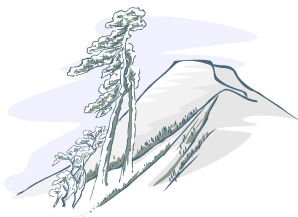


# Mount Somers District COMMUNITY PLAN



*"Magic Mount Somers"*

February 2003

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# Greetings from the Mayor of the Ashburton District



This plan presents the beginning of a new and exciting era in the history of Mount Somers.

It is a time to address issues which have presented problems in the past and put in place plans which will help in the future.

The Ashburton District Council sees the Mount Somers district as strategic to its overall development. The area is the gateway to our most beautiful scenery and precious natural resources and its position on either side of the main inland route is important to the district's fast growing tourism and hospitality industries.

However, Mount Somers continues also to be an important centre for our rural families. Council is aware of the need to address the upgrading of a number of community facilities which will help keep our rural population stable.

Mount Somers is important to Ashburton's future. It is an integral part of the economic development plans for the whole district. I commend this initiative by the community and give my assurance that the District Council will help wherever possible in turning these plans to reality.

MURRAY ANDERSON  
Mayor

## Greetings from the Mount Somers District Strategic Planning Subcommittee

The adoption of a Strategic Plan will give the citizens of Mount Somers village and district the opportunity to be involved in the growth and development of their community and allow it to move ahead to meet the challenges of the future.

This plan is the outcome of a public forum and extensive consultation and represents the collective ideas and hopes of Mount Somers residents. Our district can look forward with confidence to a bright and prosperous future. It is now very important that a new Citizens Association takes the lead and ensures that the strategies in this plan come about.

DAVE HUGHES  
Chairman – Strategic Planning Subcommittee

# Mount Somers District

## – A Pen Sketch

Mount Somers is perfectly placed to be the gateway to the Mid Canterbury High Country – where rivers and plains meet lakes and mountains.

Geographically Mount Somers village and environs is situated on the upper Mid Canterbury plains. The district is bounded in the south by Surrey Hills, to the west by the Upper Rangitata River and the Mount Somers mountain (1,600 metres) – the mountain from which the district takes its name and which dominates the skyline.

The township itself is bordered to the east by State Highway 72. The roads from this point directly link to the west through the gorge, to the east to Ashburton (the region's major centre) and north and south via a pleasant scenic highway.

The development of Mount Somers began in 1856, firstly with the taking up of land and development of large sheep runs followed soon after with the discovery of coal and limestone. A tramway was developed to the mines and in 1882 this was connected to the main trunk line by the Mount Somers train line to Tinwald. Coal and limestone are still quarried today along with silica sand and kaolin clay.

The township quickly evolved as a service town for farmers, miners, shearers, transport operators, supporting blacksmiths, supply stores, accommodation and many community facilities.

As agriculture diversified, the area continued to prosper as farming options widened. Cattle, deer, cropping and more recently dairying all played their part. Nowadays, limeworks in the area are hard pressed to supply the increased demand for crushed lime to the diverse farms of the Mid Canterbury district.

The increase of farming profitability will hinge on water resources, and the harvest of water will no doubt play a part in the future of Mount Somers district.

However, as in most other rural areas in New Zealand, transport in the region has slowly changed the way of life in the Mount Somers area. Farmers and townsfolk alike, travel to larger towns to shop and carry out their business, and Mount Somers has joined the endless list of small rural communities to lose some of their facilities.

However, a new and exciting chapter in the community's history is evolving. Mount Somers is perfectly placed to benefit from the world wide emergence of eco and adventure tourism. At the very gateway to Mid Canterbury's stunning lakes and mountains, the district offers potential as access to the unspoiled hinterland. Already, some significant historic trails and walkways have been developed and a regular Mineral to Arts festival is well established on the event tourism calendar. As well, the major scenic route to points south runs through the district. Significant growth in the hospitality industry has already expanded employment opportunities and there is considerable potential for further development.

With these factors in mind, the time seems right to evaluate what Mount Somers has now, look at possibilities for the future and move toward some well constructed goals.

# The First Step

## – A Community Forum



On 10 November, 2002, a day long community forum was organised by a sub-committee of the Mount Somers District Citizens group. This non-constituted group has been in existence for more than 40 years and whilst having gone through periods of recess, was keen to have a number of issues addressed.

The group had already done a lot of work compiling a list of maintenance projects for the township. These matters included street lighting, stormwater discharge, redesigning of the Patton Street intersection, building preservation and signage requirements.

The issues were well documented and will become part of the community plan through the channel of District Council liaison. It was obvious that this community group was the most appropriate collective to host the forum. More than 30 community representatives and interested individuals attended.

