

live

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WIN WIN

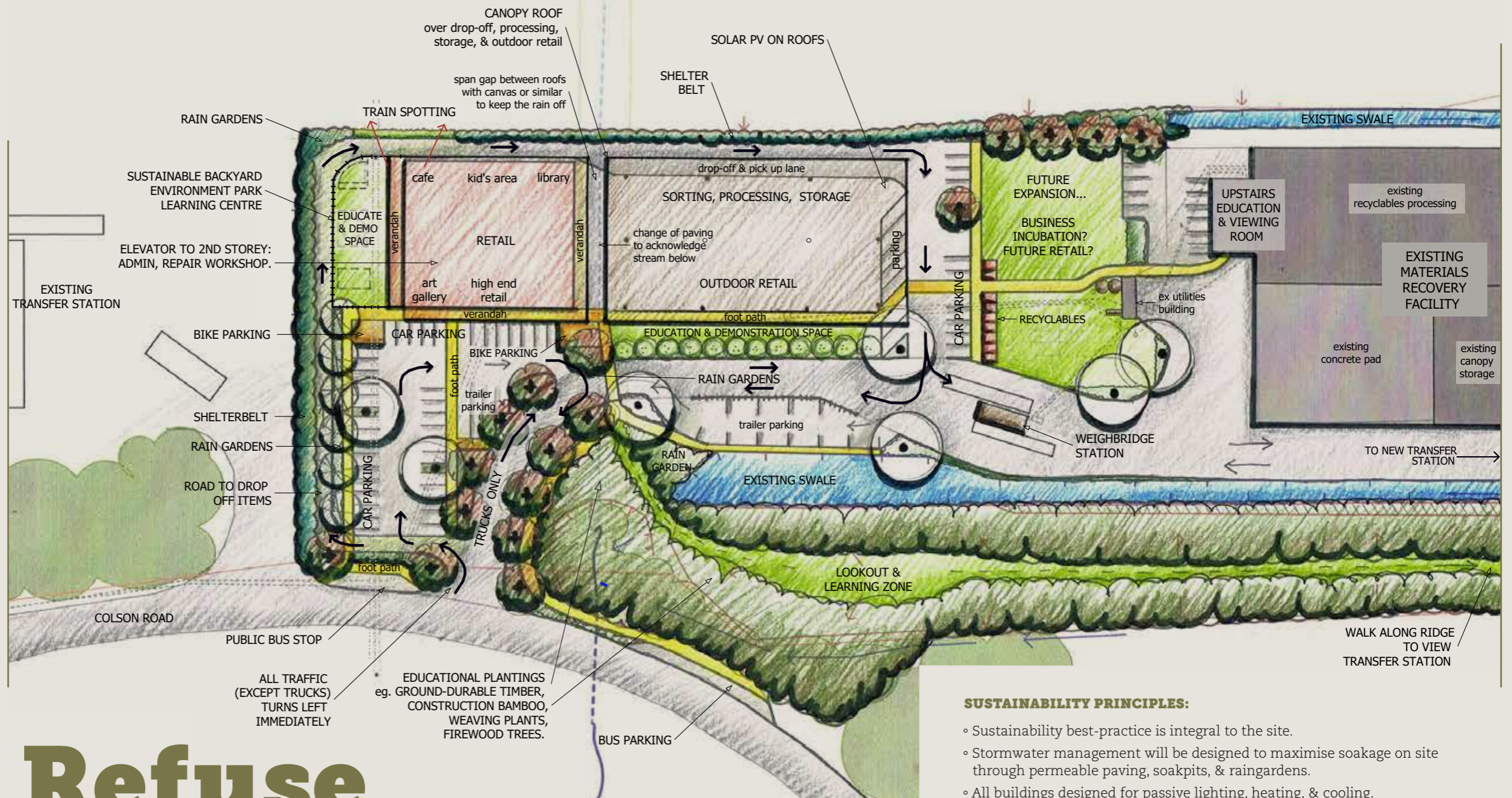
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SUSTAINABILITY PRINCIPLES:

- Sustainability best-practice is integral to the site.
- Stormwater management will be designed to maximise soakage on site through permeable paving, soakpits, & raingardens.
- All buildings designed for passive lighting, heating, & cooling.
- Construction of the site will model zero-waste practices & will heavily utilise pre-used materials.
- The site will generate more energy than it uses, through use of solar PV panels.

From Refuse to Re-Use

WORDS Andy Bassett

A new project underway at New Plymouth District Council is aiming to change the way we think about the way we deal with waste materials. While the NPDC's waste management process already has a strong emphasis on recycling of glass, paper, cardboard and plastic, the Reuse and Recycle Centre (RRC) project will take this much further. Based at the existing Colson Road transfer station, the RRC will contain retail spaces for reusable and upcycled goods, offer education programmes and workshops on ways to reuse, recycle and minimise creation of waste, and may even display art made from recycled and reused materials.

