

THE MANAGEMENT OF SUBURBAN AMENITY VALUES

**Administration by Auckland,
Christchurch and Waitakere City Councils**

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

This report is a synthesis of an investigation into local authority management of suburban amenity values. Background reports for the Auckland, Christchurch and Waitakere City Council case studies and the summary of findings are available from this Office on request.

Investigation Team

Jenny Boshier (Team Leader)	BE (Chem)
Phil Hughes	BSc (Geog), BA (Econ), MRRP
Gill James	LLB

Reviewers

Stephen Brown	LA4 Landscape Architects, Auckland
Joanne Lewis	Joanne Lewis Consultancy, Taupo
Graeme McIndoe	Architect & Urban Designer, Wellington

Editor

Jeanne M Boland	Capstone Consultants
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PREFACE

Amenity values, the things that we really feel good about and cherish in our urban/suburban environments, while defined in the Resource Management Act 1991, are a complex issue. They are however **fundamental** to city and community survival in the long term. Some densely populated cities in other countries illustrate different approaches used for managing amenity values and ensuring the cities operate and function effectively. While such a contrast may seem irrelevant, the failure to appreciate the linkages between the major “systems” that affect amenity values in cities (ie population growth, demography, sewerage, transport, water, open space, vegetation, building design) will inevitably result in a decline in the environmental qualities of our urban landscapes.

New Zealand’s traditional low density city with its 1000 square metre section is no longer viable in our major urban centres. Low density suburban sprawl has devoured quality land in some areas but, more importantly, has resulted in a very attenuated city form, the infrastructure of which is very expensive to maintain. Many of our cities are now having to grow by urban consolidation.

Low density is now described as a minimum of 500-650 square metres. This reduction in land area per dwelling unit will continue as our cities work through the painful process to achieve a more compact urban form. It’s worth reflecting that the walking cities of last century had a much more compact form, with section sizes of less than 200 square metres in some of our older centres. These early, densely settled areas are in some cases now considered to have high amenity value and to be very desirable places to live - a strong signal that New Zealanders can live at higher densities than has been traditionally accepted.

The challenge for councils is to identify and manage amenity values while urban intensification proceeds. Meeting this challenge necessitates keeping in close touch with the community and, via community group processes, develop agreement on identifying important amenity values and finding ways of managing them. Community groups are potentially very powerful learning forums for both community representatives and professionals associated with urban development. Complete urban coverage by such groups is essential, given that in many cases it appears large areas in our cities have not been identified as having any particular amenity values. This lack of identification of core amenity values exposes significant parts of our cities to the risk of amenity loss.

There is no doubt that amenity values will change as a result of intensification. Planning is the key to achieving the sound management of amenity values. Case studies on which this report is based indicate there is a big variation in how communities and councils have planned or are planning to manage amenity values. In most communities, councils have **recognised** some areas as requiring special protection, due to character, heritage, design or street aspects. These

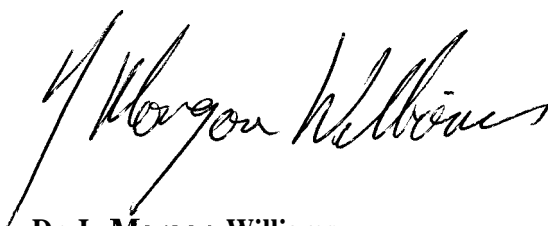
areas, although not excluded from intensification, have in general retained the character of their street or neighbourhood, but other areas have not. The balance between providing for intensification and maintaining or enhancing amenity values does not seem to have been achieved.

Some neighbourhoods, for example, have not been able to mitigate the effects of the loss of mature trees and vegetation. This is of particular concern because most communities appear to favour tree protection. It is an aspect of urban amenity values that is particularly important to the overall ecological health of a city and is much more than a simple protection of individual trees. The focus has to be on the protection and enhancement of the whole biotic component of the urban ecosystem. The trend towards focusing on vegetation maintenance as part of ecosystem maintenance, using for example streams and public spaces to develop wildlife corridors, is being recognised in some of our cities. Much greater emphasis on this component will be required in the future.

Good planning of our cities, for amenity value purposes and overall development, is dependent on adequate research into city forms. Urban research in New Zealand, that is, research on design options, infrastructure options, scenarios for transport development - structural as well as financial - appears to be woefully inadequate. New Zealand is drawing largely on overseas research for its urban models which is unlikely to be satisfactory in the long term. Our cities, in global terms, are very new. They have some unique needs related to our blend of people, lifestyle, climate, location and urban form. Research effort needs to focus on these special needs, and include what we can learn globally.

Finally, good management of amenity values requires appropriate monitoring systems. This is where the community can play an important part in helping define the attributes that need monitoring as well as actually doing the work in some instances. Monitoring amenity values needs to be part of an urban environmental indicator programme.

While this report has focused on the management of amenity values in suburban areas subject to intensification, it has highlighted the many other factors that are influencing the sustainable evolution of our cities. Cities represent our most intensive land use and this report highlights the urgency for attention to many aspects of urban development. In the last few decades, the focus of land management issues has been on rural New Zealand. This study indicates that it is now timely to put much greater focus on our urban/suburban areas; after all, that is where almost 80 percent of New Zealanders live, work and play.



Dr J. Morgan Williams
Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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 amenity values. Some communities consulted during this investigation expected little

Introduction

Findings

Urban form and intensification

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 s 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.

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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(l)(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

This particular review has been prompted after several territorial authorities indicated to the Commissioner that the management of amenity values was an important resource management issue in their area. In addition, approximately twenty complaints about infill developments occurring in suburban areas have been received by the Commissioner since 1994. After considering Part II of the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA), the Act's focus on avoiding, remedying or mitigating adverse effects and taking the above factors into account, the Commissioner decided to investigate the effects arising from intensification in established residential areas rather than the activity of infill itself.

This investigation focuses on the management of amenity values in established suburban residential areas that are subject to intensification. In the 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).

