

**THE MANAGEMENT OF SUBURBAN
AMENITY VALUES IN CHRISTCHURCH CITY**

Office of the
PARLIAMENTARY COMMISSIONER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT
Te Kaitiaki Taiao a Te Whare Pāremata

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This report is one of three council case studies undertaken as part of an investigation into local authority management of suburban amenity values. Conclusions from the case studies are synthesised in a main report available through Bennetts Government Bookshops. A brief summary of findings is available from this Office on request.

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Bibliographic reference

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY FROM SYNTHESIS REPORT

Suburban intensification (ie increasing housing densities and population densities) can affect a city's infrastructure, transportation network, the natural environment, heritage places and areas, and amenity values. This investigation by the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment focuses on the management of amenity values in suburban residential areas that are subject to intensification.

The term "amenity values" is defined in the Resource Management Act 1991 (**RMA**) as "those natural or physical qualities and characteristics of an area that contribute to people's appreciation of its pleasantness, aesthetic coherence, and cultural and recreational attributes" (s 2 RMA). Contributing factors to suburban amenity values include public and private open space, historic and cultural heritage, neighbourhood character, vegetation (eg bush, trees and gardens), safety, views, and noise levels.

Significant effects of intensification on suburban amenity values include:

- ∞ changes to the streetscape and the combination of the natural and built environment;
- ∞ the loss of vegetation, special character, and public and private open space;
- ∞ increased traffic, noise levels, on-street car parking and the effects of increased **traffic** levels on safety.

Auckland, Christchurch and Waitakere City Councils were chosen as case study councils for the investigation and separate background reports were prepared on how each council is managing suburban amenity values in its city. Relevant information has been drawn together in a synthesis report and in the formulation of good practice guidelines for the management of suburban amenity values.

*(Recommendations have been **italicised** and their recipients noted in bold type)*

Some residential areas in Auckland, Christchurch and Waitakere Cities are in transition from a suburban form to an urban form. Suburban intensification will continue as all three cities have policies to manage urban growth within existing boundaries by encouraging intensification of existing suburban areas. Traditional low density development at one unit per 1,000 m² was common 10-15 years ago; today, low density development is more likely to be at one unit per 500 m².

As intensification continues, which it must if more sustainable transport and other **infrastructural** systems are to evolve, there will be changes in

Introduction

Findings

Urban form and intensifi- cation

amenity values. Some communities consulted during this investigation expected little change in residential amenity values as residential intensification occurred. This is unlikely to be the case. Sustainable management of the total urban environment (eg the adoption of an urban consolidation strategy) will bring changes to local amenity values but these effects can be mitigated with increased management of the urban environment.

Identification of amenity values

All areas of a city have their own identity and characteristics and, therefore, amenity values. It is appropriate that these characteristics and values are 'identified by local communities in consultation with councils.

Describing amenity values is difficult as there are subjective aspects to be considered. However, there are aspects that are measurable and that can be identified. From this investigation, it appears that only a few communities have described their neighbourhood amenity values through consultation processes.

Management of amenity values

The management of amenity values in a neighbourhood that is subject to intensification requires the development of both statutory and non-statutory mechanisms by councils.

Most private amenity values (eg access to sunlight and privacy) can largely be managed by district plan mechanisms. These can include rules on site area, height in relation to boundary, and setback distances, and councils often consider these rules as a "package" in managing the effects of residential intensification.

The design of buildings and their relationship to adjacent buildings is a critical issue that affects amenity values as site and housing densities increase. The identification of the design characteristics of an area and the extent to which new buildings can enhance the amenity values of a street or neighbourhood are key factors in the community's acceptance of intensification. While perceptions of "good design" may change with time, there are universal issues such as the siting, configuration and aesthetic quality of buildings, their relationship to each other or context, and their relationship to the open space around them that need to be considered.

As managers of public open space including parks, reserves, streets and the coastal edge, councils have the ability to maintain or enhance **off-site** amenity values through the management of these assets.

Some areas subject to intensification lack **sufficient** areas of open space. Increasing the area of public open space would be a significant response to intensification. It is essential that adequate reserve contributions are obtained from areas subject to intensification to enable councils to purchase additional public open space in those areas.

Adequate funds need to be provided to upgrade existing streets, parks and reserves. Streets are valuable public open space and, where appropriate, traffic calming measures and landscaping could assist to mitigate any effects of intensification and improve the streetscape.

There has been intense public concern about the loss of urban vegetation which has accompanied residential intensification in some areas. The identification of heritage trees and the use of general tree protection and special indigenous bush zones can assist councils in the management of vegetation cover. The establishment of a green network of ecological linkages also contributes to the management of amenity values.

It is recommended that all Territorial Authorities recognise the importance of amenity values to communities and use appropriate management techniques accordingly, including those approaches in the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment's management of suburban amenity values good practice guide.

The management of the amenity values of a neighbourhood is a complex undertaking. Councils will need access to expertise including professional staff with urban design, architecture, landscape, heritage and horticultural skills. The insufficient use of professionals with the required expertise to assess effects on amenity values will compromise the adequacy of an evaluation of an assessment of environmental effects for residential infill or redevelopment. An urban amenity team could be established with professional staff from all relevant disciplines to individually and collectively comment on any assessment of effects on amenity values. This would include obtaining input from the local community and special interest groups when identifying amenity values.

The need for expertise

The processing without notification of resource consents for some proposed activities has resulted in concerns being expressed by local residents that significant amenity values and other environmental values would be adversely affected by the activity. Subject to § 94 RMA, the use of criteria to test if an application should be notified would improve the consistent processing of resource consents.

Resource consent issues

The assessment of cumulative effects on the amenity values of an area is a critical issue in terms of the medium to longer-term changes to amenity values. There are examples where there has been inadequate consideration of the cumulative effects of a series of individual housing developments in a street or neighbourhood in the evaluation of resource consent applications.

The enforcement of conditions on resource consents that relate to amenity values, eg landscaping conditions, is crucial to community acceptance of intensification.

Role of central government

Central government has a role to assist local government in the management of amenity values. New solutions are required to accommodate urban growth within existing city boundaries instead of relying on traditional suburban development. There is very little New Zealand developed research or information to assist councils in planning future urban form to achieve sustainable management of their cities. There is also an inadequate understanding and appreciation of the role of urban design in planning future urban form.

It is recommended that the Minister for the Environment *invest in, and encourage research into, urban design that will be appropriate to New Zealand to provide information to local authorities to assist them in promoting the sustainable management of urban environments and the management of amenity values,*

It is recommended that the Minister of Science, Research and Technology *invest in, and encourage research into, urban form and urban design that is appropriate for New Zealand conditions to assist local authorities with the sustainable management of urban environments.*

Monitoring

Monitoring the changes in amenity values that occur when intensification takes place is a crucial element in the ability of councils to manage amenity values. There are, however, no nationally developed environmental indicators that would assist councils and communities to describe and monitor changes in amenity values.

It is recommended that the Minister for the Environment *develop environmental indicators for amenity values to assist local authorities and communities to monitor and report on the state of amenity values,*

Role of major housing providers

Major housing providers and private landowners have a role in ensuring that amenity values are maintained or enhanced when properties are redeveloped.

It is recommended that the Minister of Housing *direct Housing New Zealand to include, in its Statement of Corporate Intent, information stating the steps that Housing New Zealand proposes to take to assist the Crown in meeting its social objectives in relation to the provision of housing and related services and, in particular, the steps Housing New Zealand proposes to take to address effects on amenity values from the intensification of established residential areas.*

It is recommended that Housing New Zealand *increase the focus on managing the effects on amenity values from the intensification of established residential areas, in accordance with the principal objective of the company (s 4 Housing Restructuring Act 1992) and “having regard to the interests of the community” in which the company operates.*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background	1
1.2 Outline of Christchurch City and urban growth history	3
1.3 Urban growth strategy	4
1.4 Description of infill and redevelopment	8
1.5 The proposed Christchurch City district plan	10
2. THE AMENITY VALUES OF CHRISTCHURCH	11
2.1 Description of amenity values	11
2.2 Changes to amenity values	15
3. REGULATORY MECHANISMS	19
3.1 District plan provisions	19
3.2 The effect of the proposed plan provisions on managing amenity values	22
4. NON-REGULATORY MECHANISMS AND APPROACHES	25
4.1 Strategic planning	25
4.2 Urban renewal programmes	25
4.3 Local Area Traffic Management	26
4.4 Concept plans	27
4.5 Provision of public open space and park management	28
4.6 Waterway Enhancement Programme	29
4.7 Other council initiatives	30
4.8 Involvement of other groups	31
5. DISCUSSION OF KEY ISSUES	33
5.1 The city's urban growth strategy	33
5.2 Consolidation and effects on amenity values	33
5.3 Vegetation retention	35
5.4 Architectural design and character	36
5.5 Strategic planning for the provision of public open space	38
5.6 Monitoring of amenity values	39
5.7 Community participation	40
5.8 Implementation of the "garden city" concept	40
5.9 Assessment of the council's performance	41

6. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	43
6.1 Findings	43
6.2 Recommendations	45
6.3 Christchurch City Council response	46
7. THE IDENTIFICATION OF “GOOD PRACTICE”	47
REFERENCES	49
Appendix 1 Consultation list	51
Appendix 2 Christchurch City Council response	52

1. INTRODUCTION

This investigation is the fourth in a series of local authority quality assurance reviews being undertaken by the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment under section 16(1)(b) of the Environment Act 1986. The purpose of the reviews is to examine the environmental management of local authorities and to report on good practice.¹

1.1 Background

This investigation focuses on the management of amenity values in established suburban residential areas that are subject to intensification. In the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) the term “amenity values” is defined as:

those natural or physical qualities and characteristics of an area that contribute to people's appreciation of its pleasantness, aesthetic coherence, and cultural and recreational attributes (s 2 RMA).

Definitions and interpretations of amenity values and how amenity values are affected by suburban intensification are discussed in chapter 2 of the Synthesis Report (Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment 1997). Although the focus of this investigation is on the management of suburban amenity values, the linkages between the management of amenity values and other issues such as transport planning and the provision of infrastructure have been acknowledged where appropriate.

Suburban intensification (ie changing housing densities and population densities) can affect a city's infrastructure, transportation network, the demand and supply of services, the natural environment, heritage places and areas, and amenity values. The changing housing densities are usually the result of

- suburban **infill** (ie adding another house or houses to a site with an existing house);
- suburban **infill** on vacant or reserve land; and
- **redevelopment** (ie replacing an existing house with multiple townhouses).

¹ The first three reviews were: *Assessment of Environmental Effects (AEE): Administration by Three Territorial Authorities* (1995); *Coastal Management: Preserving the Natural Character of the Coastal Environment. Administration by Far North, Tairāngia and Wanganui District Councils* (1996); and *Administration of Compliance with Resource Consents - Report of an investigation of three councils* (1996).

Auckland, Christchurch and Waitakere City Councils were chosen as case study councils for this review. The selection of a local authority for case study purposes was influenced by the following criteria:

- the council had adopted an urban consolidation strategy or urban growth strategy;
- population growth had been high over the past few years;
- infill and redevelopment were significant resource management issues; and
- the maintenance and enhancement of amenity values was a significant resource management issue.

Separate background reports were prepared on how each council was managing suburban amenity values in their city and relevant information was then drawn together in the synthesis report and in the formation of good practice guidelines for the management of suburban amenity values.

Terms of Reference: Christchurch City Council

1. To review the manner in which the Christchurch City Council is managing amenity values in established suburban residential areas that are undergoing urban intensification.
2. To assess the effectiveness of environmental planning and management by the Christchurch City Council to manage amenity values in established suburban residential areas.
3. To identify areas of good practice in avoiding, remedying or mitigating adverse environmental effects, and to provide advice if appropriate.
4. To report on the outcome of the investigation, and on any recommendations to local authorities, by 20 February 1997²; and also in the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment's Annual Report to Parliament for the year ending 30 June 1997.

Methodology

The investigation team visited Christchurch in early August 1996 to meet with the Christchurch City Council, two community boards, and a selection of agencies, community groups and individuals. A list of organisations and parties consulted during this investigation is in appendix 1.

In addition, the team visited different residential areas and neighbourhoods to view suburban intensification and various projects aimed at enhancing amenity. Comments from groups and individuals about the management of amenity values in the city were obtained and used in this report.

² The target completion date could not be achieved because of late responses to the final draft report.

Christchurch City covers an area of 45,250 ha with approximately 16,300 ha in urban use. Christchurch is a planned city; it has a circular shape with a radial network of roads overlaid by a grid. It is known for its garden city image because of its many parks and gardens. An area traditionally and popularly known as the “green belt” surrounds the city and includes the rural Port Hills to the south and agricultural and horticultural areas to the north and west.

