Kia ora!

We marvel at Mt. Roskill, a home to more than 188 ethnicities – the centre of the world, we are connected to almost all the nations of the earth. The uniqueness of this region is amazing, the fusion of different cultures, food, creativity and the various talents cannot be overemphasized.

I have had the privileged to meet most of the community leaders in this region who are dedicated to serve their members with no expectations. Despite the efforts and well meaning interventions the issues facing Pacific and multi ethnic communities continues to persist. Our community groups were formed to address these issues and challenges and yet there is no significant impact. We have learnt that, with proper leadership, people can do things for themselves, define their own problems and can tackle them through partnership. They have the potential to rise from the place “what is the government doing” to a place of “what can we do together”. We have a diverse range of needs that requires different range of services at the local level.

Therefore coming together will produce a shared influence and responsibility in creating local solutions. This will create a platform for local services to be tailored to meet the identified needs as we have common needs, maximize the resources and reduce costs.

This lead to the birth of Growing Confident Communities Together movement, based on premise—how can we work together as one community to address the issues and challenges that are facing us. We know that within each one of us there lies the strength, expertise and knowledge of our issues as we are already providing the solutions within our communities.

Communities coming together creates a powerful synergy that will enable us to achieve more and come up with innovative ways to solve our issues. We did not want to add more work but use the existing structures. The initiative looked into unmet needs within different community groups, including gaps in existing problem service. We are cautious not to duplicate services for the same population or target group; however, we look at ways the project will enhance and complement existing services or explore the feasibility of establishing new services where gaps are demonstrated to exist.

Join us then in this journey of Growing Confident Communities Together, which will be build over time. This partnership will help us create localized solutions that are unique to us. Our coming together is geared towards creating a future for our children; fully utilizing our resources will provide additional impetus.

Naku noa I runga I nga mihi

Agnes Granada
Trust Manager
Mt. Roskill is taken!

If we do not take Mt. Roskill then who will and when? This was the theme that drove the Growing Confident Communities Together Forum held on 5 November, 2011 at Mt. Roskill Youth Zone. There has been too much time spent on community consultation and people now want to see recommendations implemented.

Feedback from the forum has suggested that an absence of unity contributes to a lack of concrete ways to address issues within the region. A major concern is the belief that there is no unity and that people do not care for each other. The Maori principle of Whakatangata emphasises the need to build a relationship first before starting to work together.

Mt. Roskill rates highly in the New Zealand Index of Deprivation, has a large youth population and many low income families. It therefore faces youth challenges and high poverty levels. Other issues include unemployment and underemployment, youth crime and gangs, family disintegration, substance abuse, crime and insecurity, elderly inactivity and isolation, health, lack of local transport and inadequate housing.

The initiative that involved the business, youth and community groups affirmed the belief that the solutions lie within us. We possess unsurpassed experience and knowledge of our immediate surrounding and needs and this places us in a good position to take action.

The meeting embraced Maori protocol: a karakia led by our own Mt. Roskill Kaumatua, Tame Cassidy; a Mihimih to the Trust Manager, Agnes Granada; and then Pacific prayer led by Reverend Lasaro from First Fijian Assembly of God.

Participants joined in singing the waiata Nga Iwi e and later Te Aroha. Our Lunch – Halal Hangi was blessed by Imam Patel from Masjid e Umar Mosque (Mt. Roskill Islamic Trust). This all captured the community spirit, food, recognition, sense of belonging and acceptance. The forum participants sealed their unity by taking home a Migrant and Refugee plant which also marked the beginning of a long term relationship and commitment.

All the participants had the responsibility to care and nurture the plant until the next forum where they will bring back their plants. They were reminded that the plant is like a seed that will grow for all to see and seen as an investment in our children’s future.

We believe that true development in Mt. Roskill lies in locally initiated projects that embody cultural, social and economy because we know our needs. True development mobilises and empowers people and nurturing long term relationship is central to our success. We are uniting for Mt. Roskill and taking action now!