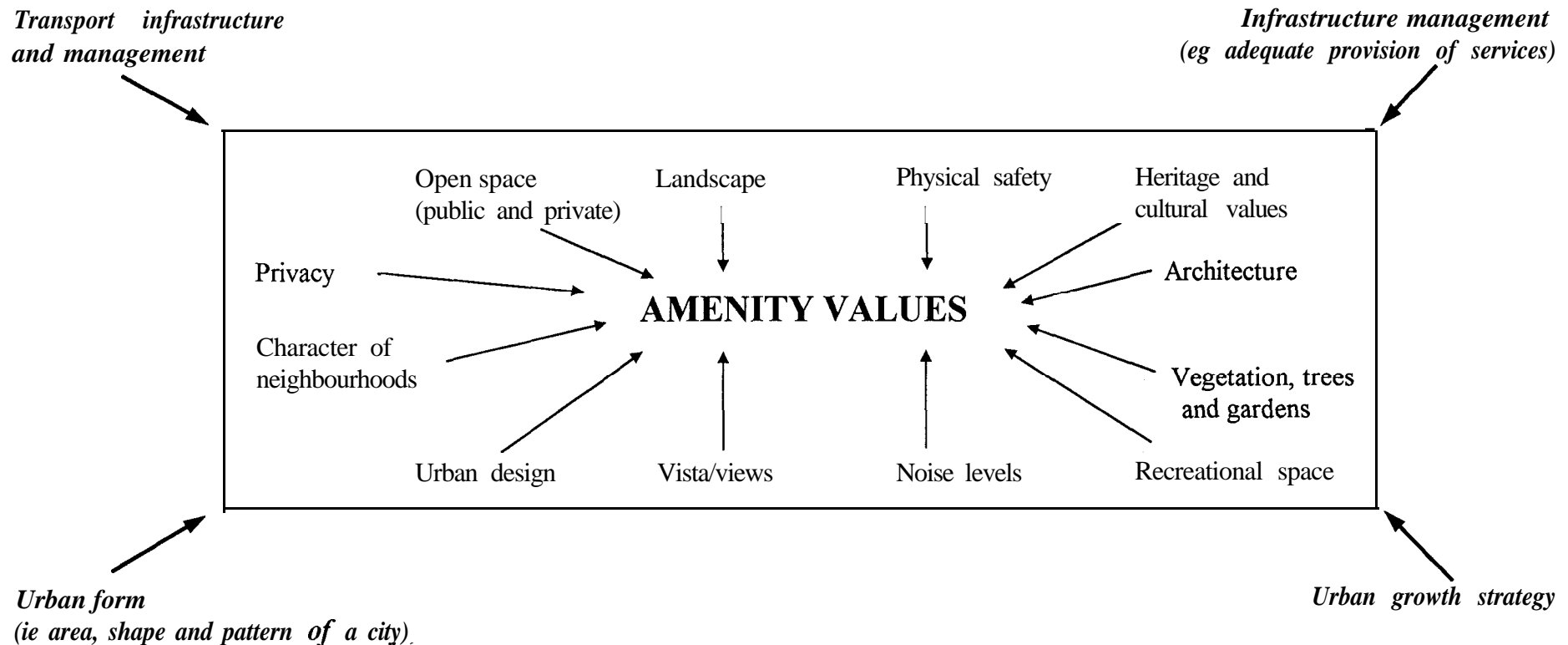
Definitions and interpretations of amenity values and how amenity values are affected by suburban intensification are discussed in chapter 2 of this report. Although the focus of this investigation is on the management of suburban amenity values, the linkages between the management of amenity values and other issues such as transport planning and the provision of infrastructure have been acknowledged where appropriate (see figure 1).

Suburban intensification (ie changing housing densities and population densities) can affect a city's infrastructure, transportation network, the

1.1 Background to the investigation and methodology

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, Tauranga and Wanganui District Councils* (1996); and *Administration of Compliance with Resource Consents - Report of an investigation of three councils* (1996).

Figure 1 Suburban amenity values and significant influences on those values



Significant Effects on Suburban Amenity Values from Intensification

- Changes to the streetscape and the combination of the natural and the built environment.
- Increased dominance of the built environment with loss of views and sunlight and increased shading.
- Unsympathetic architectural styles.
- Loss of public and private open space (active and passive recreation).
- Loss of privacy and increased noise levels.
- Loss of areas of bush, trees and gardens and loss of wildlife corridors and habitat.
- Increased traffic generation, on-street car parking and effects of increased traffic on safety.
- Exacerbated stormwater flows with an increase in hard impervious surfaces.
- Loss of heritage and special character areas.

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).

As with previous local authority reviews by the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment, three local authorities were chosen as case studies for the purposes of this investigation. 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.

After examination of a number of local authorities, Auckland, Christchurch and Waitakere City Councils were chosen for case study purposes for this review. 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 this synthesis report and in the formulation of good practice guidelines for the management of amenity values.

A brief outline of the geography and resource management issues facing the three cities is provided in chapter 3.1. Key parts of the Auckland Isthmus and Christchurch City are experiencing a rapid transition from a suburban to an urban environment. This transition has not been experienced before by many of their residents and the respective city councils are attempting to manage the transition and plan for the future. Waitakere City is attempting to plan for intensification and manage the effects of growth with a focus on urban design and the development of an eco-city.

The investigation team visited each city for one week in August and September 1996 to meet with the respective city council and community boards. In addition, the team met with a selection of agencies, community groups and individuals who have an interest in the management of amenity values of their neighbourhood or the city. A list of organisations and parties consulted during this investigation is in appendix 1.

Visits were also made to different residential areas and neighbourhoods to view suburban intensification and various projects aimed at managing and enhancing amenity values.

1.2 List of critical issues

Critical issues relating to the management of suburban amenity values and intensification that were raised by councils, agencies, residents and community groups during this review include:

- ▬ the relative weight given to amenity values compared to other resource management issues such as the adequate provision of infrastructure;
- ▬ the form and direction of urban growth (ie the potential conflict between changes in urban form and effects on amenity values and the overall character and identity of a city);
- ▬ changes to the existing built character and the design and form of new buildings in established residential areas;
- ▬ the loss of private open space and the provision and role of urban parks, reserves and public open space;
- ▬ the loss of mature trees, gardens and areas of bush from private land;
- ▬ the apparent lack of consideration of the effects of housing activities on the amenity values of neighbourhoods and streets in general residential zones;
- ▬ the test for notification of a resource consent application and what is regarded as a minor adverse effect on amenity values;
- ▬ the inability of the community to have input into the assessment of the effects on amenity values where an application is not notified;
- ▬ the ability of a council to assess any cumulative effects that may contribute to a decrease in amenity values for future generations; and
- ▬ allowing home occupations and mixed use development in residential areas with a potential loss of amenity values from increased traffic and noise.

Residential development in commercial areas (ie the conversion of offices to apartments or the building of new apartments) adjacent to residential areas can also affect established residential areas with spillover effects such as increased on-street car parking and increased noise levels.