1.2 Outline of Christchurch City and urban growth history

In 1996 the city had a population of around 314,000 with 97 per cent of the population contained within the urban area. Since 1991 the city population has grown by around 20,000 people with the majority of the population increase since 1993. The growth rate of 2 per cent in 1994/95 was considerably higher than previous annual growth rates of around 0.4 per cent. At current growth rates, the Christchurch population will grow to 340,000 people by 2011. The high levels of growth have been influenced by past immigration policies and strong economic growth although recent changes to immigration policies and the slowing of economic growth may reduce pressure on the city.

Since the late 1940s, continuing urban expansion has been restricted by a number of major physical constraints including:

- the Pacific Ocean to the east;
- the natural hazard posed by the Waimakariri River and floodplain to the north;
- the need to avoid urban encroachment around the Christchurch Airport that could affect airport operations to the west;
- the need to protect significant landscape and natural values of the Port Hills to the south; and
- the extensive Bottle Lake Forest to the north-east.

Other features that constrain urban expansion include:

- the need to protect the main recharge zone for Christchurch’s artesian water supply to the west and north;
- attempts to protect the productive capability of high class fertile soils to the north, west and south;
- the long-standing goal of protection of the “green belt” around Christchurch; and
- the need to provide a sustainable transport system through minimising traffic congestion and encouraging public transport.

There is continuing high demand for residential sections in some areas and concerns have been expressed about potential shortages of land for residential development in the future. As at June 1996, within the urban boundary of the city there were 2,925 vacant lots with an area of 278 ha, 589 ha of unsubdivided land, and 158 ha of zoned land having potential for further development (Christchurch City Council 1996a). Given the demand for residential zoned land on the edge of the city, concerns have been expressed about the ability of the RMA to provide

for the continuation of the protection of the “green belt” and the protection of versatile or high class soils from residential development.

The council is committed to sustainable development and implementing the objectives of Agenda 21³. Both the Proposed Christchurch City Plan (the proposed district plan) and the annual plan contain a vision for Christchurch with the overall goal the sustainable management of the Christchurch environment. Key aspects of the vision that relate to amenity values include:

- ☞ an attractive city that enhances the pleasantness, aesthetic qualities and coherence of its buildings and landscapes;
- ☞ a green city that protects its important natural habitats, landscapes and ecological values, and develops community environmental awareness and responsibility;
- ☞ a heritage city that recognises and values important old buildings, and its cultural history; and
- ☞ a safe city that protects the community, personal health and security, and avoids crime and injury.

1.3 Urban growth strategy

The approach taken by the council to manage urban growth will have significant implications for the future management of amenity values. For the past 30 years, the outer expansion of Christchurch has been constrained by regional “green belt” policies and controls to limit urban sprawl. It was believed that further growth could be accommodated by either urban intensification within existing limits or in surrounding rural towns to enable the “green belt” to be maintained for agricultural and horticultural purposes and recreation. Since the 1970s there has been increasing infill and urban redevelopment of the inner city because of the limited opportunities for greenfields subdivision.

Recognising urban growth as a major resource management issue as part of the district plan development, the council prepared an urban growth analysis under section 32 RMA before deciding on the preferred strategy. The council believed a growth strategy was required to clarify future directions, coordinate resource management, and provide guidance for action. The city growth strategy is limited to those outcomes that can be taken in pursuing environmental outcomes under the RMA and acknowledges that other measures will be needed to complement it.

Twelve key issues were identified as being directly related to the form and direction of urban growth. Key issue number one was “the

³ Agenda 21 is the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992. The focus of Agenda 21 is on the sustainable development of resources and it addresses the social and economic dimension, the conservation and management of resources for sustainable development and the need for a new approach to the agencies or groups and processes by which sustainability can be achieved.

potential conflict between changes in urban form and effects on amenity and the overall character and identity of the city". It was noted that "policies affecting the growth of the City have the potential to alter significantly the image, overall character and amenity of the City and some of these changes may not be acceptable to the public." (Christchurch City Council 1994a, p 6). Other factors affecting urban amenity values that were recognised as key issues included the intensity and dispersion patterns of air pollutants, conflicts between transport and people, social effects such as adequate access to housing and education, and the coordination and funding of infrastructure.

As part of the preparation of the growth strategy, detailed analysis was undertaken of population, building, and transport growth along with potential economic development (Christchurch City Council 1994b). Criteria for evaluating different growth options were developed at three levels: Part II of the RMA, strategic criteria (urban form and city identity, air pollution, community facilities, city form and transport energy, services), and site specific criteria. The site specific criteria included natural and physical resources, areas important to tangata whenua, local character and amenity values, infrastructure constraints, and heritage values.

In order to maintain and enhance the overall attractiveness, identity and amenity of Christchurch the council gave priority to:

- retaining the outstanding landscape values of the Port Hills;
- maintaining an "open" urban character;
- preventing or minimising the adverse effects of human activities on living areas;
- maintaining a distinctive urban-rural edge; and
- developing a sense of community around existing facilities (Christchurch City Council 1993).

As a result of the evaluation of growth options, urban consolidation was selected as the best option in terms of the least effect on natural resource values and cost effectiveness. The urban growth strategy was based on four key principles:

- urban consolidation through redevelopment and infill with some fit-and-proper development;
- retention of the central business area to maintain character and identity;
- management of traffic demand to stabilise and reduce the use of private motor vehicles; and
- maintenance of the ability of natural ecosystems to function through protection of water, air and soil resources (Christchurch City Council 1994c).

The beneficial effects of the growth strategy would be improvements in the utilisation of existing infrastructure, a more efficient transport

system with potential for increased use of public transport, and increased energy efficiency.

Potential adverse effects of the strategy were identified, including a reduction in residential amenity created by higher housing densities and higher land and site preparation costs. The council believed that these effects could be remedied, mitigated or avoided through non-regulatory means such as urban design strategies and monitoring, and continuing public investment in infrastructure.

The proposed district plan supports the growth strategy and provides that around 60 per cent of future residential development will occur through urban consolidation. The inner suburban and central city areas are targeted as the main areas for growth with low-medium through to high density housing.⁴ Also targeted is the area surrounding ten suburban focal points⁵ with low-medium and medium density housing. Limited outward growth and 13 main growth areas for low density housing and rural-residential living have also been identified on the outskirts of the city with another 500 ha of land zoned for residential growth on the urban fringe (see map 1).

Canterbury Regional Policy Statement

The Canterbury Regional Policy Statement (RPS) was notified by the Canterbury Regional Council (CRC) in October 1993. The RPS contains objectives and policies on settlement and the built environment (Canterbury Regional Council 1993).

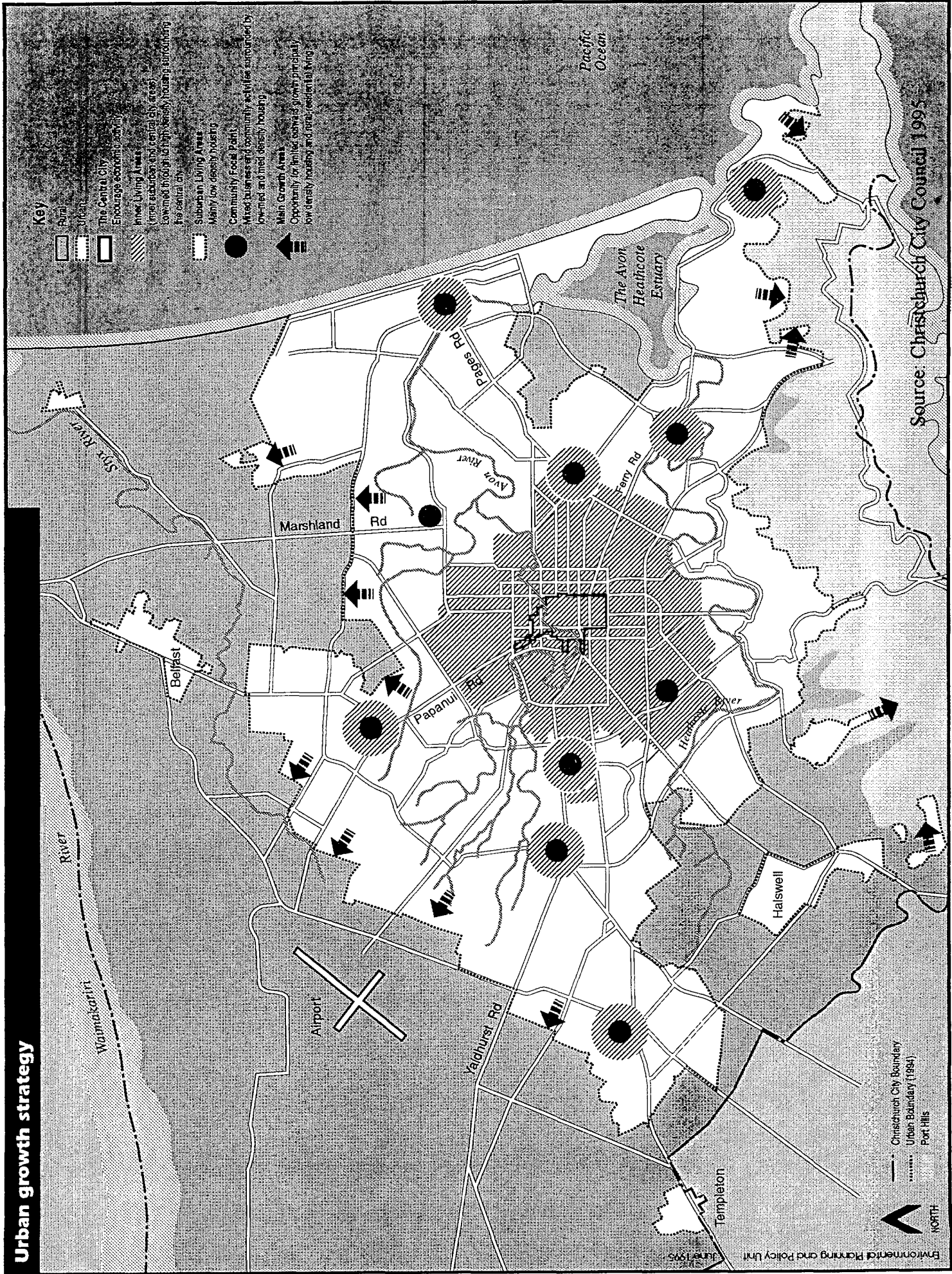
The regional council policies include the promotion of settlement and transport patterns and built environments that will:

- a) result in increasingly effective and efficient use of resources, particularly energy;
- b) reduce the rate of use of non-renewable energy sources;
- c) minimise the adverse effects of emissions into the atmosphere resulting from the use of motor vehicles and building heating; and
- d) incorporate energy efficient approaches to building orientation, form and design.

⁴ Low-medium housing densities range from one dwelling per 300 to 450 m² with high densities less than one dwelling per 300 m². Low densities are greater than one dwelling per 450 to 600 m².

⁵ Focal points include the various suburban community centres such as Riccarton, Sumner, and New Brighton and the Canterbury University. Higher densities are provided for around these key shopping, community and public transport centres.

Urban growth strategy



Key

- Water
- Urban
- The Central City: Encourages economic activity
- Inner Living Areas: Inner suburban and central city areas covered through high density housing surrounding the central city
- Suburban Living Areas: Many low density housing
- Community Focal Points: Most businesses, community activities surrounded by low density housing and some residential living
- Main Growth Areas: Opportunity for limited, low density housing principally low density housing and some residential living



— Christchurch City Boundary
 Urban Boundary (1984)
 Port Hills

Environmental Planning and Policy Unit
 June 1995

Source: Christchurch City Council 1995

The explanation in the RPS states that this policy in most cases will be met by the consolidation of urban areas. The council will seek to use land use planning and resource management to encourage the consolidation and **infill** of urban areas, to the extent that it is practical. Christchurch City's growth has been constrained for the past 30 years by regional "green belt" policies that largely maintained the land for agricultural purposes, recreation and the integrity of the airport.

The CRC has lodged a submission on the proposed district plan promoting urban development based on a "spoke" model rather than a concentric circle model. The "spoke" model would see urban development promoted for the inner city and various nodes as well as along main transport arterial routes.

Future growth

As the present provision for urban development was considered inadequate to meet projected needs beyond 2011, a technical working group of staff from Christchurch City, Hurunui, Waimakariri, Selwyn and Banks Peninsula District Councils and the Canterbury Regional Council recently reviewed urban growth trends within the districts of the five territorial authorities, and future growth options. The group identified a single issue that needed to be addressed on a cross-boundary basis, namely "coordinated provision for the projected high population and household growth for greater Christchurch in a way that is consistent with sustainable development and the purposes of the Resource Management Act".