The following pages of the newsletter are dedicated to the output of the first forum. They give an overview of the issues and challenges common to Pacific and multi-ethnic groups and some of the locally based solutions.
Unemployment and underemployment

It was unanimously agreed that this issue is the most important one of all and if it is solved most of other issues will be solved. People who are not engaged in economic contribution tend to experience financial stress, different forms of addiction or become involved in crime.

The slow reaction effect shows a possible consequence of Mt. Roskill experiencing a persistently high rate of long term unemployment. Unemployment adversely affects the skills and employability of people. The longer people remain unemployed, the less attractive they become to a potential employer.

Technical and social skills become eroded when the incentives to prolong the search for work are reduced, leading to an increase in structural unemployment. Those declared redundant leads to a mismatch between their skills and the requirements of the new opportunities.

The possible solutions are:
1. Relevant and timely job search programmes to meet market labour demands
2. Technical and business training and upskilling
3. Appropriate match of skills and talents with employment to avoid under utilization.

The education sector is also a major concern due to the existence of many substandard education providers. There is a need for the government to intervene in regulating those education providers who are not providing quality education.

In addition, it was agreed that the education process should provide work experience to students in order to ease their entry into work. The academic work required should incorporate the application of business principles and their relevance to the current business landscape.

In New Zealand 87% of employers are SMEs and employ no more than 20 staff, hence the need for more employment options. Community enterprise will create jobs for disadvantaged and transition phase people before they enter the open labour market. This call for development of entrepreneurial capacity would be supported by kick start seed funding loans from microenterprises. Potential entrepreneurs should also be provided with training in "real world" business situations.

Youth Related Issues

Mt. Roskill has a high youth population and so faces many youth related issues as well as a demand for youth space such as the Mt. Roskill Youth Zone. During the brainstorming session it was decided that what is being done now is not working and that it was clear that although there are service providers doing a good job in the community, there were gaps that existed.

The challenges facing our youth are education and career pathways. They have lost touch with the workforce system and have been unable to acquire necessary job skills. This leads to unemployment and lack of self sufficiency.

The major concern is that programmes offered are mainly activity based with no clear purpose. There is a need to focus on the cause of the youth as opposed to project/programmes on a per funding basis. This will provide clear pathways for youth.

It was recommended that there should be collaboration between schools, community, nonprofit and government agencies to achieve common goals in education, mentoring, social issues, family resourcing and pathways through school into employment.

Youth needs to be connected to their families because this gives them grounding and a sense of identity and belonging.
Community Disconnectedness

Isolation and disconnectedness are the major challenges of our time. Community disconnectedness cannot be over-emphasized because for the community to work together there has to be a unity and a sense of belonging.

The current problem is that current community centres have been converted into hireage venues thus losing their reason for existence. Sustainability has overtaken community space and relation, and some centres are perceived as very unfriendly.

This issue has been a common theme in all the consultations undertaken within Mt. Roskill. The Forum participants felt that the community centres need to be converted into neighbourhood centres, places which would function as drop-in centres, meeting places and places where people can go to get information.

The neighbourhood centre is expected to serve three important functions in community:

- **Services**: A wide range to meet local needs, providing community's multiple needs.
- **Space**: An accessible, neutral place for local residents.
- **Synergy**: A critical mass of services which improve access and delivery to residents, and which create the opportunity to strengthen social networks.

Community disconnectedness group.

Family Disintegration

Social deprivation in Mt. Roskill has led to an increase in crime, feelings of insecurity and youth issues. This has created social dislocation issues, such as like family disintegration. One of the major issues raised at the Forum was the fact that legislation is not family oriented and immigration policies drive families apart. Most of the refugee families are not reunited with their close family members and so they lose the connectedness that gives them their very sense of identity.

Lack of community connectedness was agreed to be the major cause of family disintegration; there is no unity within Mt. Roskill. The area as a society has been subjected to many modifications that have adversely affected its capacity for self-regulation, and hence adaptation. The existence of different nationalities is a challenge to unity.

It was noted that the tide of family breakdown (dysfunction, dissolution and fatherless families) can be changed by improving family stability at key life stages.

