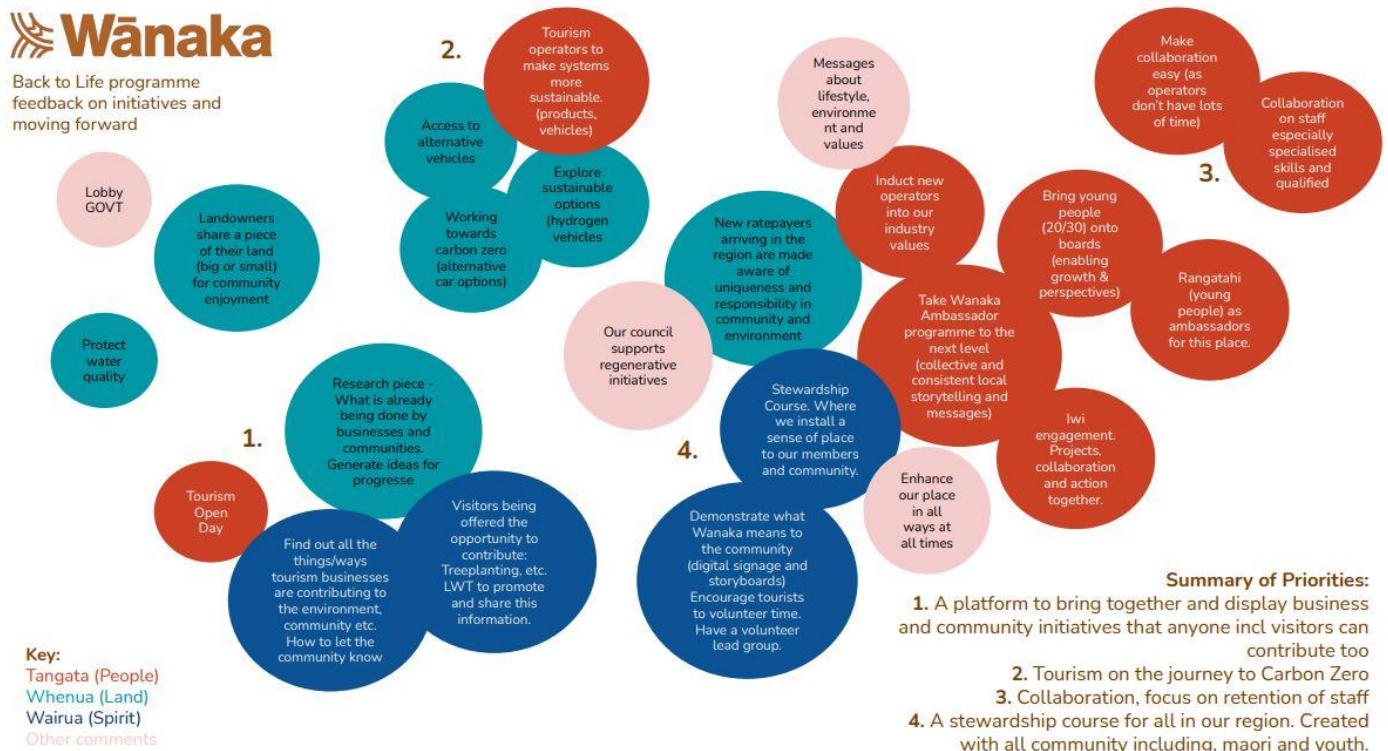
The community

Locals will appreciate additional walking tracks and more beautiful places to explore. They would have access to a variety of option for local food production which would be more affordable, health and incur minimal carbon miles.

Visitors and the tourism sector

From a tourism perspective, this unique network of green connected parks and publicly accessible places would be an additional attraction for visitors while creating more space to spread the crowds.

It diversifies the economy, enabling staff reallocation to build bike tracks or planting trees for example and it fulfils the tourism sector commitment to manaakitanga and education, environment regeneration and community contribution.



How the does idea progress?

I have been searching for similar initiatives in New Zealand and it appears that our district has a lot of catching up to do to acknowledge and live up to the crisis we are facing. A few examples worth checking out are the shared housing land use criteria in Golden and Tasman Bay and the wonderful initiatives that Wellington district has in place for green spaces and land use.

Here in Wānaka, we already have four landowners who are currently interested in participating.

This concept has been presented to:

- 100+ participants at the WAO Summit in Wānaka October 2021
- Wānaka Community Board, November 2021

In 2021, we shared this project with:

- Tim Barke Lake Wānaka Tourism General Manager
- Julie Perry WAI secretary
- Diana Manson QLDC Park ranger
- Niamh Shaw QLDC Councillor
- Bill Nicholl from QLDC resilience
- Alyson Hutton and Amy Bowbyes, from QLDC Planning
- Lauren Maginley and Olivia Bonifant from WAO

All agree that it is a great idea with excellent potential but are not in a position to make it happen.

Next steps: meeting the QLDC Planning team

To finish

This idea is simple, it does require change but change we must if we are to tackle the climate and biodiversity crisis. Waiting means more destruction. Please take a moment to reflect and think what **you** can do, what is in **your power** to support and make the idea progress.

I invite all of you to contemplate the above, add and enhance what has been proposed but more importantly use your influence and positions to make this happen. Of course, if someone finds a better idea, let's implement it, but to this day, it hasn't happened, we are still destroying nature with irremediable consequences.

There is now a [Facebook Group](#) to discuss, expand and record progress.

*It's not for me, it's for the trees, for nature, for future generations. We can do it if we choose to. Now.
Thank you for your attention and support.*

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