In a preliminary assessment of growth options, the group used twelve evaluation criteria that included social wellbeing, sense of place (maintaining and enhancing locations as pleasant and attractive places in which to live, amenity), choice, economic factors, sustainable management of natural and physical resources, minimisation of energy consumption, flexibility, and local authority support. The criteria were given equal weight as opposed to the Christchurch City Council criteria that gave priority to health and safety, resource conservation and protecting natural values. The Joint Council Committee on Urban Growth, which aims to prepare a 30 year development strategy, was established with elected representatives from the various councils. A joint working group of staff will provide the committee with technical reports on long-term urban growth options by 1997.

1.4 Description of infill and redevelopment

Christchurch has higher than average numbers of two or more flats or houses joined together (25%) compared to the rest of New Zealand (17%). In part, this has been because of historical changes to the provisions of district schemes to provide more private open space in the backyard by allowing garages to be located in front yards. This ultimately resulted in cross-leasing becoming more feasible in many parts of the city as owners could now build another house in their

backyard. More recently, demographic changes such as smaller family units and social changes such as the increase in demand for inner city living are also determining housing needs.

Since 1990 there have been significant numbers of new units built in the city with 1822 units in 1994/95 in comparison to 669 units in 1989. Some areas have received more new units than others with around 200 new units or apartments having been built in inner city areas like Riccarton, the Avon Loop and Merivale between July 1991 and December 1995. Sydenham, St Albans, New Brighton and Beckenham have also received significant numbers of new units. Townhouses and apartments are increasing in the inner city with 500 units built between 1991-1995 in inner city residential and commercial areas (Christchurch City Council 1996b).

Year ending June	No of additional units	No. of units as part of redevelopment	No. of new units	TOTAL new units
1989	180	203	286	669
1992	705	208	356	1269
1995	~ 930	~ 570	~ 320	1822

Intensification of housing is not a new issue for Christchurch, but in recent years intensification has increased and more of the city has been affected. At the present time, approximately 60 per cent of developments are urban redevelopment or infill compared to the past when new subdivisions were dominant. There has been significant pressure to subdivide in some areas like Merivale. Prior to the proposed plan, which was designed to address the issues associated with suburban infill being notified by the council, there was a major increase in applications under the provisions of the transitional plan.

There are a variety of infill and redevelopment styles from the long one storey “sausage” flats⁶ of the 1960s to the current trends of Mediterranean-influenced townhouses and construction of two to three storey tilt-slab developments. From a general amenity and design perspective, new infill developments are an improvement on past styles. The degree of intensification has been varied in different parts of the city as a result of the legacy of previous district scheme rules which may have provided for large areas of outdoor living space (eg Fendalton) or single storey developments (eg Riccarton).

⁶ The building of “sausage” flat developments was restricted in the late 1960s with developments required to have a minimum separation distance between each unit.

1.5 The proposed Christchurch City district plan

The proposed district plan was notified in June 1995 and will eventually replace the six transitional district plans of the former territorial authorities. The proposed plan adopts an effects-based approach as a basis for determining whether activities are permitted or require a resource consent. Three tiers of standards are used: development standards (eg on-site considerations), community standards and critical standards (the bottom line). If an activity meets all of the standards, then it is permitted; if it fails to meet a development standard, it is a discretionary activity for that standard; if it fails to meet a community standard, it is a discretionary activity; and if it fails to meet any critical standard, it is a non-complying activity.

Significant resource management issues affecting amenity values were identified in the water, air, growth, housing, recreation and open space, city identity, and city form and design sections of the plan. The summary of significant resource management issues for the housing section included:

- the maintenance of the coherence of established residential areas in terms of activities and visual character, while at the same time providing for change;
- the general effect on amenity of the increasing infill within suburban housing areas and redevelopment of older areas close to and within the city centre;
- the identification of areas of special amenity that need additional attention; and
- how best to cater for aspects of amenity within sites that affect future occupiers of housing (Christchurch City Council 1995b Vol 1).

The proposed plan includes policy sections that focus on the physical environment, the consideration of future population changes, the effects of housing, neighbourhoods and communities, recreation and open space, transportation and utility services, city design and heritage, and city growth and subdivision. The planning for the management of amenity values can be traced through different sections of the proposed district plan.

The public participation process included focus group interviews (meetings with selected groups), an issues and options discussion document, and a draft statement of objectives and policies before the release of the proposed plan. Ongoing discussions have been held by the council with interested parties. The major issues addressed in submissions on the proposed plan included the retail strategy, cellphone sites, rezoning of land, esplanade reserves, special amenity areas, transport planning, Travis Swamp, heritage buildings and design controls. There were fewer than expected submissions in relation to the residential density provisions.

2. THE AMENITY VALUES OF CHRISTCHURCH

City-wide

The amenity values and garden city design of Christchurch are to a large extent the result of the vision shown by the city fathers in designing and providing the city's green spaces over 100 years ago (eg Hagley Park, Latimer and Cranmer Squares, and the four avenues).

The major city-wide amenity values of Christchurch include the garden city character with many private gardens, tree cover, the network of open space, and the viewshafts to the Port Hills and the Southern Alps. The amenity values of Christchurch are influenced by the flat topography of the majority of the city, deciduous trees, and the distinctive seasonal variations. A 1993 study of Christchurch residents' attitudes to city attributes reported that Christchurch residents were proud of the environment of the city including the parks, trees, gardens, Port Hills and waterways (Research Solutions Ltd 1993).

The identity of the city is derived from the relationship between the city's key features such as its hills, rivers, corridors, buildings, roads and major public spaces that, in combination, create its distinctiveness. The proposed plan states the aim to retain key elements that contribute to the identity of the city, defined through the three principal elements of form (the overall shape of the city), amenity and heritage. City amenity is expressed through the attractiveness, pleasantness, aesthetic quality and coherence of its natural and physical features. In terms of identity, amenity reflects the quality of the city's environment. The proposed plan notes that amenity values have positive effects that improve the city's environment and enhance people's lives although this may be more a perception of well-being rather than a conscious recognition of particular attributes.

City heritage is expressed through the city's inherited assets including buildings, places, objects, trees, natural features, archaeological sites, and sites of significance to tangata whenua.

The plan comments that residential amenity is to a very large extent determined by the layout of housing on a site and the relationship of houses to each other. In terms of increasing densities, "the increasing amount of infill through the city and redevelopment within the inner city, can affect existing perceptions of amenity"(Christchurch City Council 1995b).

2.1 Description of amenity values

In the general zone description of the rules section of the proposed plan, the anticipated environmental results give an indication of both existing amenity values and desired future amenity values. The Living 1 (outer suburban) Zone covers most of the suburban living environment (80% of the residential zones). The zone provisions are intended to maintain open space and landscape plantings as an essential feature of the environment at low building densities and heights.

For the Living 2 (inner suburban) Zone it is anticipated that the provisions will maintain open space and landscape plantings as an important feature with dwellings at low-medium densities. Anticipated environmental results include:

- future infill and redevelopment at a scale and intensity which does not affect the predominant character;
- a diverse range of residential buildings at low-medium densities of building coverage and low heights (generally one to two storeys);
- maintenance and enhancement of an open street scene which reflects the garden city image; and
- maintenance of the residential coherence of an area.

For the Living 3 (inner city) Zone it is anticipated the provisions will encourage diverse residential development, redevelopment and infill to medium densities, and moderate heights while maintaining a reasonable degree of open space. Anticipated environmental results include:

- residential buildings at medium densities balanced with areas of open space and landscape planting;
- maintenance and enhancement of an open street scene which reflects the garden city image;
- maintenance of a high level of residential amenity consistent with medium density inner city living; and
- the ability to find individual and community expression through controls that encourage, rather than restrain, variety in building design and style.

The Living 4A, 4B and 4C Zones are located in the inner city. Anticipated environmental results for the Living 4A Zone include a diverse range of buildings to medium-high densities and moderate heights (one to five storeys) and an environment dominated by dwellings but framed by open space and planting where possible. The small Living 4C Zone anticipates a range of residential buildings to high densities and heights (one to ten storeys) that reflect its central city location adjacent to parks. The Living 4C Zone anticipates a diverse range of residential buildings appropriate to the diverse character of the area and medium-high density.

Special Amenity Areas

Special Amenity Areas (SAMs) have been identified in Living Zones as areas with special aspects or characteristics that contribute to the pleasantness of an area including the scale, age and style of buildings,

the lack of intrusions or the level of intactness, the combination of streetscape and vegetation, and the intimacy of the street scene. Compared to other areas, SAMs may have additional controls on external appearance, height, outdoor living space, residential site density, and street scene. Community-based management plans will be prepared for four SAMs although compliance will be voluntary. Most SAMs are for small blocks or involve several streets, but several are for larger areas including one for most of Fendalton and another for the Beckenham Loop.

Further work is being undertaken to identify and define the character of the 35 SAMs and, in particular, those relating to the external appearance of buildings. The council will attempt to encourage good design through the use of non-regulatory methods such as the preparation and promotion of design guidelines. Design guides will be prepared for nine SAMs, where external appearance is considered an important element, to supplement planning controls and assist both the public and council in the exercise and consideration of discretionary powers.

Neighbourhoods

The proposed plan identifies as part of city identity the form, amenity and heritage of particular areas of the city such as the inner urban area, suburban areas, the rural Port Hills, the coastal environment and the plains. There is limited identification and definition of particular amenity values for different areas and neighbourhoods in the proposed plan other than in the SAMs. However, amenity values for some areas can be identified from other documents such as concept plans and neighbourhood studies.

Example: Sumner

Sumner is characterised by a small village atmosphere with seaside character; its typical visual features are the Norfolk Pines, the cliff faces and colourful gardens. In the Sumner Open Spaces & Streets Draft Plan (1987) the council acknowledged a growing demand for aesthetic and traffic control improvements to residential streets. The council also acknowledged that the area had well-defined boundaries and special character (Christchurch City Council 1987b). The 1993 residents' survey reported that "Sumner should retain its village atmosphere as a place for all Christchurch to 'escape to'" (Research Solutions Ltd 1993).

At a concept plan workshop in 1995 (refer chapter 4.4 for the concept plan process), key aspects of the character and amenity values of Sumner included:

- ≈ the relaxed, slightly "scruffy" character of an older seaside village;
- ≈ a safe and friendly neighbourhood; and
- ≈ a low rise village in an amphitheatre of tall hills, no tall buildings (Lucas Associates 1995a).

The concept plan documents that the whole of Sumner should be recognised in the district plan as a special area with mechanisms to ensure sensitive management, change and development. The potential for comprehensive residential redevelopment should be explored where this conforms with the character and expectations of the protocol outlined in the concept plan. The concept plan notes that there is increasing infill housing and older houses are being replaced with new houses on smaller sections thereby altering the character of Sumner (Lucas Associates 1995a).

According to residents, development currently under the transitional district plan is affecting the amenity values of Sumner with two storey houses being built on back sections and four storey developments in the commercial area. There is also a proposal for a nine storey residential unit to be located against the Sumner cliffs.

Example: Merivale

Merivale is an inner city area where intensification has been occurring over time. A Merivale neighbourhood study prepared in 1987 documented that Merivale was one of the older parts of the city, with older style domestic architecture as well as new development, large trees and gardens, and often narrow streets. These elements constituted a distinct character and encouraged a strong sense of identity. The older buildings in Merivale were typically constructed of wood with steep pitched hip or gable roofs and symmetrical windows and doors.

In 1987 residents' concerns included:

- that the redevelopment of large residential properties was very noticeable in changing the visual character;
- high quality streetscapes, including architecture, could be detrimentally altered with new development and a lack of traffic management; and
- that new design did not always harmonise with the older character, nor is it sympathetic to adjacent development (Christchurch City Council 1987a, p 14).

In the 1987 study it was noted that Merivale lacked public open space and reserve contributions were not necessarily used in the area from which they were derived.' An even distribution of public open space was required along with public open space linkages. The study noted that:

⁷ A decision in 1993 clarified that law concerning reserve contributions. Councils are required to use any reserve contribution in the area from which they were collected (*Woodridge Estates Ltd v Wellington CC* (1993) 2 NZRMA 656).

“design becomes more important with increasing density of development including details such as roof pitch, use of materials, texture, colour and solar design guidelines. Therefore the City Plan may need to be expanded and/or a set of more de tailed guidelines established for Merivale as a result of feedback from this study” (Christchurch City Council 1987a, p 7).