Parenting education programmes are seen as solutions that could be extremely effective. Family-centered policies should also be at the heart of government. Families depend on government for services such as education, health, social services, and law and order. In almost everything that government does, some policies can help families but some policies may also neglect or harm. There was a need to think beyond anti-social behavior.

Dealing with family dysfunction requires an integrated and wide-reaching effort which is not merely focused on the small percentage of deeply problematic families whose children receive help.

“Let us create an integrated global community”

Puru Gopal contributing to group discussion.
Crime and Insecurity

Although there are multiple causes of crime and insecurity, lack of employment is the major factor. This has resulted in high levels of youth and street crime. It was agreed that relevant institutions have a shared responsibility to work together to create a safer community. An integrated and partnership approach needs to be developed rather than relying on courts, police and correctional institutions. There needs to be a long term plan that is responsive to the immediate needs of Mt. Roskill and not just limited to criminal justice responses.

In order to reduce delinquency, youth must be diverted to positive action and break cycle of violence in their homes. There needs to be an awareness and a means of resolving conflicts in non-violent ways.

Unemployment is the underlying causal relationship. The participants felt that crime is a symptom of a society in distress and the root cause is unemployment. It causes poverty, disconnection from society, and a lack of positive ways to spend one’s time. Though addiction and gambling present themselves in many ways it is important to address the root cause.

Addiction and Gambling

Addiction and gambling often present with a range of complex and interrelated problems. These include potentially serious alcohol and drug problems, unemployment, mental health problems, and issues related to marital and family breakdown.

Casinos, lotteries and online gambling have made betting and games of chance more available to the public than ever before.

There needs to be the development of and application of responsible policy relating to gambling. This will help reduce access to gambling which will reduce the rates of gambling and increase awareness of the problems associated with gambling addiction.

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Family and support networks are necessary for people who need help or for family members with related gambling behaviour. Referrals and collaboration are seen as the way forward as an effective and targeted response. Effective prevention strategies are seen as a solution by increasing awareness that will generate social change in attitudes and prevent development of antisocial behaviour.

Social, recreational and community activities and places for these activities need to be accessible and free. The creation of employment opportunities will allow meaningful economic engagement.
A high percentage of the population within Mt. Roskill is elderly as seen by the demand for alternative transport as they are the big users of taxi. What is not working are the rest homes and family support. Service providers are also inadequate. There is also inadequate support at home and the relevant agencies Some of the solutions suggested at the Forum given was that the government to enforce laws and regulation and that there be a thorough audit of the agencies to improve their quality of service.

Another suggestion was that the government should put in place control mechanisms to monitor agency staff at rest homes. Families should also take more responsibility for looking after the elderly; for example, more frequent home visitation. Some of the elderly feel frightened and isolated, trapped and worthless.

Awareness – educating people about elder abuse, examine families’ ability to provide long term, in-home care, and ensure that they understand and can meet the demands, responsibility and costs involved. Support services and professional available too caregivers. Availability of respite care as an alternative source of care.

Family support – to increase social contact and support for families who have with dependent older adults and who use caregivers. Employers to help caregiving families.

Counseling – cope with personal and family problems that contribute to abuse.

Social circle – prevent tensions from reaching unmanageable levels.

Buddy system with a friend outside home.

Community groups to become more involved in service programmes for the elderly.

The issue of transport involved two concerns: first, the lack of access to services due to immobility within the region; and second, linking Mt. Roskill to the airport and its neighbouring areas. Mobility within the region is impaired by lack of local transportation. The elderly are big users of taxis which is an expensive mode of transport.

The most affected are women with children who would like to access services within the region. There is a lack of bus routes to the interior of Mt. Roskill. You have to pay high fares if you opt for public transport and it takes time to get to destinations because you have to take more than one bus. It was suggested that we can learn from transport models in countries such as Australia. In addition, alternative transport options need to be introduced, such as smaller buses, train facilities and a tram system. The Mt. Roskill route is not served well and there is a long commuting between residences and workplaces. It also increases isolation especially among the elderly people.

Although it was noted that low ridership outside peak hours may be financially unstable for the big companies, it was seen as a good opportunity for entrepreneurship. It was emphasised that local transport alternatives need to be introduced.