1.3 Terms of reference and assessment criteria

The terms of reference for the investigation were:

1. To review the manner in which the Auckland, Christchurch and Waitakere City Councils are 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 Auckland, Christchurch and Waitakere City

Councils 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 1997;² and also in the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment's Annual Report to Parliament for the year ending 30 June 1997.

The assessment criteria that were used for assessing the performance of the three case study councils for this investigation are shown in appendix 2.

Chapter 2 introduces the term “amenity values” and briefly reviews case law pertaining to amenity values and planning approaches. It then summarises major residential amenity values and changes to amenity values from residential intensification.

1.4 Chapter summary

The geographical, population and resource management issues affecting the three case study councils are briefly reviewed in chapter 3. Particular pressures and constraints on the three case study councils are then discussed with further information on urban growth policies provided in appendix 3.

Chapter 4 describes amenity values as identified by the case study councils and local communities and then outlines approaches to involve the community in identifying amenity values and council monitoring of amenity values.

Chapter 5 summarises the councils' responses to managing amenity values through district plan approaches and other mechanisms such as special projects, the provision of open space and urban design.

Chapter 6 discusses the management of amenity values given residential intensification and then comments on the management of critical parts of residential amenity: urban design, urban vegetation and open space. The mitigation of adverse effects and the enhancement of amenity values are identified as important issues.

The report concludes with a series of findings and recommendations in chapter 7 with the identification of “good practice” in the final chapter.

²

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

2. INTERPRETATIONS OF AMENITY VALUES

“Amenities” was defined in section 2 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1977 (T&CPA) as “those qualities and conditions in an area which contribute to the pleasantness, harmony, and coherence of the environment and to its better enjoyment for any permitted use”. Reference to amenities occurred in s 4(1) T&CPA which set out the purpose of regional, district and maritime planning. The general purpose was:

the wise use and management of the resources, and the direction and control of the development, of a region, district, or area in such a way as will most effectively promote and safeguard the health, safety, convenience, and the economic, cultural, social, and general welfare of the people, and the amenities, of every part of the region, district, or area.

The district plan was to deal with the preservation or conservation of “the amenities of the district” (cl 5 Second Schedule).

The emphasis on amenities in the T&CPA was on the development of future amenities (Palmer 1984, p 240). In *Mundy v Cunningham* ([1978] NZLR 555, 560) Haslam J said:

The Act is designed (inter alia) to protect the citizen against certain forms of detriment of an intangible kind and to emphasise the importance of keeping in mind the preservation of aesthetic values. Furthermore, the definition of amenity already cited gives emphasis to the qualities of environment in a particular neighbourhood!

The Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) uses the term “amenity values” in the definition of “environment” and in s 7(c) of “other matters”. “Environment” is defined in the Act as:

- a) *Ecosystems and their constituent parts, including people and communities; and*
- b) *All natural and physical resources; and*
- c) *Amenity values; and*
- d) *The social, economic, aesthetic, and cultural conditions which affect the matters stated in paragraphs (a) to (c) of this definition or which are affected by those matters.*

Definition of amenity values

2.1.1 Historical context – Town and Country Planning Act 1977

2.1.2 Resource Management Act 1991

The term “amenity values” is defined broadly in the 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).

Section 7(c) RMA requires all persons exercising functions and powers under the RMA to “have particular regard to the maintenance and enhancement of amenity values”.

The purpose of the RMA (section 5) is to promote the sustainable management of natural and physical resources; “sustainable management” includes the ability of people and communities to provide for their social, economic, and cultural well being and for their health and safety. The proximity of buildings and the relationships between buildings and open space can have an impact on health and safety. The well being of people and communities, and health and safety issues affect, and are affected by, amenity values and the management of those values.

The matters set out in s 7 (along with those in ss 6 and 8 RMA) are subordinate to the purpose of the RMA expressed in s 5 (*New Zealand Rail Ltd v Marlborough District Council* [1994] NZRMA 70). The s 7 matters are intended to guide persons exercising functions and powers under the RMA as to how the purpose is to be achieved; the s 7 matters are not ends in themselves (*Reith v Ashburton District Council* [1994] NZRMA 241). So the duty to have particular regard to the matters in s 7 must be fulfilled in the context of s 5 RMA.

If the maintenance or enhancement of amenity values in a particular instance would not promote the sustainable management of natural and physical resources, or would conflict with a matter of national importance in s 6 or another matter in s 7, then those amenity values may not be able to be maintained or enhanced. Amenity values may also conflict with each other; for example, one person’s need for privacy may conflict with the neighbour’s view or sunlight. The duty to have particular regard to the maintenance and enhancement of amenity values is a duty to recognise those values as important and to consider and weigh them carefully in making a decision (*Marlborough District Council v Southern Ocean Seafoods* [1995] NZRMA 220, 336).

Important components of amenity values are historic and cultural heritage values (s 7(c) RMA) and landscape values (s 6(b) RMA), which are included in ss 6 and 7 in their own right. A heritage order may be used to protect any place of special interest, character, intrinsic or amenity value or visual appeal, or of special significance to the

tangata whenua for spiritual, cultural or historical reasons (s 189(1) RMA). A place may be of special interest by having special architectural, historical, scientific, ecological or other interest (s 189(2) RMA).

The concept of amenity values as provided for in the RMA is an anthropocentric concept; what the amenity values of an area are will depend on what is appreciated by people, and whether some particular characteristic of the area is viewed positively or negatively by the local people. It is also a subjective concept; the views of the people who live there, namely the people most likely to be directly affected, are of greater relevance than those of the “reasonable person”.¹ That subjectivity is tested by the objectivity of the planning process.²

Amenity values are not restricted to areas that are residential or rural as opposed to commercial or industrial,³ although a large number of the cases brought to the Planning Tribunal (now the Environment Court) on s 7(c) relate to residential areas.

What is required to “maintain and enhance” amenity values?

The Court of Appeal has interpreted section 7(c) as not requiring that a proposal *both* maintain *and* enhance amenity values, but to *either* maintain or enhance those values (*Shell Oil NZ Ltd v Auckland CC* [1996] NZRMA 189, Court of Appeal). The use of the term “maintain” does not necessarily imply that there should be no change to the amenity values of an area as amenity values will change with time even without human intervention. It does suggest that there should be no deterioration in those values. However, suburban intensification will inevitably change some of the particular amenity values of an area. The term “enhance” envisages some improvement to amenity values.

2.2 Legal interpretations of amenity values

What are amenity values? Illustrations

The cases decided by the Planning Tribunal (now the Environment Court), which have considered amenity values, tend to deal with two

¹ The RMA places some emphasis on the importance of **affected** persons in the plan-making and resource consent application processes: clause 5 of the First Schedule and ss 93 and 94.

