

Vision 2025 - Strategies for Whanganui's Economic Development

Adrian Dixon, Wanganui & Partners Manager, spoke at the first UCOL Business lunch time Forum on 'Strategies for Whanganui's Economic Development - Vision 2025.' He used terms describing Wanganui as "leading edge," "not following the pack," "magnetic place of abundance and appeal" and describing Vision 2025 as "dynamic, aspirational stuff." He said the Wanganui was "resounding with community spirit" with its people "pulling in the same direction."

He then outlined some of the approaches which they are implementing. They include

- Setting up a capital market, providing start-ups with access to innovative capital
- Working with partners such as UCOL, training institutes, schools and iwi
- Developing a digital directory of IT services available in Wanganui
- Working on an innovation quarter
- Building a Business Mentor programme

- Preparing proactive business proposals to encourage companies to establish branches or to relocate here

- Revitalising a business friendly approach within Council with the aim of being "the best council in New Zealand to deal with."

- Checking out a possible international advisory board with the assistance of other public organisations such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

- Telling Wanganui's stories in media such as the NZ Herald and the National Business Review, profiling current successful local businesses.

Adrian also referred to demographic changes impacting not only on Wanganui, but also much of the world, especially an ageing population. He suggested that it should be seen as an economic and social opportunity. With new technology and improving medical services, living in your own home for longer, is becoming much more likely.

This will lead to refits of homes, the downsizing of food packaging, the provision of better



Adrian Dixon at the UCOL Business Forum

transport and delivery services and arthritic friendly equipment. With the maturing of many Kiwi Saver accounts, retired people will have greater access to disposable income.

He referred to a regional growth strategy which is due to be released in June. This will help identify opportunities to use the land around Wanganui more effectively, in his view. Adrian suggested that there were oppor-

tunities in goat farming, manuka plantings leading to honey production

and the development of more unusual crops for export.