The Merivale concept plan (refer chapter 4.4 for the concept plan process) identifies four areas with a definable character, some of the features of two of the areas include older houses, cottages, villas and bungalows with small quiet streets, and well-vegetated private gardens with mature trees. It was noted there was an inadequate spread of public open space and private open space was diminishing with infill (Lucas Associates 1995b).

There is continuing intensification in Merivale and ongoing pressure to redevelop. This is supported by the zoning of the area as either Living 2 or 3 with low-medium to medium densities. The development in Merivale is affecting the amenity values of the area as many new developments are not in sympathy with existing houses and the streetscape and the character of Merivale is being changed from suburban to urban (Merivale Precinct Society 1996).

A 1993 council survey of Christchurch residents’ attitudes to various city attributes reported that urban sprawl and encroachment on to the hills was disliked but infill housing and high rise developments were also disliked by some participants. Infill developments were seen to affect the character of existing houses, reduce open space and increase congestion (Research Solutions Ltd 1993).

2.2 Changes to amenity values

In the 1995 state of environment report, for local developments, slightly more than half of the residents who were aware of development approved of the work being undertaken. However, a group of 18 per cent disapproved and 22 per cent of residents believed that some of the developments should not have been allowed. Residents criticised cross-leasing and subdivision of existing sites as they resulted in houses being built too closely together, too many properties on one site, a lack of privacy, loss of views and outdoor space. The lack of character and the poor quality of new housing was also an issue. For city-wide development, concern about the above issues was still a factor but there was less reaction (Christchurch City Council 1995a).

It is highly likely that the percentage of residents that disapproved of developments would be greater than the recorded 18 per cent for local developments in areas where there has been considerable housing intensification. The council could specifically monitor and report on

the reaction of local residents in areas experiencing the greatest intensification and their opinions about the quality of the developments.

Changes to amenity values in Christchurch that had been noticed by different groups and individuals consulted during this investigation include:

Changes to public amenity values	Changes. to private . . . amenity values
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> z Altered streetscape with high barrier-type fences and front yard garages. z Loss of trees (especially tall trees), gardens and open space. z Unsympathetic design (form, roof pitch and colour). z Increased traffic flows and noise levels. z Increased dominance by the built environment. z Loss of security afforded by past zoning process with clear rules. z Loss of neighbours and community cohesion from non-residential uses or exemptions to residential requirements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> z Loss of privacy. z Loss of sunlight and increased shade and cold. • Loss of views. z Increasing insecurity. z Increased noise.

One example was provided concerning a high security, high rise apartment building in the residential part of the inner city. The building was located in the middle of a community and has affected community and social interaction. Neighbours in adjacent low rise development were fearful of their security as a result of being looked down upon from the high rise. The inhabitants of the high rise development can also be isolated from the community and the street even though they may have a community within the building.

Other community concerns have focused on the failure of the RMA to provide reasonable planning outcomes and certainty for communities. These concerns include:

- z an emphasis on effects and not rules means that more non-complying proposals can be applied for and residents then need to argue repeatedly against each proposal (eg where communities believe that commercial activities are incompatible with residential activities);
- z the current approach of assessing effects individually means the negative consequences of a proposed activity are only considered one at a time. For example, a commercial development in a residential area is examined for such effects as noise, traffic generation, hours of operation, signs, and site density. Although each effect may be less than minor, the cumulative effect of the activity is not considered, even though the total adverse effect may

be considerable - it is noted that the RMA explicitly requires the consideration of cumulative effects; and

- ⌘ little weight is given to less tangible effects such as loss of community spirit and lost opportunities for social interaction.

3. REGULATORY MECHANISMS

The proposed plan defines amenities/amenity values to have the same meaning as in section 2 of the RMA; “those natural and physical qualities and characteristics of an area that contribute to people’s appreciation of its pleasantness, aesthetic coherence and cultural and recreational attributes”. Amenity is concerned with the quality, harmony and coherence of elements in the city landscape. Key aspects of city amenity are the garden city image, the external appearance of buildings, interesting and varied public open space, landscape quality and vegetation, and public safety.

3.1 District plan provisions

Methods of implementation for achieving the objective of a diversity of living environments based on the differing characteristics of areas of the city include:

- the identification of a pattern of land uses (through zoning) in support of a strategy of urban consolidation and a compact form for the city;
- the identification of...a range of Living Zones for the city and associated rules. Within some of these zones areas of “special amenity” are identified; and
- the provision of information such as design guidelines and landscape guidelines.

Associated with the Living Zones are zone rules that target site density (the number of dwellings per area), open space, site size, site coverage, building height, sunlight, street scene, separation distances (between dwellings), continuous building length, and outdoor living space. These rules can be considered as a package of methods which in part are aimed at addressing the maintenance and enhancement of amenity values. Other rules deal with protected buildings, places and objects, outdoor advertising, traffic generation, subdivision, and noise.

Site density/open space, site size and street scene are the most significant elements of general suburban character and amenity for which the plan has greatest influence. The proposed plan lists the matters the council shall consider in determining whether or not to grant consent or impose conditions.

Proposed district plan policies aimed at the maintenance and enhancement of amenity values include:

City identity: *Form*

- To maintain and enhance the inner “urban area” as the principal focus for the larger scale and widest range of housing forms, opportunities for higher density living environments, and diversity of

activities (Policy 4.1.2). To ensure compatibility, new building should be designed to be appropriate to its context. Increasing densities will mean there is less potential for new large trees and gardens but the protection of existing notable trees and heritage is important along with the planting of public spaces.

- ☞ To maintain and enhance suburban areas for low scale, low density housing in a predominantly open landscape setting, supported by a range of community activities (Policy 4.1.3). The suburbs generally provide low density housing in a predominantly open setting which contributes to the garden city image. Neighbourhood improvement plans will also be used to complement the provisions of the city plan.

City identity: Amenity

- ☞ To recognise and promote the garden city identity, heritage and character of Christchurch (Policy 4.2.1). The garden city image contributes to visual coherence, amenity and ecological values.
- ☞ To promote and, where appropriate, ensure the harmony and compatibility of buildings (Policy 4.2.2). The design of buildings and the relationship of buildings to each other (context) and open space can be affected by redevelopment and the relocation of buildings, and principles of design should be observed.
- ☞ To ensure the development and protection of the quality of public open space (Policy 4.2.3), sensitive landscape design (Policy 4.2.6), and public safety in design (Policy 4.2.7).
- ☞ There are also policies for outdoor advertisements, impacts of noise, hazardous substances, airborne contamination, glare, and the sale of liquor.

City identity: Heritage

- ☞ To identify and provide for the protection of heritage items including buildings, spaces, places, objects, trees, natural features, archaeological sites, and sites of significance to tangata whenua (Policy 4.3.1).
- ☞ To identify and provide for the protection of trees having special value to the community (Policy 4.3.3).

Urban growth

- ☞ To achieve a gradual increase in overall population density within the existing urban area through higher building densities near the central city and suburban focal points (eg shopping centres) and by managing the rate at which land is zoned at the edge of the urban area for urban purposes (Policy 6.1.1). The rate of release of land for peripheral growth is a key component of consolidation and any release will be assessed against the objective of consolidation and the objectives and policies for peripheral growth.
- ☞ To promote development of vacant land, and redevelopment and more intensive use of the urban area as a whole, in a manner

consistent with maintaining the character and amenity values of neighbourhoods (Policy 6.1.2).

Living

- To conserve and enhance the character of living areas identified as “special amenity” areas (Policy 11.1.1).
- To maintain the general character of the suburban living environment (Policy 11.1.2).
- To promote change in the character of selected living areas through encouraging infill and site redevelopment (Policy 11.1.3).
- To provide for different heights of buildings in living environments based on the existing character of an area, on strategic objectives of urban consolidation, and to provide for a diversity of living environments (Policy 11.1.5).
- To provide for local community facilities and services to locate within living areas, subject to compatibility with the existing character of different parts of the living environment, and maintaining residential coherence and amenity (Policy 11.3.1).
- To provide for a range of home based employment opportunities throughout living areas, consistent with safeguarding the amenity values of the living environment (Policy 11.3.3).
- To ensure that the design and siting of development does not unduly compromise outlook, privacy and views of adjoining development, having regard to the character of the area and reasonable expectations for development (Policy 11.4.3).
- To reinforce the garden city image of Christchurch and the different identified characters of the living areas of the city (Policy 11.4.10). Streetscene that is influenced by setback distances is an important determinant of the character of areas.
- To encourage design compatible with existing development for infill and redevelopment throughout living areas (Policy 11.5.2). A significant issue is the impact of new residential development on the existing character.

Density

Density is a major determinant of the character of the living areas of the city. The size of sections, along with the amount of open space or plantings, is a key factor in determining visual amenity, spaciousness, level of privacy, access to sunlight and daylight, and pleasantness of these areas. The minimum areas for the Living 1, H and 2 Zones have been set at a low density to ensure that open space is retained as the essential feature of the zone. This is a change from the transitional district plan to reduce density in the general living zone.

∴ The Living 1 Zone covers most of the suburban area excluding the hills and provides for low density, permanent living accommodation with the minimum area of land required for a residential unit as a

permitted activity being 450 m² (400 m² if the proposed development complies with all standards).

- ⚡ The Living H Zone covers most of the suburban area on the Port Hills and provides for low density, permanent living accommodation with the minimum area of land required for a residential unit as a permitted activity being 600 m² (550 m² if the proposed development complies with all standards).
- ⚡ The Living 2 Zone generally covers the inner suburban living areas and includes parts of Merivale, St Albans, Linwood, Waltham and Spreydon and provides for low to medium density, permanent residential accommodation with the minimum area of land required for a residential unit as a permitted activity being 300 m². Living 2 Zones are also located adjacent to district commercial centres and the university.
- ⚡ The Living 3 Zone comprises the inner city area including Merivale, St Albans, Linwood, Waltham, Spreydon and Sydenham and provides principally for medium density, permanent residential accommodation. Living 3 Zones also surround district commercial centres. The density for residential activities in this zone is calculated by using a maximum residential floor area ratio per site of 0.8.
- ⚡ The Living 4 Zones are located adjacent to the central business area and, although characterised by a diverse range of activities, provide principally for medium-high density residential accommodation. Of note is the Living 4C Zone which comprises a number of character areas within the four avenues. Medium-high density is provided for throughout the zone with different heights prescribed for each area in order to ensure the scale of development preserves the special characteristics of each area.

Further reductions in the minimum area are available as a discretionary activity with the requirement for the Living 1 Zone reduced to 360 m² and for the Living 2 Zone reduced to 270 m². Any development that proposes exceeding the maximum residential floor area ratio per site is a non-complying activity.

3.2 The effect of the proposed plan provisions on managing amenity values

The plan does not propose to prevent infill or redevelopment but it does increase the minimum section size to ensure that the outer suburbs retain their suburban, low density character, which is distinct from other areas of the city. However, some rules in the proposed plan have implications for the maintenance and enhancement of amenity values.

The “bonus issue”

In the Living 1 Zone, the development standard for residential site density is 450 m² but for residential units that comply with all other development standards, the minimum area of a site, or part of a site, allocated to each residential unit from the net area is 400 m². This

development standard has become the incentive for developers to comply with other provisions of the proposed plan. This rule means that sections of 800 m² or greater in the outer suburbs can be subdivided. To provide for the continuing low density of the area, the council is reviewing whether the initial density threshold was set too low.

The use of a plot ratio in the Living 3 Zone instead of site coverage

The transitional district plan uses a persons-per-hectare density in the equivalent of the Living 3 Zone with a maximum number of persons-per-hectare. Compliance was based on the number and size of bedrooms which was difficult to interpret because there was no definition of bedroom. This led to three bedroom houses on small sites in the Living 3 Zones and public concern about the size of the developments.

To overcome these problems, it was decided that a residential floor space ratio would be used in the proposed plan because this provided a more effective means of controlling the size of the building. Calculations were then made to work out new floor space ratios to provide the same development rights as did the former persons-per-hectare density requirements. A minimum section size in the Living 3 Zone was not considered an effective way of controlling the size of buildings given that minimum site sizes would generally be less than 300 m².

Recession planes

The low sun angle in mid-winter (around 23.5 degrees) means that absolute protection for winter sunlight cannot be provided, as in doing so there would be few two storey houses and wider separation distances between buildings would be required (ie larger sections). Therefore, a balanced approach is taken to preserve sunlight for the majority of the year.

The plan has not been designed with an objective of protecting private views although recession plane requirements on the hill suburbs will protect some views, and on the flat will assist to protect privacy. The protection of public viewshafts to the Port Hills and the Southern Alps were identified as major concerns by some submitters to the proposed plan.