² *Chan v Auckland City Council* [1995] NZRMA263, 273, where Judge Kenderdine commented that “[t]here is therefore a subjective element in the perception of amenity too, as it involves personal appreciation of that quality”.

³ *Hopper Nominees Ltd v Rodney District Council* [1996] NZRMA 179, 187-8 – the Planning Tribunal had considered the effects of the proposal on the commercial amenity values and refused the application to build a residential dwelling. The High Court upheld the decision of the Planning Tribunal, finding that “in considering amenity values and the environment, the Tribunal is entitled to have regard to the zoning and the surrounding activities.”

categories of proposal: infill housing applications and applications to build service stations in residential areas. A significant number of these cases relate to the Auckland area.

The infill housing cases

The characteristics of an area are relevant to its amenity values. Judge Kenderdine commented on “special character” in *Lee v Auckland CC* ([1995] NZRMA 241,258):

[i]t appears that ‘special character’ is wider than just identified housing. It encompasses built and natural features, larger trees, spaciousness, a certain pattern of buildings, distinctive streetscapes.

The amenity of the immediate neighbours was found to be relevant, but the amenity of the larger environment or precinct contained within the boundaries of the zone was also relevant. The Judge observed that the council was entitled to rank streets as a whole even if there were some minor inconsistencies in terms of the character it was trying to protect within them.

In *Chan v Auckland City Council* ([1995] NZRMA 263) neighbours were concerned that the proposed infill development would negate the amenity and privacy afforded by the large open space rear yards of their properties and that of the applicants. Judge Kenderdine found that the bulk and height of the proposed additional rear unit would invade the current open space amenity of the environment in a way that could not be offset by landscaping. She commented:

Unfortunately a two-storey building with the bulk and consequent dominance of this proposal on its small site does not satisfy the need to sustain the level of amenity and spatial qualities of this area which ensure to some extent the reasonable privacy of the neighbouring residences (Chan v Auckland City Council [1995] NZRMA 27 1).

By way of contrast, in *Brown v Auckland City Council* (W185/96, Judge Treadwell, 12/12/96), the Environment Court, in coming to the decision that the effect of a third unit on a site would be minor, put some weight on the fact that the unit would be unobtrusive and at the rear of the site.

The petrol station cases

In *BP Oil v Auckland City Council* ([1992] 2 NZRMA 2 18, 223), Judge Treadwell found that the effect of a service station on the chosen site upon the environment would be appreciable and therefore not minor. Judge Treadwell also found that the effect of the service station on the amenity values of the area would be adverse. The natural and

physical qualities and characteristics of the area consisted largely of residences with well laid-out gardens, which would not be enhanced by the presence of a major service station.

Any non-residential development in a residential zone should be assessed as to its design and scale to avoid unnecessary incongruity with its environment (*BP Oil (NZ) Ltd v Christchurch City* [1992] 2 NZRMA 65, 69).

In *BP Oil Ltd v Waitakere CC*, ([1996] NZRMA 67) BP had applied for consent to erect a service station at an intersection in a residential area. Council refused consent and the Planning Tribunal upheld that decision. The High Court dismissed the appeal after referring to the decision of the Planning Tribunal in *Shell Oil NZ Ltd v Wellington City Council* ([1992] 2 NZRMA SO), where the Tribunal had commented that:

If operators such as the present appellant wish to bring their enterprise into zones of residential character and harmonious design, then they must tailor their structures to fit the amenities there at present.

The definition of amenity values places strong emphasis on the present neighbourhood character. It would not be exaggeration to state that the design of most modern service stations is effectively a complete advertisement for the product. . . . The whole colour scheme, layout, lighting and signage of a modern service station is one large attention-attracting complex, with motifs designed to indicate from a distance the brand of fuel which is sold . . .

This passage was also cited with approval by the Tribunal in *Foxley Engineering Ltd v Wellington City Council* (W12/94, Judge Kenderdine, 16/3/94). The *Foxley Engineering* case concerned a proposal for the development of a service station by Mobil Oil on a central city Wellington site which was characterised by its proximity to substantial historic buildings set back from the street with extensively landscaped frontages (Old Parliament Buildings, the Railway Station). The Tribunal found that the effect of the proposal on the visual amenity of the area would be adverse and major.

In a recent case, *Shell New Zealand v Auckland City Council* (W 15 8/96, Judge Kenderdine, 19/1 1/96), the Environment Court found that the proposed service station could not avoid being out of character in a residential area.

Cumulative effects on amenity values

In deciding whether or not to grant a resource consent, a consent authority must consider what are the effects, including cumulative

effects, of the proposed activity on the amenity values of the affected area.

The decision in *Lee v ACC* specifically addresses the matter of the cumulative effects of infill development. In that case the Planning Tribunal agreed with the submitters that “if the appellants’ site is suitable for infill housing in the terms indicated by their witnesses, then these qualities apply to the generality of sites in the area.” There was nothing to distinguish the site in question from other sites in the area, so granting the consent would have a potential adverse effect “if we consider the **spectre** of **future** applications and cumulative effects”.

Other similar applications would follow and be difficult for the council to resist. The Tribunal found that if the proposal were allowed there would be a cumulative adverse effect which would be more than minor on the conditions of spaciousness and historic form and pattern of open space in the area.

A similar situation arose in *Chan v ACC* where the site was surrounded by numerous other properties with similar features making them suitable for infill. The Tribunal found that the potential for the development of these other sites on a similar basis to the Chan application (if granted) was a prospect of high probability which would result in the loss of overall amenity in the precinct.

Rather than taking the “last straw” approach to cumulative effects, which would mean determining which was the last application that could be granted without serious adverse effects on the environment, the Tribunal, in *Chan*, approached the issue of cumulative effects on the basis of consistency of treatment of applications, that is whether granting this application would mean other applications would be difficult to resist.

In *Brown v Auckland City Council*, Judge Treadwell gave some consideration to the nature of the other sites in the street and whether a decision allowing the third unit on a site would lead others to expect similar consent. He decided that there were unusual factors about the Brown application, namely that the site had already been developed for the construction of a third unit well before the proposed plan was notified and if no unit were built the unkempt appearance of the building platform would continue.

2.3 Planning for amenity values

The term “amenity values” is a subjective concept but particular amenity values can be identified for different areas. The subjectivity of amenity values reinforces the need to identify, interpret and define the amenity values of specific areas.