### Forum Leaders

- Ashburton District Council Corporate Services Manager, John Rollinson (Chair)
- District Councillor, Beverley Tasker
- District Councillor, Ken Lowe
- District Council Secretary, Phillipa Clark
- Community Planner, Susan Thomas
- Members of the Mount Somers District Citizens Group

### The First Step

Representatives of the Foothills Promotions Association and community attendees –

D Hughes, R Schikker, R Huggins, R Wilson, D Syme, C Cassidy, B Kerr, I Beach, R McKay, L Moodie, L Brown, V Boa, A Boa, V Phillips, P Reveley, R Kollar, J Acland, M Acland, B Humm, J Syme, C Mehrrens, M Gifkins, R Stanley, R Spencer, R McClimont, L McClimont, D Phillips, M Reveley, D Millichamp, W Jowett, J Quaipe, L Huggins, R Joseph.

**Apologies** Mayor M Anderson and J Syme.

# Synopsis of the Community Forum

## Mount Somers Strengths

- Gateway to adventure tourism – rivers, mountains and lakes. Million dollar views.
- Community has a significant history.
- Natural resources – coal, lime, sand.
- Unique geological formations.
- Strategically positioned within an hour and a half from major business, health, educational and cultural centres and air and sea ports.
- Peaceful and quiet.
- Good place to live with a real sense of community.
- Employment opportunities in agriculture, mining and tourism.
- Excellent facilities for family holidaying, accommodation options, two golf courses, walkways, fishing, sailing and ski fields close at hand.
- Well placed on the scenic route to major tourist centres further south.
- Good community facilities - hall, tavern, internationally acclaimed restaurant, domain, sports fields, school, playcentre and museum.
- Great affinity with the mountain. Important focus for the community.

## Mount Somers Weaknesses

The forum felt the **major weakness** in the Mount Somers District was the lack of township planning. This extended into most areas of community development.

- Tree planting and general beautification
- Street lighting
- Building code
- Land development eg land locked sections
- Signage – no sense of arrival
- Dated community facilities, no adequate children's playground
- Water issues – both potable and stormwater discharge
- Lack of cohesive marketing of the area
- Lack of communication with rest of district.

## **Mount Somers Threats to Development**

- Beaucratic indifference and red tape from both local and central government, stifling community and enterprise development.
- Lake Hood taking activity away from up-country lakes.
- School bus run to Ashburton College under threat.
- Primary school closure would mean families would move away.
- Village placed just off Highway 72 means loss of visitors.
- Possible lack of water in the future.

**From the strengths and weaknesses and threats to community development, the group then identified five most important areas of opportunity for developing the Mount Somers District. These were:**

### **▪ TOURISM**

This area of development opportunity occurred in all group discussions. The forum groups were not so much interested in high powered tourist projects but to develop knowledge of and access to the natural resources of the region, eg ecological treasures, beautiful lakes, the mountain and walkways etc.

### **▪ WATER ENHANCEMENT**

All five discussion groups saw the enhancement of waterways, particularly the Ashburton River, as a major area of opportunity for the district and the whole Ashburton region. The much needed development would secure agriculture and its associated employment and residency opportunities in the Mount Somers village of the future, as well as recreational tourism opportunities for the wider district.

### **▪ LIAISON WITH THE LOCAL AUTHORITY**

This was also a major area of opportunity for development as identified by all groups. It was felt the Ashburton District Council needed to have a greater commitment to assist in the development of the area. Channels of communication needed to be improved, barriers to enterprise development broken down and an awareness of the need to protect essential local services should be developed.

### **▪ VILLAGE DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

A plan for the development of the Mount Somers village was sought by all the forum groups. It included addressing building codes, improved street planning, development of a village green, better lighting, road safety, water scheme and general tree planting and beautification.

### **▪ IDENTITY AND PROMOTION**

A common theme with all discussion groups was the need for the identity of Mount Somers to be improved. This included a better presented village, good entrance features at all major roads, a large limestone sculpture of a miner or similar to announce the district, a revamped information board with an illustrated history of the district and inventory of all attractions. A more up market museum, visual information story-board of Lord of the Rings. Establish and maintain a website etc. This area of opportunity is linked closely with the work of the Mount Somers Foothills Promotions and Ashburton District Tourism but will be driven by the people of the Mount Somers District.

# A Mission Statement

The forum as one group collectively developed the following Mission Statement:

*“The residents of Mount Somers are committed to maintain and enhance a caring and friendly community, and to welcome and encourage people to share in its unique location and diverse natural resources.”*

## A Catch Phrase

A suggested catch phrase for the district is:

*“Magic Mount Somers”*





# Goal Identification

Taken from the identified areas of development opportunity, the five focuses can now be developed into the following three Goals –

## 1 LOCAL AUTHORITY LIAISON GROUP

The Mount Somers District Citizens Association appeared to be the most logical organisation in the community to take over this role. The focus would be to formalise the group and set up a permanent ongoing line of communication with the Ashburton District Council, the local Member of Parliament and Environment Canterbury.