Open space

Cross-lease subdivisions approved under the transitional district plan were not subject to reserve contributions as cross-leases were not included in the definition of subdivisions under the Local Government Act. This restricted the development of public open space by the council in areas where it was needed. Cross-leases are subdivisions under the RMA so reserve contributions can be required for the cross-lease of one site. Proposed reserve contribution rules for both living

and business zones will provide significantly more funds for the purchase and development of reserves in the future but they will not take effect until the plan becomes operative.

On the Port Hills, which provide an important landscape backdrop to the city, the council has chosen to restrict development at the 200 m contour in order to provide for growth on the lower slopes while protecting the landscape values of the upper slopes for the entire city. The Summit Road Protection Act controls development further up the Port Hills. The council has been an active purchaser of some of the upper areas of the Port Hills to protect open space areas for the future.

Monitoring

The council's state of the environment report and the annual residents' survey assist in determining if the maintenance and enhancement of amenity values is occurring in the city. The annual survey is primarily used as a measure of council's performance for annual plan purposes but can also include questions on other aspects of the council's functions.

The proposed district plan contains a general monitoring statement and specific monitoring provisions are included in each section. Emphasis has been placed on identifying key indicators to provide useful indicators of change. For example, the council will monitor the "maintenance of the general suburban character and amenity of the majority of the city's living environment" as a key anticipated environmental result. The general suburban character has been defined as the Living 1, H and 2 Zones. The anticipated result has been given priority for monitoring as a large area of the city is included in these zones, the majority of the population lives in these areas, it supports the strategic aims of the urban growth strategy, and many of the regulatory mechanisms in the proposed plan seek to influence the result. Critical indicators will be established after the collection of baseline data for monitoring changes in amenity values in selected neighbourhoods (Christchurch City Council 1996).

An additional anticipated environmental result was included in the priority monitoring programme for the "conservation and enhancement of areas identified as having 'special amenity' value within the living environment of the City" (Christchurch City Council 1996).

4. NON-REGULATORY MECHANISMS AND APPROACHES

The Christchurch City Council does not have a dedicated strategic plan but uses various documents that together constitute a strategic plan for the city. These documents include the proposed district plan, asset management plans and a transport plan. The council has an urban consolidation strategy and is developing a natural environment strategy.

4.1 Strategic planning

Neighbourhood Improvement Plans

From the 1950s to 1983 the council, with the support of central government funding, developed several large urban renewal schemes to provide comprehensively designed, moderate cost residential housing on the edge of the inner city. About 350 units were constructed by the council in locations where there was little private investment. In the early 1980s, central government funding for the Community Housing Improvement Programme enabled three urban renewal projects to be completed at Moa, the Avon Loop and Charleston. However, in the mid-1980s central government stopped funding these programmes and a new approach was required by the council (Kensington 1996).

4.2 Urban renewal programmes

The council made a commitment to a finite programme of urban renewal in selected older residential areas of central Christchurch through the implementation of the Neighbourhood Improvement Plan (NIP) programme in 1987. A NIP can be described as an urban renewal project to improve the amenity values of both the natural and the built environment of public areas in inner city residential areas characterised by older housing stock and poor quality streetscapes. The council believed that intervention to assist urban renewal was required as a gap existed between the point at which the market would intervene to renew areas and acceptable environmental living standards. A NIP was envisaged as providing a catalyst for private investment in an area by improving the baseline environmental standard of areas and enhancing the amenity values of living environments (Kensington 1996).

The preparation of a NIP involves extensive public consultation and ongoing local community involvement is encouraged with some NIPs having been the catalyst for the formation of residents' associations. The aim of the NIP is to improve the local environment of these neighbourhoods through:

- kerb and channel replacement and road reconstruction: Complete road reconstruction can have a major positive effect on public amenity values. The carriageway can be reduced from 15 m to 9 m,

- grass berms can be created and planted with street trees, overhead wires can be placed underground, and on-street parking can be redesigned to provide angled parking and grassed areas;
- the installation of traffic calming measures on non-arterial roads can divert through traffic and reduce speed thereby reducing road noise and vibration and increasing public safety. In some areas where there is little traffic, shared streets that integrate pedestrian activity and vehicular movement can provide important public open space and feature extensive landscaping;
- the purchase of land for neighbourhood parks in areas lacking public open space and the upgrading of existing reserves; and
- the purchase and removal of non-conforming industrial or commercial uses in residential zones.

The NIP will reinforce the objectives of the proposed plan through improving the visual qualities and character of neighbourhoods, improving traffic circulation and safety, and improving pedestrian links between community facilities. The council coordinates works to maximise their effectiveness and efficiency as a complete renewal programme with road reconstruction, undergrounding of wires and planting costs around \$750,000 per km.

Criteria used to identify priority areas include: the area has a definable boundary, it has poor environmental qualities, and it will benefit from upgrading. Sydenham, North Waltham and Latimer have been identified as the future priority areas; by concentrating the programme in key areas, the council can make recognisable changes in short periods of time. By October 1995, thirteen NIPs had been completed (eg Beckenham and East Papanui), four were under action and the three priority areas above were identified for future action.

Other urban renewal programmes

Other aspects of urban renewal include the council's works programme to replace all kerb and channel in the next 25 years. To achieve this the council intends to spend around \$9.5 million per year on kerb and channel replacement. Where possible, the council will reduce road widths in residential areas to reduce the level of through traffic in an area. In conjunction with Southpower, the undergrounding of overhead wires will be completed in 80 years.

4.3 Local Area Traffic Management

A Local Area Traffic Management (LATM) scheme is another initiative to plan the use of road space within a local residential area. A LATM scheme is an area-wide approach to provide an efficient and effective road network with minimal conflict between land uses, traffic and people, and to maintain the hierarchical network of roads while improving the living and environmental conditions in residential streets. Ongoing consultation occurs between the local community, the

community board and council staff concerning traffic and other issues before a scheme is finalised and funded by the council.

LATM schemes may discourage through traffic and reduce vehicle speed, reduce traffic noise and vibration, enhance the visual streetscape, support cycleways, and improve pedestrian safety. Once a LATM scheme is prepared, works can be planned and approved according to the council's budgetary process and considered in conjunction with city-wide demands. Priorities for LATMs are being evaluated as part of Asset Management Planning presently being undertaken by the council.

In 1995, several communities and groups requested the support of the Christchurch City Council in order to undertake a version of the charrette planning process (an intensive planning and design workshop) and prepare a concept plan for their area. Three separate charrette planning processes were subsequently undertaken for Sumner, Merivale and the inner city bounded by the four avenues.

4.4 Concept plans

At the communities' requests, the consulting firm Lucas Associates organised and facilitated all three charrette workshops with the support of the council. Representatives of key community groups identified main themes and issues to be addressed in the charrette. Following widespread publicity, open workshops were then facilitated, with the local community identifying the important characteristics of their area, what changes were occurring, the desired character for various areas and preferred options for the future. At the completion of the workshop a draft concept plan was prepared and then checked by participants before it was finalised. The concept plan notes that for specific developments, further design workshops would be required. Post workshop evaluations were undertaken for each charrette and from the Sumner evaluation, an annual review of the concept plan was sought.

The inner city concept plan highlighted the diversity of different communities living in the inner city and noted that the district plan did little to address this except by providing some maximum height differences and Special Amenity Areas (SAMs). Retention of the low rise, aesthetic and historic qualities of the inner city, and its sense of place against the Port Hills was desired. Open space in the inner city was of crucial importance and it was extremely important that the built form abutting open space did not have significant adverse effects. A result of the workshop was a request to the council to provide greater recognition of this diversity in planning for the inner city (Lucas Associates 199%).

The charrette process is a new approach for the council, which is still working through how best to respond to the concept plans. The

council prepared a report in response to the Sumner concept plan in June 1996 and is now waiting for further comments from the community. A flow chart for future responses to concept plans detailing the various stages of consultation and input from the community was also prepared. The council report noted the range of issues that were identified through the charrette and that they would be addressed through different council processes such as consideration in the regular operations of the council, district plan hearings, and by further research. Further heritage research by the council identified several areas as potential SAMs along with other individual heritage items that could be recognised in the district plan.

4.5 Provision of public open space and park management

Open space is an important part of the amenity values of Christchurch with large public open space areas such as Hagley Park, the Botanical Gardens and parts of the Port Hills. There are many parks and reserves, public walkways and public gardens that offer opportunities for recreation with a total of 2,300 ha of public open space (15% of the urban area). This is approximately 8 ha per 1,000 people. The 550 parks and reserves are classified as:

- /// local parks: less than 2 ha for informal recreation and passive use. They contribute to local visual amenity and often feature large trees;
- /// district parks: approximately 2-5 ha for active sports and also as local parks with important visual amenity and open space;
- z metropolitan parks: large parks used for a wide variety of activities; and
- z conservation parks of all sizes.

In 1993 a Parks Deficiency Study identified where there was a shortage of parks both in terms of their size and variety. Further work has now been undertaken to prepare a local parks acquisition strategy. The proposed plan identifies a number of policies relating to the provision and diversity of open space and it acknowledges that some areas lack public open space, particularly the inner suburbs. Over the last ten years, the lack of reserve contributions from cross-leases made it very difficult for the council to purchase new reserves. Neighbourhood parks are important open space at the local level and need to be spread throughout the community. Financial contributions will be required as part of all subdivision consents in order to provide for additional local and district parks,

Implementation of open space objectives will be achieved through the district plan by using a range of conservation and open space zones, and financial contributions for reserves. Non-regulatory approaches include the preparation of reserve management plans and landscape concept plans, NIPs, the acquisition of land, the rehabilitation of sites, the Waterway Enhancement Programme and the formulation of a natural environment strategy for Christchurch.

The draft 1996/97 annual plan recognises that with intensification there is a strong demand for new reserves in the older inner suburbs. The draft annual plan proposes that an additional \$500,000 will be spent on reserve purchases and, in total, \$3.2 million will be spent on new reserves. Twenty-two parks were purchased by the council in 1995/96 (ten of these were in the inner city) for purposes as diverse as natural heritage, conservation or sports fields.

The parks acquisition budget has been separated into two accounts, one for strategic purchases and one for neighbourhood purchases. This is important for assisting the purchase and development of neighbourhood parks. The council has an ongoing programme of strategic land acquisitions for district, metropolitan, and conservation parks, and is committed to securing the protection of the upper slopes of the Port Hills as reserve land.

An asset management programme for parks and reserves has been prepared in order to provide for the ongoing maintenance of these areas including a tree replacement programme. The council has recently decided to retain excess road reserves in order that they may be planted and landscaped to enhance local amenity values. The council has adopt-a-park, adopt-a-riverbank, and adopt-a-cemetery schemes to encourage community care and responsibility for local open space areas.

The Water Services Unit administers the city's water supply and drainage functions. Since 1989, part of the unit's activities have involved the maintenance and enhancement of natural waterways and the creation of wetland habitat. The Waterway Enhancement Programme involves enhancing the natural and amenity values of streams with the close involvement of the community. In some cases, this involves removing pipes, returning the stream to its natural character, and improving the vegetation and landscaping. This is a large undertaking; about 20 km of enhancement work has been started but another 280 km needs to be completed (Worrall 1996).

4.6 Waterway Enhancement Programme

To assist planting of stream banks the unit has provided the community with guidelines for indigenous planting alongside streams in Christchurch (Lucas Associates & Meurk 1996). The streams and wetlands can become community assets and provide important habitat for indigenous plants and birds. There has been a noticeable increase in the variety and number of bird species in some areas of the city.⁸ For one project in Woolston, the community identified that they wanted a

⁸ For example the Christchurch population of the New Zealand Scaup has increased from less than 300 birds in 1986 to around 1400 • 1500 birds in 1996. Populations of the New Zealand Shoveler, the Little Cormorant and the Australian Coot are also increasing, as has their distribution across the city (Worrall 1996).

cleaner, more natural stream, with planted banks and places for people to relax which would provide important amenity and natural values.

4.7 Other council initiatives

Local projects

The council provides community boards with funding for local projects. The community boards are generally accessible to the local communities and can be seen to be more responsive to local issues affecting amenity values. Through the allocation of \$250,000 per board for annual plan projects in their area, the boards can promote local projects aimed at enhancing local amenity values. In addition, the boards can promote and support local projects aimed at enhancing local amenity values through the allocation of \$50,000 per board for discretionary projects in their area.

The local projects programme fits well with the functions of community boards which include:

- the right to act as a resource consent hearings panel;
- a policy and monitoring overview of local aspects of streetworks, parks and traffic engineering;
- the right to approve by way of recommendation an annual submission to the central budget process; and
- the right and duty of active liaison with groups in the community with the particular objective of expanding existing residents' groups.