The Ministry for the Environment (1996a) has commented that there is a need for a clear definition of the amenity values of particular areas in a district plan. The Minister for the Environment has stated that “the RMA requires plans to define amenity very precisely” (Upton 1996). A district plan needs to describe what elements make up the amenity values or character of certain areas and the threats to these values from proposed activities. Rules based on a clear description of the amenity values appreciated by the local community should:

- provide guidance to potential applicants to assess if their proposal is compatible with the character of an area;
- provide some certainty to current landowners, residents and the community;
- provide consistent guidelines for decision-making;
- provide the rationale for conditions, standards and terms; and
- provide specific anticipated environmental results which can be monitored (Ministry for the Environment 1996a).

An example of an approach to planning for amenity values is that of the Thames-Coromandel District Council (Thames-Coromandel District Council 1997). The draft district plan contains a resource management strategy for the Thames-Coromandel District and provides:

- a statement of the anticipated future environmental conditions the community wants;
- a framework to promote integrated development within the district;
- the direction of council investment in public services, facilities, reserves and roads; and
- the essential ingredients for environmental decision-making.

The resource management strategy contains five components to assist the council achieve integrated development: landscape and amenity values, services, roading and accessibility, settlement, and tangata whenua. Key principles are stated for each of the components and they reflect the aspirations of the community while taking into account the environment as a whole.

The landscape and amenity values strategy identifies the landscape components and amenity values within the district by planning area. It assesses landscape quality and sensitivity by planning area, and additional components of amenity values: pleasantness, aesthetic coherence, cultural and spiritual significance, and recreational attributes.

Historically, land use zoning has been used to spatially identify and group different areas that have a similar character and pattern of land uses and to separate incompatible land uses. Specific activities could then be allocated to discrete zones to ensure the separation of different land uses (eg residential, commercial, industrial, rural and conservation). Land use zoning provided some certainty and security

2.3.1 Planning approaches

for existing residents and land uses as it could protect them from the adverse effects of other activities, but it limited mixed use development and the innovative use of land for new purposes.

The RMA emphasises that the effects of activities should be managed rather than the activities themselves. However, zoning is still a valid management technique to identify discrete areas to which various rules apply such as distinguishing between areas with different amenity values. Overlay zones or areas of special amenity within a broad general residential zoning are other techniques that can be used. Performance standards or thresholds may be used to specify the levels of effects that can be tolerated in a particular area.

Problems can arise with the use of performance standards where it is difficult to define a threshold or measure the effects of an activity. This is particularly so for subjective assessments such as effects on landscapes, character and amenity values. Professor Palmer, in commenting on the value of adopting performance standards *vis à vis* zoning for land use segregation, noted that performance standards had serious limitations in relation to the preservation of community amenities and character (Palmer 1984, p 222).

Auckland City has retained the concept of zoning as a land use control in the proposed Isthmus district plan although it is less directive than in the past. The proposed plan continues to group “activity areas” of similar character such as residential or business. The proposed plan comments that this technique recognises the existing pattern of activities and allows a range of future developments in keeping with the character and amenities of those areas.

In the Christchurch City proposed district plan, spatial differentiation through zoning continues to be used but this is done to achieve generally common environmental results through a broad identification of the effects of the use of resources within the zones. Environmental standards or limits of effects are then used to regulate the establishment and operation of activities within these zones according to the scale of their effects.

The Waitakere City proposed district plan recognises both the natural and the built environment and has used a combination of management layers (Natural Areas and Human Environments) in order to address the management of the effects of activities on natural and physical resources.

2.4 Types of amenity values

The term “amenity values” potentially encompasses a wide range of natural and physical qualities and characteristics (given the RMA definition) and also non-physical values. These values are not static

and because of their dynamic nature they will change with time and with cultural preferences and socio-economic status.

Amenity values can be defined at a range of spatial levels such as city-wide, suburb, neighbourhood, street, and site; at each level they contribute to the identity of an area and provide a “sense of place”. The amenity values of a residential area are the sum of the individual values of each dwelling or section and their relationship with public space such as the streetscape and public open space (ie a combination of private amenity values and public amenity values).

A community defines, supports and changes local amenity values. Although perceptions of what constitutes amenity values will vary between individuals, there are general themes that contribute to the amenity values of an urban or suburban setting. These themes include:

- scale and dominance: the ratio of building height (and visual prominence) to other buildings and the interaction of buildings with adjacent buildings and with the streetscape;
- aesthetic coherence: the visual relationship between built and natural elements;
- environmental factors such as wind speed, sunlight, daylight and outlook;
- noise levels, vibration and odour;
- heritage features and continuity with the inclusion of both natural and built elements from the past in an environment for the present;
- safety and accessibility of places.

Specific elements of amenity values have been summarised in table 2.1 for the purpose of this investigation. Consultation with interested parties indicated that there were different emphases for different communities and people.

On a city-wide basis it can be argued that a community’s view of itself is also bound up in its community or commercial core. For example, Christchurch’s rejuvenated Civic Centre, with the Old Arts Centre, its new tram system and the historic connection to Hagley Park and the Avon River, is an obvious source of civic pride for all residents. It substantially affects their perception of Christchurch and the garden city character that permeates many inner city suburbs.

By contrast, the development of Lincoln Road as Waitakere City’s de facto commercial centre in the 1970s and 1980s strongly reinforced the message of a car oriented society prepared to make few concessions to aesthetics and local community values. This rather utilitarian philosophy is reflected in nearby subdivisions of much the same era and is a legacy for the city to respond to in the future.

At a more localised level, there can be shared community ownership of local centres such as Mt Eden Village, Ponsonby Road and the

Table 2.1 Specific elements of amenity values

City-wide/public amenity values (off-site)	Neighbourhood/public amenity values [off-site]	Private amenity values (on-site)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall physical landscape. • Areas of vegetation: bush, parks, trees and public gardens. • Cultural and heritage values of places, areas, sites and objects. • Areas of similar architectural design: age, style, form and character of housing. • Open space: public and private: for active and passive recreation (parks, reserves, esplanade reserves, streets and public gardens). • Traffic: congestion and noise levels. • Public views of significant natural and cultural features. • Public safety. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landscape elements: landform, slope and aspect. • Streetscape: the combination of public and private amenity values; • General design of housing, character, front yard depth, landscaping and fencing. • Scale and dominance of buildings. • Spaciousness: degree of public and private open space. • Physical access to open space and natural features. • Configuration and width of streets and berms and degree of street planting. • Parking: on-street and off-street. • Neighbourhood safety. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Private open space. • Site coverage. • Privacy. • Sunlight/shade. • Private views. • Landscaping. • Off-street parking, garages and vehicle access. • Personal safety and well being.