This group would then become the voice of the community concerning the district's development issues. These issues were identified as town planning, identification and beautification, and the bigger issues of tourism and water systems enhancement.

## 2 VILLAGE PLAN

This plan would evolve under the umbrella of the above organisation in conjunction with a community consultation process. The plan would include solutions for all concerns identified at the forum.

## 3 IDENTITY AND PROMOTION

This focus would improve the identity and promotion of the district, and include the setting up and maintaining of an information website, based around the theme that the Mount Somers District is a great place to live, work and recreate.

Other ideas to be included in this focus were to select a catch phrase for the district, and build an icon on State Highway 72. The road entrances to the district would be upgraded as would the information board and the local museum.

The idea of a district newsletter was also mooted.

## Key Players

A number of organisations in the Mount Somers District, have already been identified as essential participants in the implementation of the strategic plan. However, the people of the village and the wider district hold the key to its success.

As the major stakeholders, the residents must make the decisions and hold the control. They cannot however make the plan a reality without the physical and financial support of local authorities and community funding organisations. Therefore important players will include:

- Ashburton District Council
- Environment Canterbury
- Transit New Zealand
- Ashburton District Tourism
- Ashburton Enterprise Agency
- Community Employment Group
- Mt Somers Foothills Promotions
- Service Clubs
- Ashburton Charitable Trust and other funding agencies

## Mount Somers District Citizens Association

The Mount Somers District Citizens Association will become the voice of the community. The group will become formally constituted, meet regularly and be responsible for a number of key developments. The group will have the ability to apply for, and / or raise funds in its own right for community projects identified in the strategic plan and will monitor the progress of those projects.

The group will have a direct line of communication with the local authority through its local ward members, as well as staff executive members, and will make formal submissions to the Annual Plan.

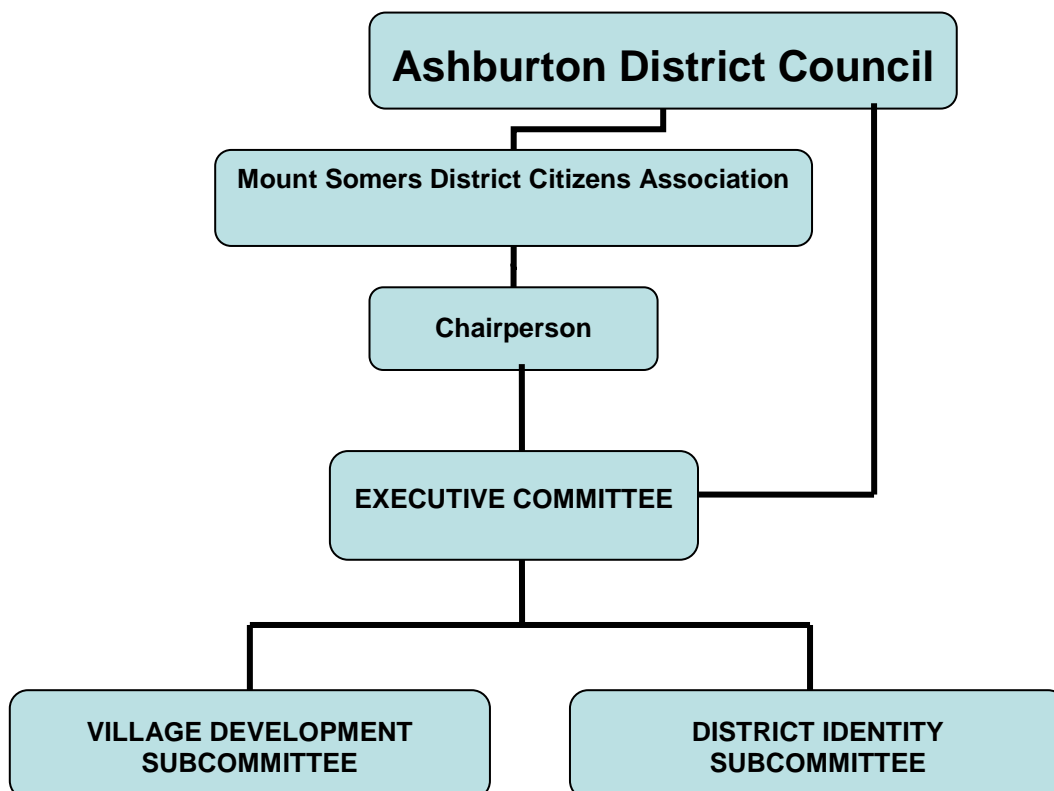
Membership of the Mount Somers District Citizens Association will be open to all adults resident in the designated area stated in the Association's rules. From this membership a chairperson, secretary, treasurer and three executive members will be elected at an annual general meeting. District Councillors may be ex officio members of this executive.