The four service centres in Christchurch assist the local community to present planning concerns and negotiate solutions that often relate to the management of amenity values. The staff of the service centres are regarded as being accessible by the local community and "the officers listen" to the concerns of local residents and the community. For example, in July 1996 the Linwood community activities officer arranged for a meeting of representatives of Christchurch's residents' associations to promote networking and the discussion of issues relevant to their areas. At the first meeting in July 1996, it became apparent that many groups shared similar concerns and key issues included substandard housing, the loss of historic trees, cellphone towers and urban containment. It was suggested that a core group of representatives of residents' associations be established to promote networking and the discussion of city-wide issues, and this is being facilitated by the council.

Indigenous ecosystem mapping

A joint project by the Christchurch Otautahi Agenda 21 Forum and all six community boards has enabled the preparation of reports that map which indigenous plants are natural to particular areas of the city (Lucas Associates 1996). The maps inform and assist local residents to select appropriate indigenous species to plant in their area and promote the restoration of indigenous habitat in the city. The information is available from the council service centres.

Children's Strategy

A Children's Strategy was completed in 1996 to provide an umbrella strategy for initiatives to achieve the vision of a healthy, child friendly city.

Education

In 1989 the council introduced an urban design strategy to determine building scale and height in relation to important city elements such as the squares, the Avon River, and historic buildings and precincts. The council intends to develop further design guidelines for SAMs to assist the retention of the special character of those areas.

Design guidelines for urban development are signalled in the proposed plan and will be prepared in the future. The council has prepared design guidelines to assist landowners with locating garages in front yards and to assist the assessment of these controlled activities. The guide comments that a garage in a front yard can often be the most prominent feature seen from a street. It identifies that screening and landscaping of garages is required and illustrates examples of good practice.

Keep Christchurch Beautiful: The Keep Christchurch Beautiful campaign is a volunteer campaign to increase the public's awareness of litter, rubbish and related problems and to find ways of solving them. Through the campaign, community committees have been established and competitions are held annually to promote a clean environment.

Christchurch Safer Community Council: The Christchurch Safer Community Council works in partnership with other agencies to promote a coordinated approach to crime prevention and the development of safer neighbourhoods in Christchurch. Areas of their advice that are relevant to the management of amenity values include crime prevention, improving safety, improving community relationships, and the safe design of parks, streets and other public open space.

4.8 Involvement of other groups

5. DISCUSSION OF KEY ISSUES

The management of amenity values in established residential areas is an important resource management issue for Christchurch. It is not surprising that residents and communities have expressed concern about intensification and the effects of suburban infill and redevelopment on amenity values.

The urban growth strategy is clearly defined and has undergone a thorough § 32 analysis. The council has recognised its influence in controlling growth is limited to controlling its effects and identifying future growth areas as it has little control over the rate of growth. However, the council acknowledges it can affect the timing and sequence of infrastructure to regulate the form and location of future growth.

5.1 **The city's urban growth strategy**

A clear vision for urban growth is to be developed and promoted by the Christchurch City Council, the regional council and adjacent territorial authorities. There is only a limited amount of land within Christchurch's boundaries that can be used for greenfield development unless there is a change in community values that opens the way to urbanise the "green belt". A clear vision will require coordination within the council and between agencies, and the support of the commercial sector. Communication with, and the involvement of, communities will be of vital importance, and public understanding and support of the regional growth strategy will be required.

The council has recognised that one of the main reasons for urban consolidation is to assist the development of a more sustainable transport system. Increasing population densities in suburban nodes and the inner city will increase the potential for the greater use of public transport, along with cycling and walking. However, strategies for promoting alternative forms of transport to private motor vehicles will be needed and people will need to be provided with a selection of transport modes. If the provision and use of alternative forms of transport does not occur, then intensification will lead only to greater traffic generation and compound existing traffic problems.

As documented in the urban growth § 32 analysis, policies to address the form and location of growth in Christchurch must recognise the social implications involved as well as the environmental effects. The city plan can address the environmental policies required to manage the effects of future land use change but other corporate processes need to be in place to address social impacts and economic development (Christchurch City Council 1992). The proposed plan

5.2 **Consolidation and effects on amenity values**

uses zoning to specify discrete areas where there are specific controls on the effects of an activity.

In terms of the anticipated environmental outcomes and the effect of urban growth policies on amenity values, it appears that there are contradictions in the proposed plan for the Living 2 and 3 Zones. The anticipated environmental outcomes for the Living 3 Zone include:

- maintenance and enhancement of an open street scene which reflects the garden city image;
- maintenance of a high level of residential amenity consistent with medium density inner city living; and
- the ability to find individual and community expression through controls that encourage, rather than restrain, variety in building design and style.

Some policies support this result such as:

- to maintain and enhance the inner urban area as the principal focus for the larger scale and widest range of housing forms, opportunities for higher density living environments, and diversity of activities (Policy 4.1.2); and
- to promote change in the character of selected living areas through encouraging infill and site redevelopment (Policy 11.1.3).

However, **some policies do not support this result** (emphasis added):

- **to promote** development of vacant land, and **redevelopment and more intensive use of the urban area** as a whole, **in a manner consistent with maintaining the character and amenity values of neighbourhoods** (Policy 6.1.2);
- **to reinforce the garden city image of Christchurch and the different identified characters of the living areas of the city** (Policy 11.4.10); and
- **to encourage design compatible with existing development for infill and redevelopment** throughout living areas (Policy 11.5.2).

It may not be possible to redevelop and intensify the use of the inner city area in a manner consistent with maintaining the character and amenity values of different neighbourhoods, reinforcing the garden city image and having compatible design. The amenity values may be able to be maintained or enhanced through a well-designed development (ie sympathetic to the general character and design of the street), but the wholesale intensification of use and development will alter the existing amenity values. In particular, the construction of high barrier fencing and front yard garages, increased car parking and traffic, and the loss of trees, gardens and open space will not reinforce the garden city image or maintain amenity values of neighbourhoods.

With major intensification planned for areas of the city like the Living 3 Zone, there is a major conflict between providing for the maintenance

and enhancement of amenity values and meeting strategic objectives such as urban consolidation. The council has recognised this conflict and is addressing this through zoning more land for residential development and enhancing amenity values through non-regulatory approaches. However, **the council will need to respond to effects on inner city areas like Merivale that will receive the majority of the intensification and investigate new approaches such as the use of design guides** (see chapter 5.4).

The council recognises that some areas have their own, character through the SAM provisions but all areas have their own unique identity, amenity values and characteristics. This is highlighted by the results from the three concept plan workshops where the local community could define different amenity values for their areas. There is a lack of description of the particular amenity values for different areas in the district plan and this will reduce the value of the various policies and rules relating to the maintenance and enhancement of amenity values in the proposed plan. The particular amenity values that are to be maintained or enhanced need to be identified so that these values can be considered in the assessment of environmental effects of proposed activities, and changes to amenity values can be monitored.

The proposed plan takes an effects-based approach as a basis for determining whether activities are permitted or if they require a resource consent. It will be essential that the thresholds and performance standards for amenity values are identified and adequately defined and that they take into account the amenity values of particular areas.

Trees are an important part of the city's character and amenity, and rules in the proposed plan are aimed at retaining, as far as possible, trees of special significance. Approximately 1,400 trees are listed in the proposed plan for historic, scientific, botanical, landscape, cultural, recreational, form, condition, and ecological reasons. The council acknowledges that the relative importance of trees will vary across the city and there is some flexibility to consider trees of local importance. Proposed work that affects listed heritage trees is a non-complying activity and proposed work that affects listed notable trees is a discretionary activity.

5.3 Vegetation retention

The continuing loss of urban vegetation including significant trees, groves of trees, and private gardens as a result of urban intensification is a major amenity and ecological issue. The loss of urban vegetation could also lead to a reduction in the biodiversity of the city and decrease food and habitat available for some wildlife. There is a concern that intensification in the Living 2 and 3 Zones could

compromise the garden city image and lead to a decrease in the amenity values of those areas.

The particular fabric of different areas of the city needs to be taken into account in promoting the retention of vegetation cover. The proposed plan notes that “there are other ‘significant trees’ which contribute to the amenities of a local area but where listing in the plan would be impracticable” (Christchurch City Council 1996 Vol 3, p 10/8). This is acknowledged, but general tree protection provisions for significant trees (eg over a certain height), either city-wide or for specified areas, possibly as SAMs, could complement the existing protected tree provisions of the proposed plan and reinforce the garden city image of Christchurch.

The promotion and enhancement of the tree and vegetation cover of the city could assist in mitigating the adverse effects of intensification. Other mechanisms to promote vegetation retention in Christchurch include:

- the preparation of an urban tree plan;
- the investigation of incentives to promote the maintenance of general tree cover across the city through rates relief, professional advice, council and community partnerships and the support of the commercial sector with tree planting programmes;
- the establishment of an inventory of significant gardens to recognise and promote the protection of significant private gardens;
- changing the criteria for the identification of significant trees in different areas to take greater account of the amount of tree cover in those areas and the particular amenity values of different communities; and
- encouraging living fences (eg hedges) rather than built fences and tree replacement where trees have been removed.

The loss of open space in areas subject to urban intensification often means it is difficult to retain tall trees or groves of trees. To compensate for this, increased planting of public open space including parks and streets will be required. The quality of green open space in these areas will be of particular importance.

5.4 Architectural design and character

There is a mixture of design styles and forms resulting from suburban intensification in Christchurch. Recent development is generally better than historical intensification but there are many examples of incompatible styles and designs. The scale of development, the rate of change and the cumulative effects on the architectural design and character of areas undergoing urban intensification are major issues for the city. As noted in chapter 5.2, there are some contradictions in the policies of the proposed plan relating to architectural design in the Living 3 Zone. Policy 11.5.2 is to encourage design compatible with existing development for infill and redevelopment throughout living

areas. However, it is difficult to reconcile this policy with the anticipated environmental outcome for the Living 3 Zone, namely the ability to find individual and community expression through controls that encourage, rather than restrain, variety in building design and style.

As site and housing densities increase, design becomes the critical issue that affects amenity values. The proposed plan commits the council to producing non-regulatory design guidelines for nine SAMs where external appearance has been recognised and more general design guides for public information purposes. Further guidelines are required for other areas, particularly those where there is suburban intensification. If these guidelines were supported through district plan provisions they would then have to be taken into account by resource consent applicants. While the council recognises that there is a need for innovative design solutions to address these issues, the council will need to do more than just encourage good design.

The fact that many submissions on the SAMs requested increasing the size of areas and creating new SAMs suggests that a greater distinction is required between the broad living zones to take into account the diversity of different neighbourhoods. For example, the SAMs in Sumner were considered inadequate to address the community's desire for greater heritage conservation of Sumner and it was even suggested that the entire area be recognised as a special area requiring a process to ensure sensitive change and development. Design and appearance and the retention of open space were recognised as important issues that needed to be addressed (Lucas Associates 1995a). In the 1987 Merivale study, design was identified as a critical issue and design guidelines were required for the area, although they were only prepared for the commercial area.

The assessment of resource consent applications from an urban design perspective will be a key requirement in order to promote compatible urban designs while providing for urban intensification. The council has one architect on staff who is primarily responsible for the management of the heritage provisions and the SAM provisions but further resources are required to be put into the urban design area if the policies are to be given effect.

There is a need for proactive approaches between the council, resource consent applicants, architects and land developers with the early discussion of proposals and potential designs before significant amounts of money are spent on designs that may not be compatible with local amenity values. With time, the continuity of advice and early discussions will assist successful urban design outcomes. This proactive approach may be difficult where there are one-off developments by private owners. However, private owners may have limited design experience and, in the interests of the community and the

management of amenity values, more assistance may be required from the council.

The use of medium density housing provisions similar to those used by Waitakere and Manukau City Councils could be explored by the council in order to provide for higher density living environments that have been designed in accordance with design guidelines.⁹ Appropriate intensive development that matches the local neighbourhood could then take place. The design criteria could address safety, security, privacy, amenity protection, resource efficiency and protection of natural resources.

Significant developments that may affect the urban design and character of an area could use pre-consent discussion between the local community and interest groups and an applicant that is facilitated by members of the community board.

In terms of protecting views and sunlight, difficulties in interpreting the requirements of the recession plane rules could possibly be overcome through requiring a recession plane certificate to allow for building heights to be examined and approved by a registered surveyor.