Note: In addition to the amenity values that are identified in the table, the proximity and access to services, facilities, shopping, entertainment and leisure will provide other important amenity values.

Henderson Town Centre. The character and perceived quality of those centres can substantially affect local and outside perceptions of an area and of its general amenity. Such centres can be regarded as providing some social and recreational values for their communities.

It can be argued that amenity values are distinct from character. While all landscapes have character, not all landscapes contribute to amenity values. In addition, open space does not always equate with amenity, and open space does not necessarily provide an assurance of amenity values (Letter from New Zealand Institute of Architects to PCE 1996).

In undertaking this investigation, it is recognised that there are amenity values other than those mentioned in the RMA; for example, the status of living in a particular suburb and private views of natural features (eg sea views). There are also activities other than residential intensification that affect the management of amenity values.

Public facilities or amenities such as museums, art galleries, sportsfields and shops may contribute to the amenity values of an area but the physical facilities themselves do not, on their own, constitute the

amenity values of an area. The provision of public facilities or amenities does not necessarily ensure the provision of amenity values.

The quality of amenity values of a city or area is closely linked to the management and the quality of the infrastructure. The development of roading infrastructure, increasing traffic flows, congestion, air pollution and noise levels, can have major detrimental effects on amenity values.

Overflows from combined stormwater and sewage systems in parts of Auckland during heavy rain have the potential to create major health and environmental problems including adverse effects on local amenity values. Polluted stormwater and sediment also detract from the amenity values of maritime recreational areas like the Orakei Basin.

It has been suggested that transport, perhaps more than any other issue, affects the “livability” of the Auckland region (Stanley 1996). Residents of Auckland are making more car journeys per day than before, the average length of a journey is increasing, and car usage is projected to increase by 4-5 per cent per year. Transport systems with an emphasis on private vehicles as opposed to public transport will have major adverse effects on neighbourhood amenity values. At the local level, car parking can have a major influence on the amenity values of the streetscape with either on-street car parking or poorly designed or sited front yard garages detracting from the character of residential areas.

The rate of change to particular amenity values is a key factor in whether a community accepts or rejects housing intensification and redevelopment. There is often a conflict with people opposed to further urban sprawl but also opposed to infill and redevelopment that takes little account of the existing amenity values of an area.

A community may accept a certain level of intensification before the rate and scale of change and associated effects become unacceptable. For example, the first infill or redevelopment may have little effect on the existing amenity values of a street or area and the development can be incorporated into the existing environment. There may be only a small decrease in the area of open space, there may be little change in vegetation cover, and traffic and noise levels may not increase. However, after a threshold is reached, each additional development will compound the effects on the existing amenity values. It is this change that is observed by local communities and is often seen as an adverse effect on amenity values by local residents.

A council in setting a density threshold needs to have full regard for the cumulative effects of intensification. In setting a threshold for a particular area, the council must consider the cumulative effects of all the developments that could potentially take place in that area as

2.5 Linkages to other environmental issues

2.6 Changes to amenity values from intensification

permitted activities or with resource consent (ie if all possible sites were in fact developed).

Changes to residential amenity values observed by communities consulted during this review are listed in table 2.2. Some changes to amenity values can be viewed as positive or negative. If the changes to amenity values are viewed as negative by both councils and communities, there are mitigation measures that can be employed to offset some of the effects on amenity values as discussed in chapter 5.

Positive effects of intensification

While intensification can result in major changes to amenity values, it is acknowledged that there are positive effects from intensification. These positive effects can include the development of a more sustainable urban form through halting or slowing urban sprawl, better access to services and facilities with increased population densities and greater levels of demand and supply of services, and provision of a public transport system.

Crucial questions include how an intensification policy is developed for different areas, how this is supported by both the city-wide and local communities, and what other values are considered while planning for, and managing the effects of, the intensification policy.

Table 2.2 Changes to residential amenity values from intensification as observed by communities consulted during this review

Changes to public and neighbourhood amenity values (off-site)	Changes to private amenity values (on-site)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⚡ Unsympathetic architectural style and design (form, roof pitch and colour) with the loss of coherence and continuity of built form and identity. ⚡ Loss of open space (active and passive). ⚡ Loss of significant trees (individual trees and groves of trees) and gardens. • Loss of wildlife corridors and bird habitat. ⚡ Increased traffic generation, traffic flows and noise levels. Effects of increased traffic on safety. • Exacerbated stormwater with an increase in hard impervious surfaces. ⚡ Altered streetscape with high barrier-type fences and front yard garages. ⚡ Increased dominance by the built environment. ⚡ Loss of public and community views. ⚡ Increased car parking on streets. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⚡ Changes in character when a new building is located on the same site as an older existing building. • Loss of privacy. ⚡ Loss of sunlight and increased shading. ⚡ Loss of views. ⚡ Increased noise. ⚡ Loss of private open space. ⚡ Increased potential for conflict between different land uses.

3. PRESSURES AND CONSTRAINTS

This section provides a brief geographical overview of Auckland, Christchurch and Waitakere City and the significant resource management issues for each council.

Overview Of selected councils

Auckland City

Auckland City is one of four major cities in the Auckland region and its suburban boundaries are fixed as they lie on the boundary with adjoining territorial authorities. The Isthmus part of the city, the subject of this review, is mainly a suburban environment but it includes remnant areas of bush and a network of parks and reserves together with nationally significant volcanic cones and craters. It is surrounded by important coastal areas, the Manukau Harbour, the Waitemata Harbour and Hauraki Gulf. All of these natural resources contribute to the unique character and identity of the city and to the overall amenity values of the city.

Auckland City has a population of around 354,000 people, with a 12 per cent increase since 1991. It is estimated that in the future the population is likely to grow by between 1.5 per cent and 2 per cent per year with an expected increase to over 400,000 people by the year 2016. This growth rate means that around 2000 new dwellings are required for Auckland City each year.

In 1991 the city council adopted an urban growth strategy which recognises the regional council's urban consolidation policy. The urban growth strategy recognises the need for residential growth and the constraints placed on it by drainage and transport infrastructure, and the concern of the community to maintain and enhance the particularly appreciated existing character of residential areas.

The first strategic direction, "alive, exciting and green", in the city council's strategic plan (Auckland City Council 1996a), incorporates recognition of city-wide amenity values and values for identified distinctive areas of the city (see appendix 3).

