



## Massey and the role of local government in ‘making it matter’.

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**Initiative: Massey Matters**

**Theme: Working Together in Place**

**Local Councils are often part of community-led development initiatives but it is still uncommon to find a Council that has committed to a ten year period of support for a community-based project. This, however, has been the case with Waitakere City Council (now part of Auckland Council) in Massey. The journey together has not been without a few bumps along the way and looking back helps to cast enough light over the path taken so far to inform what might come next.**

'Massey Matters' began in mid 2006, when fifty community leaders were interviewed to identify Massey's strengths and assets and local aspirations for the future. The result was Waitakere City Council agreeing to fund the establishment of a ten year project to improve quality of life in Massey. Quickly coined Massey Matters, things got started not by creating a new organisation or building, but by launching an umbrella brand that catalysed and convened a diverse range of innovative and collaborative actions.

Taking the lead from community ideas and passions, Council resourced a part time 'strategic broker' to:

- Facilitate ongoing community planning forums that in turn created the framework and work programme for Massey Matters;
- Help initiate Te Raa Mokopuna Day (a celebration of Massey's young people);
- Create a local Massey Community Projects fund to help support and seed locally led action for change;
- Explore a sustainable neighbourhood initiative in West Harbour, working alongside the local primary school; and
- Convene an internal Council integration forum that coordinated Council led activity and investment in Massey.

So, although Massey Matters was initiated by Waitakere City Council, it was developed through the interests of local residents, community groups, schools, churches, businesses and central

government talking and working together with Council. The intent was to help make Massey an even better place to live in a community driven way. Massey Matters began working in 'organic' and collaborative ways, with next steps often determined in response to community and organisational energy and opportunity, rather than predetermined Council timelines and expectations. While clearly the leader, Council was trying to work in a very different ways to help engage and empower local people and organisations for the long term community change journey ahead. In a practical sense, this meant:

- Having high level objectives approved by Council with permission to 'work out' the best ways of achieving them in an iterative way;
- Exploring new models of political participation and reporting;
- Adopting action-reflection approaches alongside traditional Council strategic planning conventions; and
- Changing internal Council systems, such as by enabling funding of individuals and not just organisations.

Working differently also meant Waitakere City Council exploring how to effectively and coherently wear multiple hats – as leader/initiator, a funder, a service provider, an investor, a governor and advocate, an enabler, an employer AND a partner in Massey Matters. Juggling these multiple roles has at times been a tricky balancing act and is an ongoing learning journey. And, while some have appreciated the 'bottom up' capacity building approach of Massey Matters, for others it hasn't always been bottom up enough!

In aiming to broker and lead new relationships to support Massey Matters, for example, Council was sometimes perceived as dominating and controlling. Even providing practical administrative support meant Massey Matters had to first fit with Council's highly structured systems for example. These don't always easily allow for the organic nature of community-led development. And for the local Massey Community Board, there was some initial confusion about the relative leadership roles and decision making of Massey Matters compared to the Board. What does stand out however, is Council's early and long term commitment of significant community-development funding to Massey over a ten year - rather than the traditional three year pilot funding period. As research by Tamarack Institute (2003) shows, the phases of a local effort can take four to ten years to unfold, and even then it will continue to evolve. Being there for the long haul has been seen as a definite display of commitment and faith by Council in the Massey community as the journey of Massey Matters unfolds. It has directly enabled:

- Time for the initiative to establish, build local capacity and leadership and find its way forward;
- Time for potential co-investors in Massey to work out how they could support the Massey Matters vision and new collaborative action;
- Confidence that local government was here for the 'long haul' – which in turn gave confidence to local people and also other potential funders;
- Time and permission to take risks, try new things and really learn from what is and isn't working; and
- An appropriate legal and governance structure to emerge over time.

These have proven to be pivotal contributing factors to Massey Matters' achievements so far because they have helped create a secure space in which the Massey communities could, over time, step into and make their own. In this way, Council has helped to grow and catalyse community capacity, establishing a framework for wider community leadership and action as well as increasing community ownership of the project into the future.

With both Council and community working together in Massey the strengths of each have been maximised through synergies that could not happen without this long term partnership. Overall, Council's strong guidance and brokering role alongside local leadership as well as its demonstrated faith in local people over a ten year period has supported Massey Matters to become not only a project *for* Massey but a project *of* Massey. Massey Matters adds positively to life in Massey for residents and promotes a positive profile of Massey to others. Both of these aspects of Massey Matters are linked to an increased connection amongst organisations and individuals living and working in Massey as well as an improved collective knowledge about what is happening and what is needed in Massey.

And, in the process, Massey is growing together and becoming a more resilient community.

**Intent:** Working differently together in place in a community driven, Council supported way to catalyse and convene a diverse range of innovative and collaborative local actions so Massey became an even better place to live.

**Key Learnings:**

- It takes ten years. Councils are in a pivotal position to walk alongside a place and its people to broker, link and endorse community-led development as well as to underwrite a security of resourcing and provide legal and administrative services over a longer period of time.
- Councils and Council workers need to know when to enable, broker and lead and to be able to be all these things at different times (and sometimes at the same time!). Recognise that it can be tricky!
- Working *with* communities AND Council systems doesn't have to mean ineffective compromise. Instead, ensuring that there is always a two way street in terms of talking and listening is incredibly important when, inevitably, things get messy. And it really helps to have champions in strategic places both within Council and in the community.

**Key Outcomes:**

A higher profile of Massey, the vision of Massey Matters and committed brokering from Council led to new local and central government initiatives being based in Massey. These include:

- Vector power box painting, School Travel Plan cluster in Massey West;
- Ministry of Social Development School-Community Liaison funding for West Harbour School;
- planning for development of the Westgate pedestrian bridge across the motorway linking Massey East and West;
- planting of rain gardens in West Harbour to help address stormwater issues; and
- securing council funding for the establishment of a community hub in West Harbour.
- DIA funding for an Enterprising Communities Coordinator to support community economic development in Massey.

**Contact details:**

Sam Farquhar  
Project Coordinator - Massey Matters  
Community Development and Partnerships  
Ph 09 832 0431 | Mobile 021826314 |  
396 Don Buck Road | Po Box84 152, Westgate 0657  
Sam.Farquhar@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz

**Reference:**

[http://tamarackcommunity.ca/downloads/tools/primer\\_e.pdf](http://tamarackcommunity.ca/downloads/tools/primer_e.pdf)

Story by Megan Courtney and Denise Bijoux.

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