5.5 Strategic planning for the provision of public open space

There is a recognised shortage of parks and reserves in the north-west of the city and in the inner eastern parts of the city which include some of the areas targeted for urban intensification. The shortage of parks is particularly critical at the local neighbourhood level and these parks will become important areas of local public open space as intensification reduces private open space. These parks will need to be well-designed with high quality amenity values given the surrounding population density. It will be essential that reserve contributions from areas receiving further infill and intensification through redevelopment are returned to the area to purchase additional public open space or upgrade existing parks.

The council has separated funding for strategic and neighbourhood parks which will assist the purchase of the small neighbourhood parks. However, the council will also need to be able to respond very quickly in order to obtain key blocks of land for reserve purposes including sportsfields.

An associated issue with the provision of open space in the city is the lack of certainty over the future of the outer “green belt” with a large

⁹ For example, the medium density provisions in the Waitakere City Council proposed district plan (1995) and the design code developed for Manukau City Council by Rae & Mentz (1995) to be used in the assessment of applications for intensive housing. Waitakere City Council has also held workshops to provide selected design techniques for high density housing (Mentz 1996).

landowner (a major corporate apple producer) signalling potential development of this area in the near future. A strategic vision for the protection of this area needs to be put in place in order for the council to provide for sufficient large areas of public open space in the future. The funding implications of this strategic vision will be a critical issue that needs to be addressed by the council.

A green way around the city that would be parallel to the “green belt” has been proposed (by way of a submission to the proposed district plan), and it would be a major natural, recreational, and educational facility. The green way would assist the retention of indigenous species and natural heritage in the city, within the framework of a new garden city (Letter from C Meurk to the PCE 1996).

The proposed plan contains a general monitoring statement and specific monitoring provisions are included in each section. Emphasis has been placed on identifying key indicators to identify change. As part of council monitoring, the council will monitor the “maintenance of the general suburban character and amenity of the majority of the city’s living environment” for the Living 1, H and 2 Zones and the amenity values of the SAMs (Christchurch City Council 1995b).

5.6 Monitoring of amenity values

The council is not intending to monitor the amenity of the Living 3 Zone. However, it is in the Living 3 Zone where the majority of urban intensification is targeted and there will be significant effects on amenity values. This zone will also need to be monitored to assess if the provisions of the district plan and other approaches can provide for the management of the amenity values of these areas while there is increasing intensification. Baseline information on the local amenity values of each area should be obtained in order to assess future changes and the effects of urban intensification.

The identification of areas that will be intensified in the future would enable mitigation of adverse effects to be planned in advance. Modelling the effects of increased residential growth would assist planning for the enhancement of amenity values and targeting mitigation measures to those areas that require it the most.

In terms of the Neighbourhood Improvement Plan (NIP) programme, social and economic monitoring is required to assess the effectiveness of the NIP programme as an urban renewal programme. The monitoring that is planned for the North Waltham area will be very useful to assess effectiveness.

An additional research topic that would be very beneficial would be monitoring social changes resulting from higher density development and the change of amenity values.

5.7 Community participation

The concept plan or charrette process is a good initiative to facilitate the involvement of the community in planning for their area and, in particular, for identifying important amenity values and adverse effects on these values. The council has responded to the Sumner concept plan but there is also a need to respond to the two other concept plans and complete the initial round of community consultation and participation.

The charrette process raises community expectations for improved environmental management of an area and the council needs to respond to proposals and keep the community informed as to future policy developments and council approaches. An ongoing process needs to be developed to ensure that the benefits of the initial workshop are not lost and that the community can remain involved with planning for their area. The increased participation of the community board could be investigated to assist ongoing discussions. A timetable for implementing identified tasks would also be of assistance.

Several community groups have suggested the concept plan exercise is the type of consultation process that should have preceded the release of the proposed district plan.

5.8 Implementation of the “garden city” concept

The garden city image of Christchurch is actively promoted by the council. Policies and programmes that recognise this are part of a suite of initiatives to maintain and enhance amenity values in the city and to recognise and promote the city’s identity. For example, a major objective of the proposed plan is to reinforce the garden city image of Christchurch and the council is committed to a programme of urban renewal for older areas and the development of public open space.

Christchurch was modelled on an English garden city and this is apparent in the formal parks with European woodlands and in the central area within the four avenues. The future form and identity and the role of indigenous vegetation in the city will need to be examined. For example, deciduous street trees are valuable in that they do not block sunlight in winter. The use of other trees and vegetation need to be examined to assess if they can tolerate living in an urban environment with hard sealed surfaces and difficult conditions.

The council will need to do more to promote the importance of private gardens and tree cover and to ensure these gardens are maintained in areas where they are an important part of the streetscape. A strategy could be developed for the integration of indigenous vegetation and the original English garden image. The use of various incentives such as rates relief and professional design advice to promote the maintenance of amenity values could be explored by the council.

The support of the local community in promoting and achieving the garden city image which contributes to amenity values requires further promotion by the council as ultimately the management of amenity values is a shared responsibility. The building of high barrier fences to provide individual privacy and security do not enhance streetscape amenity values or the garden city image and they can contribute to a “fortress mentality”. High barrier fences do not support proposed plan policies aimed at maintenance and enhancement of an open street scene which reflects the garden city image. There are also associated safety issues when houses are removed from direct interaction with the streetscape. Further design guidance and perhaps more stringent controls need to be investigated for the construction of fences in residential areas.

A summary assessment of the Christchurch City Council’s performance in terms of managing amenity values in established suburban areas subject to intensification is shown in table 5.1.

5.9 Assessment of the council’s performance

Table 5.1 Council assessment

PCE CRITERIA FOR ASSESSING COUNCIL PERFORMANCE	PCE ASSESSMENT
The council has identified amenity values in specific areas.	General comments and anticipated environmental results in the proposed plan. Further identification required along with descriptions of different areas in the district plan.
The implications of urban growth and urban consolidation policies for the maintenance and enhancement of amenity values are considered by the council.	The urban growth strategy clearly recognises the potential effect of consolidation on, amenity values. There are some potentially conflicting policies in the proposed plan relating to the maintenance of amenity values and changes resulting from increasing levels of intensification.
The council has developed policies and practices to maintain and enhance amenity values.	The council has a wide range of regulatory and non-regulatory programmes in order to maintain and enhance amenity values.
The council integrates the use of various environmental planning mechanisms to maintain and enhance suburban amenity values in specific areas.	Urban renewal programmes, street improvements, and the implementation of the garden city image assist integrated management of amenity values.
The council implements agreed priorities for the maintenance and enhancement of suburban amenity values.	Council works programmes are outlined in the annual plan. Community boards have a discretionary fund of \$250,000 p.a. for local amenity value improvements. Long-term planning for undergrounding of overhead wires and road reconstruction has occurred.
Parties affected by changes to suburban amenity values are meaningfully consulted by the council at appropriate times prior to final decisions being made (eg during strategic planning, the development of urban growth and urban consolidation policies, and the identification of suburban amenity values).	The council has undertaken a major consultation exercise with the preparation of the proposed plan. Communities are encouraged to contact service centres and community boards. Annual residents' surveys report on amenity values and the management of the city. More work could be undertaken with specific communities in identifying local amenity values as indicated by comments in the concept plans.
Community action is encouraged by the council to maintain and enhance suburban amenity values.	The council encourages community participation in residents' associations, parkcare, tree planting, planning for local areas and stream management.
The council monitors and reports on the state of amenity values.	Monitoring is proposed for the general suburban area. None proposed for medium-high density areas.
Amenity values are maintained and enhanced to a degree which meet community aspirations.	Amenity values are recognised in general terms across the city for the suburban area and particularly for the SAMs. Less recognition of amenity values and community aspirations in the medium-high density areas.

6. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Urban form and intensification

1. The management of urban growth is a significant resource management issue for Christchurch City. New solutions are required to accommodate urban growth within existing city boundaries instead of traditional infill or suburban development.
2. The Christchurch City urban growth strategy is clearly defined and has undergone a thorough section 32 analysis. The council has long recognised the need for urban consolidation and has acted to put other policies and programmes in place that assist to implement the consolidation policy.
3. The Joint Committee on Urban Growth involving the Christchurch City Council, the Canterbury Regional Council and adjacent territorial authorities is a positive initiative to plan for the future management of urban growth.
4. Communication with, and the involvement of, communities in preparing this urban growth strategy will be of vital importance, and public understanding and support of the regional growth strategy is required.

The identification of amenity values

5. The council recognises that some amenity values will change with its consolidation policy and is using a wide range of regulatory and non-regulatory programmes in order to maintain and enhance amenity values and to mitigate or compensate changes to amenity values. However, there are areas of the Living 3 and 4 Zones where the council needs to become more proactive to ensure the adequate management of amenity values.
6. There are contradictions between the various policies and anticipated environmental outcomes in the proposed plan for the Living 2 and 3 Zones in terms of the maintenance and enhancement of amenity values and provision for intensification. For example, one policy promotes change in the character of selected living areas through encouraging infill and site redevelopment and another policy promotes development of vacant land, and redevelopment and more intensive use of the urban area as a whole, in a manner consistent with maintaining the character and amenity values of neighbourhoods.

6.1 Findings

7. The construction of high barrier fencing and front yard garages, increased car parking and traffic, and the loss of trees, gardens and open space will not reinforce the garden city image or maintain amenity values of neighbourhoods.
8. The council recognises that some areas have their own character through the SAM provisions but all areas have their own unique identity, amenity values and characteristics. This has been highlighted by the identification of amenity values by three local communities within the Christchurch area.
9. The concept plan or charrette process is a good initiative to facilitate the involvement of the community in planning for their area and, in particular, for identifying important amenity values and adverse effects on these values.

The management of amenity values

10. The rules for SAMs in the proposed district plan may not be adequate to provide for the special character of those areas, particularly where design guides only encourage compliance.
11. The lack of design guidance (eg urban design guidelines and strategies) to lessen the effects of changes in amenity created by higher housing densities has contributed to a variety of housing styles. The scale of development, the rate of change and the cumulative effects on the architectural design and character of areas undergoing urban intensification are major issues for the city.
12. The council has separated funding for strategic parks and neighbourhood parks which will assist the purchase of the small neighbourhood parks in the city. An associated issue with the provision of open space in the city is the lack of certainty over the future of the outer “green belt” and the lack of a strategic vision for the protection of this area.
13. The lack of monitoring for the Living 3 Zone will compromise the council’s ability to respond to the effects of intensification in the area. Baseline information on the local amenity values of each area is required in order to assess future changes and the effects of urban intensification, This monitoring may help to address the issue of cumulative adverse effects on amenity values and help to identify when thresholds are at risk of being exceeded by developments

Assessment of effects and resource consents

14. The assessment of resource consent applications from an urban design perspective will be a key requirement in order to promote compatible urban designs while providing for urban intensification.

To the Christchurch City Council:

6.2 Recommendations

1. Continue to develop and promote a clear vision for urban growth in conjunction with all responsible authorities and ensure that communities are consulted about the regional growth strategy.
2. Assist local communities to identify particular amenity values for all residential areas so that these values can be considered in the assessment of environmental effects of proposed activities and changes to amenity values can be monitored.
3. Explore the use of general tree protection provisions for significant trees (either city-wide or for specified areas) to complement the existing protected tree provisions of the proposed plan and to reinforce the garden city image of Christchurch.
4. Promote and enhance the tree and vegetation cover of the city to mitigate the effects of intensification through such measures as:
 - ∞ the preparation of an urban tree plan;
 - ∞ the use of incentives to promote the maintenance of general tree cover across the city through community partnerships (eg encouraging living fences (eg hedges) rather than built fences) and the support of the commercial sector with tree planting programmes;
 - ∞∞ the establishment of an inventory of significant gardens to recognise and promote the protection of significant private gardens; and
 - ∞ changing the criteria for the identification of significant trees in different areas to take greater account of the amount of tree cover in those areas and the particular amenity values of different communities.
5. Develop a dedicated urban amenity team that can take responsibility for managing the amenity values of the city through the use of regulatory and non-regulatory policies and plans.
6. Develop design guidelines and ensure that the design guidelines are supported by district plan provisions so that they have to be taken into account by resource consent applicants.
7. Use reserve contributions from areas subject to intensification for the purposes of purchasing parks in those areas and use part of the

increased rate revenue from the additional development to offset the high cost of purchasing open space in developed areas.

8. Monitor all residential zones to assess changes in amenity values and use the information to address the issue of cumulative adverse effects on amenity values.
9. Develop a process to involve the community with ongoing planning for their area to ensure that the benefits of the initial charrette workshops can be maintained. The increased participation of the community board could be investigated to help achieve this.

6.3 Christchurch City Council response

A formal response to these findings and recommendations is in appendix 2 at the back of this report.