The Reuse and Recycle Centre will work in partnership with community groups to build upon existing reuse and recycling programmes. The prime directive of the whole project is to increase public awareness of the concepts of reuse, recycling and upcycling (transforming of existing

products into something of higher quality than the original), resulting in minimisation of the amount of waste that ends up in landfill. New Plymouth is not the first local authority in New Zealand to take this approach, as NPDC infrastructure manager David Langford explains.

"We looked at what other local authorities are doing and there's a really good example up in Raglan, where they have already created this kind of space, where people can drop off their waste, and community groups find ways of recycling, upcycling and reusing it. From their

experience, eighty per cent of the people who come there are looking to buy things, rather than drop things off, so our ambition is to create something similar." Shopping at your local transfer station may seem like an unusual concept but it merely requires a shift in public attitude. The key difference between what the NPDC is setting out to do, and what has previously been done by other authorities around New Zealand, is that projects such as Raglan's Xtreme Zero Waste have developed over time around their existing solid waste services, whereas the NPDC is setting out with a

strategic plan with the specific aim of building one of these spaces. So, while growing public engagement will take time and education, New Plymouth has the advantage of utilising examples like Raglan as templates. "We're going to benefit from all of their collective experience and, as a result, hopefully we'll build something that's highly successful, both in terms of the community education that we want to provide – changing people's attitude to waste, that it's not something to get rid of, but a resource to be used and add extra value into our economy – and also our on-going goal of diverting waste away from

landfill, so we're not just burying our rubbish. We are aiming to reach a diversion from landfill rate of 30% within 3 years – up from the current transfer station's rate of just 11%" In addition to the innovative new programmes, the RRC will continue to provide and promote services the public may not be aware that the NPDC already offers, such as e-waste recycling. While in previous years, the annual E-day was always a success, with the public bringing their old electronic equipment such as computers, printers, monitors, TVs, DVD players and stereos to be stripped for reusable parts, this service is now

available at the Colson Road transfer station on a daily basis.

Last year, the RRC project invited community groups to register their interest and have formed an agreement with WISE Better Homes and Taranaki Environmental Education Trust, with support from Xtreme Zero Waste, to work with and develop a business plan for operation of the facility once it is completed.

"One of the advantages we have, that the other facilities around the country haven't had, is that, because we're setting out deliberately to build this, we have the opportunity to phase it and develop the site strategically over a number of years. In the early days, when we're trying to get people on board with the facility, we can start out with something relatively basic. Then, as people engage with it and it becomes busier and more popular, it can grow and develop to accommodate new or enhanced services as people buy into the concept of waste minimisation, upcycling, recycling, and reusing our waste as a resource."

Working with environmentally conscious organisations such as Greenbridge, who drew up the plans, helps broaden the scope of environmentally sustainable

ideas and practices available to the project. "One of our ambitions is to try and use as much reclaimed and recycled material as we can in the construction, so we can really build that sustainability aspect into the whole thing. Rather than getting virgin aggregates and brand new raw materials, let's see what we can reuse and recycle in the construction as well as the operation."

Such use of recycled materials in construction is not new to the NPDC, as David points out. "We've already had a good example late last year, where our parks team built a boardwalk in Waitara. Instead of using timber for the sleepers, they used plastic ones made from recycled carrier bags."

Another important function of the centre will be education. There is already an education space at the current recycling centre, which has had over 1,600 visitors since it opened, including school groups, who take tours of the facility and learn about the recycling process.

"That's great," says David. "Now we want something complimentary to that, but focussing on ways of avoiding creating waste in the first place, such as how to compost at home, so you can make use of your



David Langford of the NPDC

food waste; and buying products that don't have so much packaging, so you minimise the waste created. We want to get people thinking about how to avoid creating waste, so we don't have to deal with it, versus having created waste and having to look at how to reuse or recycle it, so we don't have to just bury it in a hole."

The Centre aims to be open before the end of this year. You can track the project's progress by following the Community Reuse and Recycle Centre page on Facebook. ••



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What can I put in my recycling bin?

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Milk bottles

Soft drink bottles

Paper and cardboard

Egg cartons

Plastic containers

Aerosol cans

Tin cans

Aluminium cans

No thanks

Food or liquid

Medical waste

Clothes and shoes

Polystyrene

Nappies

Plastic bags

Coffee cups

Garden waste

Soft plastic packaging and film

If in doubt leave it out

Try our recycling search on Newplymouthnz.com or download the rubbish and recycling day app...

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