Christchurch City

Christchurch City is the oldest established city in New Zealand. It has been a planned city, with a circular shape, a radial network of roads and it is known as a garden city because of its many parks and public and private gardens. An area popularly known as the "green belt" surrounds the city and includes the Port Hills to the south and agricultural and horticultural areas to the north and west. Protection of this privately owned "green belt" has restrained greenfield

developments around Christchurch for many years although there is some uncertainty as to whether this protection can be provided under the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA). Applefields Limited, a major corporate apple producer and landowner on the fringe of the urban area and in the “green belt”, has signalled the development of its land in the near future. This will test the urban growth policies of both the Christchurch City Council and Canterbury Regional Council.

Christchurch City has a population of around 314,000 people. Since 1991 the city population has grown by around 20,000 people, with the majority of the population increase occurring since 1993. The growth rate of two per cent in 1994/95 was considerably higher than previous annual growth rates of around 0.4 per cent. The high levels of growth have been influenced by past immigration policies and strong economic growth. The city is expected to grow to around 340,000 people by 2011.

The council is committed to sustainable development and is implementing the objectives of Agenda 21¹. The overall goal of the sustainable management of the Christchurch environment is a feature of recent annual plans and the proposed Christchurch district plan (Christchurch City Council 1995a). Key aspects of the vision for Christchurch in the proposed district plan 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;
- a safe city that protects the community, personal health and security, and avoids crime and injury.

The city council prepared an urban growth section 32 analysis² between 1992-1994 before deciding on an urban consolidation policy as the benefits would include better utilisation of existing infrastructure, a more efficient transport system and increased energy efficiency. Potential adverse effects of the strategy including a

¹ 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.

² A section 32 analysis involves the consideration of the costs and benefits of a particular action and any alternatives; it is specifically required under the RMA before any objective, policy, rule or other method is adopted (s 32 RMA).

reduction in residential amenity created by higher housing densities were also identified (see appendix 3).

Waitakere City

The city of Waitakere is one of four major cities in the Auckland region and has, over the past three decades, become an “edge city” of greater Auckland. New Lynn, Glen Eden and Henderson originally developed along with the development of the railway line.

The city has a diverse social and physical environment. The physical environment includes the West Coast beaches, the Waitakere Ranges, the foothills, the rural areas and a large network of streams. It is also a coastal city bounded by the Tasman Sea and the Manukau and the Waitemata harbours with 150 km of coastline. The city has a population of around 153,000 people and the growth rate has been about two per cent per year for the last ten years. The city is a young city: one-quarter of the population is under 15 years of age and three-quarters under 45 years.

Waitakere City is firmly committed to a policy of sustainable development and was the first New Zealand city to embark on a process of becoming an eco-city in 1993. The commitment to become an eco-city was a motivating force that encouraged the council to take a strategic view of the issues facing the city. The council decided to stop further “urban sprawl” because of its environmental, social and economic impacts. The protection of the diverse natural environment in the city is a primary aspect of the protection and enhancement of amenity values within the city. The council has a strong commitment to improving the built environment for both amenity and safety reasons.

The Waitakere City Council has placed a strong emphasis on design of houses and of the streetscape in the district plan (Waitakere City Council 1995). Overseas work on city form and design has been used in developing a design philosophy that will meet the council’s objectives for housing intensification, transport planning and the maintenance of amenity values.

Waitakere City Council has embraced the Safer Community Council concept wholeheartedly and included the concepts in the policies, objectives and rules of the district plan. Rules relating to residential activities in the district plan (eg the placement of houses in a street, the requirement for living areas to face the street and the fronting of houses onto reserves) are concerned with the safety aspects of amenity values.

3.2 Urban growth pressure on council planning

Population growth in Auckland, Christchurch and Waitakere continues at higher rates, generally around two per cent per annum, than many other cities are experiencing, either because of natural increase or because of migration from within New Zealand or from other countries. Demographic changes such as smaller family units and people living alone are affecting the type of housing that is required. The shift of people to live in inner city areas is also affecting the choice and design of housing. The effects of these growth pressures on the amenity values of an area is a key issue for both councils and communities.

The residential intensification has not been evenly distributed across the cities. For example in some areas of the Eastern Bays in Auckland City, the growth rate was higher than the average for Auckland. This increase was, in part, due to landowners seeking to capitalise on the development potential of their property before being affected by the signalled downzoning³ provisions in the proposed Isthmus plan. In Christchurch City, significant numbers of new units have been built in inner city areas such as Riccarton, the Avon Loop and Merivale during the last four years.

The pressures for more housing of different types have meant that changes to both private and public amenity values are evident in some areas of these cities.

3.3 Constraints

The three city councils all face constraints to the continued growth of their city by the traditional means of greenfields development. Christchurch and Waitakere cities could continue to expand into rural areas within their boundaries but have chosen to protect certain features and to choose a more sustainable city form in accordance with the respective regional policy statements. This has led the three councils to develop policies to cater for urban growth based on urban consolidation using a mix of intensification measures. Urban consolidation policies are recognised by the councils as having an impact on the management of amenity values.

3.3.1 Regional policies

Policies on urban form and regional development prepared by the territorial authorities in their district plans are consistent with policies developed by the respective regional councils through their regional policy statements.

The proposed Auckland Regional Policy Statement (RPS) (Auckland Regional Council 1994) concluded that to achieve the purposes of the RMA, (greater) Auckland's expansion must be contained within

³ A reduction in the density of housing that is allowed by a district plan in order to limit further **infill** and redevelopment (eg increasing the minimum site area from 300 m² to 375 m²).

defined limits. Intensification should be encouraged at selected places around transport nodes and along transport corridors. Waitakere City Council has developed the concept of medium density development at transport nodes whereas Auckland City Council has **focussed**, for the next ten years, on intensification in the majority of the Isthmus area.

The Canterbury Regional Policy Statement (Canterbury Regional Council 1993) contains objectives and policies on settlement and the built environment. 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; and
- 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.

The explanation in the RPS states that this policy in most cases will be met by the consolidation of urban areas. Land use planning and resource management should seek to encourage the consolidation and **infill** of urban areas, to the extent that it is practical.

More work is being done on a regional basis by local authorities in the Christchurch and Auckland regions to address future regional growth options (refer appendix 3).

Each of the cities has a number of physical constraints that have had an effect on the ability of the cities to expand.

3.3.2 Physical constraints

The major physical constraints on growth for Auckland City are:

- the coastal edge of the city;
- the state of the drainage infrastructure;
- natural hazard areas;
- the roading infrastructure; and
- special character areas.