The Executive will meet regularly and report formally to the Ashburton District Council. The Executive will prepare submissions to each District Council annual plan.

Two sub-committees will be convened by an executive member and named:

1. Village Development Committee
2. District Identity Committee

These sub-committees may co-opt community members according to need. The sub-committees will oversee the development of goals 2 and 3. Goal 1 will be managed by the Executive Committee.



## **GOAL 1**

# ***A COMMUNITY WHICH IS ACTIVE AND DEMOCRATIC, OFFERING INPUT AND PARTICIPATION TO ALL RESIDENTS***

### **Strategic Actions**

- To formalise the Citizens Association into a legally constituted community organisation.
- To formalise a liaison with the Ashburton District Council.

### **Tasks**

1. Draw up a set of rules.
2. Define the boundaries of the Mount Somers district.
3. Formalise a relationship with the Ashburton District Council including representation and direct line of communication.
4. Clearly set out rights and responsibilities of both parties.
5. Establish a line of communication with both Transit NZ and Environment Canterbury.

### **Performance Measure**

A set of rules to be drawn up in conjunction with the District Council Solicitor, and application for incorporation to be made no later than June 2003.

### **Desired Outcome**

A community which is well co-ordinated and which is empowered to be part of its own decision making and its own future.

## **GOAL 2**

# ***A VILLAGE WHICH IS ATTRACTIVE TO RESIDENTS AND VISITORS ALIKE, AND ONE WHICH OFFERS HIGH STANDARD COMMUNITY FACILITIES***

### **Strategic Actions**

A village development and landscape plan to be drawn up addressing key issues.

- Section subdivision and access
- Street lighting
- Stormwater discharge
- Building Code
- Kerbs and berms
- Street signage
- Upgrade of recreational areas and playground in the Domain
- Potable water
- Village green
- Public picnic areas
- Public conveniences
- Tree planting and beautification

### **Tasks**

1. Set up a small sub-committee of the Mount Somers Citizens Association to work with appropriate departments of the Ashburton District Council to create a Village development plan to the year 2010.
2. Clearly define which projects will be carried out by the District Council and which will have community ownership.
3. Establish a time line for each agreed project.
4. Prepare a budget for each project in community control and submit to the Committee of the Mount Somers District Citizens Association.
5. Apply to community funding organisations and service clubs for assistance for community based projects.
6. Prepare submissions through the Citizens Association to the District Council's Annual Plan for targeted projects each year.

### **Performance Measures**

1. Develop a time line for the completion of each community initiative.
2. Work with the Ashburton District Council to develop a time line for each Council initiative.

### **Desired Outcome**

A township which is functional, attractive and well maintained.

## **GOAL 3**

# ***A CLEARLY AND ATTRACTIVELY IDENTIFIED DISTRICT, WELL PROMOTED AND RELATIVE TO ITS RESOURCES AND ATTRACTIONS***

### **Strategic Actions**

- Set up and maintain an information website for a) tourists and b) people needing information on lifestyle and employment opportunities.
- Create and build an icon for State Highway 72.
- Choose a community catch phrase to be used on all publicity material.
- Develop entrances to the district on all major roads.
- Upgrade the appearance of information laybys on Scenic Highway and Gorge roads, and provide more information (accommodation and activities etc).
- Develop a community newsletter.

### **Tasks**

1. Hold a competition for an icon design.
2. Apply to arts funding bodies for assistance to commission the icon.
3. Choose the artist.
4. Apply to CEG for a part time salary for person to manage a newsletter and website.
5. Work with Transit NZ and service organisations to plan entrance signs to Mount Somers at each boundary of Highway 72 and highway from Ashburton. Also upgrade information laybys featuring recreational pursuits and directions to lakes, trails and mining sites etc. Projects to be carried out over a number of years.
6. Seek sponsorship from local accommodation businesses etc for space at laybys.

### **Performance Measures**

1. Icon project to be completed by December 2003.
2. Newsletter established by June 2003.
3. Entrance signs and site beautification to be completed by March 2004.
4. Laybys upgraded and further laybys built and completed by June 2005 (one on each highway and at village).
5. Website to be set up by December 2003.

### **Desired Outcome**

A location that is known nationally and internationally and a village which is attractive to live in and visit.