Given the highly constrained funding situation we face, we must think creatively about strategies for improving transportation. We need to explore the potential of a variety of relatively small measures taken together, may contribute to the alleviation of our larger problems.

Instead of just finding reasons not to do things, let’s find reasons to do them.
**Breakfast meetings**

Breakfast meetings were held on 9 and 16 December 2011 to give feedback on the Growing Confident Communities Together Forum that was held at Mt. Roskill Youth Zone on 5 November 2011. They were held for two purposes:

1. First, to give feedback to the community leaders and to discuss the way forward; second, to maintain momentum and increase the motivation of the participants.

Due to ever-increasing pressures on people’s time the short length of these meetings was highly appreciated, and they were also helpful to some community members who value face-to-face meeting.

The different members who attended the meetings constituted a small group but their ripple effect will enhance and strengthen the relationship of different members and increase trust and openness.

The key points raised were:

- **1. How are we going to ensure that the feedback from the Forum is channeled into other forums or networks that exists within the area?** This will ensure that more work is achieved and feedback is translated into action.

2. **Way forward—do we form a working group?**

Despite funding cuts that loomed large over the community activities of different organisations it was agreed that it was time to take action within Mt. Roskill. We are joining hands to establish long term solutions and through these actions we show that we care and we can act together. It is our duty to make a serious commitment and avoid applying stop-gap. We must therefore think creatively about strategies.

The group agreed on the need to explore the potential of a variety of small measures that, taken together, may contribute to solving larger problems. This includes working together and pooling resources and considering ideas that have the potential to make even a marginal social and economic improvement.

There were suggestions of using successful models that can be used in our local context. This idea was discussed at length and possible options to be deliberated within the wider group.

**IMPORTANT NOTICE**

Let us know of your community events and we will add it to our “community calendar”

What would you like to see in future issues of *Growing Confident Communities Together*? Help us meet your needs. Email your suggestions or requests to jane.migrantaction@xtra.co.nz
Marvel@ Roskill – Do not miss our next edition where we get up close and candid with some of our community leaders in our exclusive interviews

List of community groups who attended the 5 November 2011 forum

1. Al Nejashi Trust
2. ARMS
3. Auckland Council
4. Auckland First Fijian Church
5. Auckland Refugee Coalition
6. Auckland Sudanese
7. Auckland United Youth
8. Auckland Youth Federation Inc.
9. Breastscreen Auckland
10. CAB Language Link
11. Te manawanni
12. Eritrean Community
13. Ethiopian Youth Group
14. Ethiopian Youth Network
15. FFAOG Church
16. I Have A Dream
17. Ugandan Community
18. Tongan Community
19. Gateway Community Trust
20. Sukhmani Charitable Trust
21. Sri Lankan Society of NZ
22. Somali United
23. Mt. Roskill Network
24. Probasse Bengalee Association of NZ
25. ONKOD Somali Youth
26. Ghana community
27. NZ Mangalorean
28. Muth Tamil Sangam
29. Mt. Roskill Business Network
30. Mt. Roskill Tongan Trust
31. Mt. Roskill Islamic Trust
32. MESST
33. Kenyan Community in NZ
34. Immigranz Ltd

Kai for community spirit

“In every community, there is work to be done. In every nation, there are wounds to heal. In every heart, there is power to do it.”

- Marianne Williamson

“Average people and the average community can change the world. You can do it just based on common sense, determination, persistence and patience.”

- Lois Gibbs

“For a community to be whole and healthy, it must be based on people’s love and concern for each other.”

- Millard Fuller

“What do we live for, if it is not to make life less difficult for each other.”

- George Eliot

“We can begin by doing small things at the local level. That is how change takes place in living systems, not from above but from within, from many local actions occurring simultaneously.”

- Grace Lee Boggs

“It’s impossible for people to change alone. We need to join with others who will push us in our thinking and challenge us to do things we didn’t believe ourselves capable of.”

- Frances Moore Lappe

“Teaching kids how to feed themselves and how to live in a community responsibly is the centre of an education.”

- Alive Waters