7. THE IDENTIFICATION OF “GOOD PRACTICE”

The council is using many different methods and programmes to maintain and enhance amenity values in established residential areas. In particular, the various non-regulatory approaches such as the investment in urban renewal programmes are positive initiatives to mitigate the adverse effects of intensification and enhance public open space. In terms of the maintenance and enhancement of amenity values, the following “good practice” has been identified.

- ☞ **The proposed plan:** Parts of the proposed plan assist the maintenance and enhancement of amenity values in Christchurch. In particular:

 - ☞ the identification of Special Amenity Areas (SAMs) in the Living Zones of the proposed plan will assist the management of special aspects or characteristics of the identified areas.
 - ☞ the listing of heritage items and notable trees in the proposed plan and making proposed works subject to resource consent to provide some protection to these resources.
- ☞ **Special projects - Urban renewal:** the council’s commitment to the Neighbourhood Improvement Programme and Local Area Traffic Management Plans is encouraging as the investment can have a significant impact on improving amenity values through:

 - ☞ kerb and channel replacement, road reconstruction, the undergrounding of wires, and the planting of grass berms;
 - ☞ the installation of traffic calming measures;
 - ☞ the purchase of land for neighbourhood parks in areas lacking public open space and improvements to existing reserves; and
 - ☞ the purchase and removal of non-conforming industrial or commercial uses in residential zones.
- ☞ **Special projects - Waterway Enhancement:** The Waterway Enhancement Programme will assist the maintenance and enhancement of amenity values as well as providing for the enhancement and improvement of natural and ecological values. The programme will assist the promotion of the garden city image of Christchurch through additional open space and green areas. The close involvement of the local community with these programmes will lead to shared responsibility for these areas and improve the management of streams and streambanks.
- ☞ **Concept plans:** In terms of the management of amenity values, the concept plan or charrette process offers a unique opportunity to

involve the community in planning for the future of their local area. Through the local community identifying the important characteristics of their area, the desired character for various areas and preferred options for the future, a council can coordinate various responses not only to maintain and enhance amenity values but also to meet many other environmental management objectives.

~~///~~ **Neighbourhood parks:** The separation of the budget for the acquisition of strategic parks and neighbourhood parks will assist the purchase and development of neighbourhood parks (ie small pocket-sized parks). This will be especially important where increased housing densities are targeted for the inner city area and around suburban focal points in order to offset the reduction in private open space. The existence of local public open space will benefit the health and well-being of local communities through recreation. The recent decision by the council not to release road reserves will assist the provision of public open space as these areas can be landscaped and planted to enhance streetscapes.

~~///~~ **Community Boards:** The community boards are charged with the right and duty of active liaison with groups in the community with the particular objective of expanding existing residents groups. The community boards are generally accessible to the local communities and through discretionary funding can respond to local issues affecting amenity values.

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Lucas Associates 1995c: The shape of Christchurch within the frame of the 4 avenues. A plan developed through the inner city charrette. Lucas Associates, landscape planners, for the various residents groups, the retailers, and professional organisations. Instigated by the Civic Trust and supported by the Christchurch City Council. November 1995. Christchurch.

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Research Solutions Ltd 1993: Christchurch residents' attitudes to city attributes. Prepared for Christchurch City Council

Statistics New Zealand 1996: Christchurch City Council annual survey of residents 1996. Commissioned by the Christchurch City Council.

Worrall J 1996: Sustainable waterways, *Landscape New Zealand*. September/October 1996.

Appendix 1 Consultation list

Canterbury Regional Council
Christchurch City Community Boards: Fendalton and Hagley-Ferrymead
Christchurch City Council
Christchurch Civic Trust

Lucas Associates

Merivale Precinct Society
Ministry for the Environment: Head Office and Christchurch

National Council of Women, Christchurch Branch
New Zealand Institute of Architects
New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects
North Canterbury Branch Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society
North Canterbury Conservation Board

Sumner Residents Association

The investigation team also met with a number of individuals from Christchurch.

**Appendix 2 Christchurch City Council
response**

THE MANAGEMENT OF SUBURBAN AMENITY VALUES - RESPONSE OF THE CHRISTCHURCH CITY COUNCIL TO A REPORT BY THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMISSIONER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

INTRODUCTION

This response on behalf of the Christchurch City Council follows the request of the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment and addresses the recommendations made by the Commissioner regarding the management of suburban amenity values in Christchurch in those areas subject to intensification.

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHRISTCHURCH

The study identifies a number of positive initiatives adopted by the City Council contributing to mitigating the adverse impacts of intensification on amenity values. Those methods and programmes identified include:

- The Proposed City Plan, particularly the identification of special amenity areas (SAMs) and the listing of heritage items and trees.
- Special projects such as Neighbourhood Improvement Plans, LATMs and the Waterway Enhancement Programme. All are identified as contributing significantly to improving amenity values.
- The preparation and development of Concept Plans (using the planning charrette process), involving communities in planning for the future of their local area.
- The acquisition of strategic and neighbourhood parks.
- The active liaison with groups in the community by Community Boards and their ability through discretionary spending to respond to local issues.

The recommendations of the study to the Christchurch City Council suggest continuation of these and many initiatives being implemented by the Council impacting upon the processes of intensification and the management of amenity values. The study promotes the ongoing development of these, as well as further initiatives to achieve successful management of amenity values in these areas. The Council is currently committed to continuing to develop and promote the following initiatives:

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(a) Urban Growth Strategy

The Commissioner acknowledges the commitment of the City Council, the Regional Council and adjacent territorial authorities to establishing a clear vision for long term urban growth in the region. It is suggested that communication with, and the involvement of, communities will be of vital importance to this process, and public understanding and support of the regional growth strategy will be required. The Commissioner also notes the need for strategies promoting alternative forms of transport to private motor vehicles in recognition of the effects of intensification in terms of traffic generation.

Work is progressing towards the release of a draft discussion document, expected for the middle of 1998, and an extensive programme of consultation is also being developed expected to involve focus groups and other agencies. The outcomes of this study will set direction for the management of urban growth in the wider Christchurch area for the next 30 - 40 years.

(b) City Plan and Local Area Amenity Identification

The Commissioner questions the potential for conflict in meeting some of the objectives expressed in the Proposed City Plan. For example, it is suggested it may not be possible to redevelop and intensify the use of the inner city area in a manner consistent with maintaining the character and amenity values of different neighbourhoods, reinforcing the garden city image and achieving compatible building design. The particular amenity values that are to be maintained or enhanced need therefore to be clearly identified so that these values can be considered in the assessment of environmental effects of proposed activities and changes to amenity values can be monitored over time.

Considerable efforts were made in preparing the Proposed City Plan to identify matters contributing to residential amenity values throughout the city. This was instrumental in identifying zoning patterns and in setting more specific controls such as those applying to special amenity areas (SAMs). At that time the concept of special amenity areas was new and as now evident by submissions to the City Plan this concept has been viewed with some considerable favour by many in the community. Consequently it is quite possible the SAM concept will be further developed and expanded as a result of the submission process. The outcomes of this process will be known towards the end of 1998 when it is anticipated that Council decisions will be released.

(c) Vegetation

The particular fabric of different areas of the city needs to be taken into account in promoting the retention of vegetation cover. The Commissioner therefore suggests that general tree protection provisions for significant trees either city wide or for specified areas could complement the existing protected tree provisions of the Proposed Plan. In addition, the Commissioner recognises that the loss of open space in areas subject to urban intensification often means it is difficult to retain tall trees or groves of trees. To compensate for this increased planting of public open space, including parks and streets, will be required. The Council will need to do more to promote the importance of private gardens and tree cover and to ensure these gardens are maintained in areas where they are an important part of the streetscape. The Commissioner suggests that the use of various incentives such as rates relief and professional design advice to promote the maintenance of amenity values could be further explored by the Council.

General tree protection provisions were considered in the preparation of the Proposed City Plan and at that time were not adopted principally because of anticipated implementation and administrative costs. However, a recently notified variation to the Proposed Plan promotes including further trees and groups of trees on the protected tree list and significant trees can be protected as a condition of subdivision approval under the Proposed City Plan. A programme of street tree planting is . . . also underway in the inner city where significant residential redevelopment is occurring.

The Commissioner suggests monitoring be undertaken of change in the extent of vegetation relative to hard surfacing as a factor impacting upon amenity and this will be included in the Council's monitoring programme where building densities are increasing.

Similarly, the proposed preparation of an "urban tree plan" has some merit in that a wide range of Council activities affect trees throughout the city. This could form a part of, or be prepared as an adjunct to the Natural Environment Strategy currently being prepared. Lastly, the Council's tree evaluation system is sensitive to variations in the levels of amenity between different areas of the City in assessing trees for protection, and this received support in submissions to the Proposed City Plan.

(cl) Urban Amenity Team and Design Guidelines

The Proposed Plan commits the Council to producing non-regulatory design guides for special amenity areas and more general design guides for public information purposes. The Commissioner, however suggests that while the Council recognises that there is a need for innovative design solutions to address many of the issues associated with intensification, the Council will need to do more than just encourage good design. The Commissioner promotes proactive approaches between the Council, resource consent applicants, architects and land developers. It is suggested that this could be facilitated by an urban amenity team comprised of a variety of experts from within the Council.

In effect, an urban amenity team operates already in respect of applications for resource consent on plan changes. Specialist advice relating to matters such as transport, landscape, architecture and heritage is obtained where appropriate, in exercising Council discretion in respect to notification versus non-notification of resource consent applications and in the assessment of environmental effects. Use has also been made of independent design panels, on occasion, in implementing resource management functions, and the Council has an ongoing commitment to investigating the possibilities for utilising further non-regulatory methods in achieving City Plan objectives.

The Council's Environmental Committee has sought that a report be prepared investigating the potential role of an urban amenity team, particularly in terms of issues associated with urban design. The Council is currently working with representatives of the New Zealand Institute of Architects examining urban design issues and ways of achieving improved urban design, relating particularly to inner city residential areas.

The Council is committed to the preparation of design guidelines and work is underway to produce a range of these in support of the regulatory provisions of the City Plan. Recent guidelines to emerge include that relating to locating garages in front yards and to assist in interpreting external appearance controls for buildings within special amenity areas. While progress has been made, it is recognised that further work is needed to ensure additional guidance material is produced. In addition, further consideration is being given to the extent of regulatory controls over building design as this is a matter raised in a number of submissions to the Proposed City Plan.

(e) Strategic Planning of Public Open Space

The importance of the ongoing purchase of parks, particularly at the local neighbourhood level, is recognised given that intensification reduces private open space. It will be essential that reserve contributions from areas receiving further infill and redevelopment are returned to those areas to purchase additional public open space or upgrade existing parks. The Commissioner also identifies a need for a strategic vision for the protection of what is traditionally described as the "green belt" in securing sufficient large areas of public open space in the future.

The Council endeavours to reinvest reserve contributions in those general areas from which they were obtained. Clearly areas subject to intensification are often areas of existing open space deficiency, and this is sought to be addressed in a recently adopted Council policy for the acquisition of neighbourhood parks. This policy targets areas of current deficiency as areas for future acquisition of open space.

(f) **Monitoring and Community Involvement**

The Commissioner recognises significant moves already underway in terms of monitoring specific provisions of the Proposed Plan, however those zones most affected by intensification will also need to be monitored to assess the performance of the provisions of the Proposed City Plan. Baseline information on local amenity values in each area would be critical to this process. The Commissioner acknowledges initiatives undertaken by the Council in terms of involving communities in local planning for their area, such as planning charrettes. It is suggested that an ongoing process needs to be developed to ensure the benefits of workshops such as these are not lost, and that further initiatives ensure the community remain involved in planning for their local areas. It is recommended, for example, that increased participation of Community Boards could be investigated to assist ongoing discussions with local communities.

The initial focus of the City Plan Monitoring Programme for residential amenity values targets suburban locations. However, the need to also monitor other residential areas, particularly those subject to increasing densities of development is recognised. Given the consequential effects on existing amenity values experienced in these areas as a result of intensification, initial monitoring will be expanded to include the higher density living environments of the inner city. Reference is made by the Commissioner to community involvement in managing the effects of intensification and the Council has used the planning charrette process in producing plans to assist local communities in identifying and addressing planning issues in their area. A programme to develop the outcomes of these workshops has been established and initial findings are being refined in consultation with participants, before being presented to respective Community Boards. The Council anticipates that further such workshops could be undertaken in the future.

CONCLUSION

The report of the Commissioner commends a number of current initiatives of the City Council, both regulatory and non-regulatory, in managing the effects of intensification of built development in residential areas. The Commissioner also highlights areas where further action could be implemented, some of which are currently being addressed through the City Plan submissions process, others able to be pursued outside of that process and as resources permit.