For Christchurch they include:

- 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;

- the need to protect the main recharge zone for Christchurch's artesian water supply to the west and north; and
- a desire to protect the existing "green belt" around Christchurch.

Waitakere's physical constraints include:

- protection of soils to the north of the city, around the air bases;
- protection of the Waitakere Ranges;
- protection of the upper Waitemata Harbour from the effects of development;
- ensuring that stormwater runoff from any development in the foothills area is not exacerbated; and
- the coastal edge of the city.

3.3.3 Transportation constraints

All three cities cite increasing transport problems as one of the most important constraints that is affecting the way in which urban growth will occur in the future and that is affecting the maintenance of amenity values in some areas.

Both the Auckland and Canterbury Regional Councils cite transport as a main determinant constraining urban growth unless the outlook for public transport is improved.

The Auckland region's size, rate of growth and topography have also resulted in major transport planning problems with public concerns over traffic congestion, noise, pollution and safety. The need for a solution is of such importance that the territorial authorities and the regional council are participating in a task force to assess the transport infrastructure needs created by Auckland's growth.

In the case of Christchurch the council recognises the need to provide a sustainable transport system, through minimising traffic congestion and encouraging public transport. One of the reasons for the adoption of an urban consolidation strategy is stabilisation of traffic demand to reduce the use of private motor vehicles.

More than half the workforce of Waitakere City works outside the city and commutes to work, resulting in high vehicle kilometres travelled per person. The aim of the urban consolidation strategy is to reduce the proportion of people travelling to work by private means to 35 per cent of the workforce and to encourage the viability of public transport based around existing public transport nodes.

3.4 The transition

3.4.1 Transitional district plans

All three cities are in various stages of the planning process as new district plans are prepared under the RMA. Parts of the Auckland City Isthmus district plan have become operative and hearings of submissions on the Christchurch and Waitakere proposed plans have commenced.

In general, the three cities have signalled residential density reductions in their new district plans for some areas, as compared to the provisions of the transitional district plans. However, in Auckland and Christchurch in the time leading up to the release of their district plan, a significant number of developments gained resource consent or a certificate of compliance (both valid for two years from date of issue unless a different period is expressly provided for in the consent or certificate) so that development could proceed under the rules of the transitional plan. Although some communities were supportive of the reduced densities, the reality has been continued intensification and a sense that the amenity values in neighbourhoods have been irretrievably lost due to the transition period and the inadequate provision for the management of amenity values in the transitional district plans.

In the transitional phase it is acknowledged that certificates of compliance and resource consents granted under the transitional plan are lawfully sought and issued, and a property owner is quite entitled to exercise them. A certificate of compliance confirms that a proposed activity complies with the requirements of a district plan. However, some of the developments undertaken under the transitional district plan rules have not promoted the maintenance and enhancement of local amenity values.

Auckland City's proposed Isthmus district plan, of which the residential sections are now operative, signalled a downzoning of residential zoning across the city and a reduction in development potential compared to the transitional district plan. There have been transitional problems with large numbers of resource consents or certificates of compliance issued for infill developments. In the last three years, redevelopment has been the increasingly favoured option as changes to site coverage rules favour clearing a site and building a comprehensive development.

The proposed Christchurch City plan was notified in June 1995 and will eventually replace the six transitional district plans of the former territorial authorities. In the proposed plan a significant reduction of density in the general living zone (which covers 80 per cent of the city) was promoted. There are developments continuing under the higher density rules of the transitional plan through the issuing of certificates of compliance and these developments continue to generate concerns from local communities who observe adverse effects on amenity values from some developments.

Waitakere's transitional district plan had minimal controls on subdivision during 1987-88 when subdivision to 300 m² sections was permitted. The present council has this legacy of development on small sections in some areas of the city. The traditional cross-lease infill seems not to have been as extensive in Waitakere as it has been for Christchurch and Auckland. Waitakere City Council has signalled a

fundamental change to urban form in the new district plan by reducing the potential for piecemeal infill development in several areas and by enabling medium density housing to be established in certain parts of the city.

3.4.2 Cross-leases

The addition of a second house to a large section with an existing house has been a traditional method of increasing housing densities in suburban areas and often this is done through the use of a cross-lease. For example, cross-leases have been used extensively in Christchurch, possibly because historical provisions of district schemes allowed garages to be built in front yards so that there was more private open space in the backyard. In Auckland, substantial residential building activity in the second half of the 1980s was primarily due to the increase in cross-lease development, especially in the Eastern Suburbs (Auckland City Council 1990).

Cross-leases are often criticised for allowing intensification; however the focus should not be on the cross-lease mechanism but on the rules in a district plan enabling infill or medium-high density housing developments. A cross-lease itself does not create or physically change a residential neighbourhood. It is the district plan that determines the number of dwellings permitted on a property and the cross-lease mechanism enables separate titles to then be issued for those dwellings. Councils could recognise this and through a district plan allow only one dwelling to be erected per existing certificate of title or increase the minimum area for subdivision (for both infrastructure and residential amenity reasons).

One of the issues arising from cross-lease developments was that they were not defined as subdivisions under the Local Government Act 1974 (which governed subdivisions prior to the enactment of the RMA) and councils were not able to request financial contributions for these developments. However, since 1991 cross-leases have been included in the definition of subdivision under the RMA and a 1993 judgment of the Planning Tribunal clarified that a condition requiring payment of a financial contribution could be imposed on a consent to subdivide by way of cross-lease (*Application by Hamilton City Council (1993) 2 NZRMA 64 1*).

The definition of “financial contribution” includes money, land, works (including the protection, planting, or replanting of trees or other vegetation), services or any combination of the above made for purposes specified in the plan. The district plan should state the maximum value of the financial contribution or provide for it to be determined in accordance with the plan.

As reserve contributions could not be sought for cross-lease developments under the Local Government Act and it was unclear whether they could be required prior to the *Hamilton* case, councils have not had the funds to

purchase open space in areas subject to intensification in order to manage the amenity values of a neighbourhood. In addition, any new financial contribution formula for cross-lease developments⁴ that more explicitly takes into account the effects of these developments and the financial contribution that is required cannot take effect until the district plan is fully operative.

Cross-lease developments continue to be a major means of housing intensification in Auckland with current levels around 2,200 cross-leases per year. There is the potential for development of cross-lease sites with designs compatible with the existing house but the amenity values of a street can be changed by placing houses at the back of sections down long driveways or by building a house that is incompatible with the existing house. The removal of mature trees and gardens is sometimes the only way to construct a suitably sized second dwelling on the site.

In multiple dwelling situations, consent authorities could impose conditions to mitigate any environmental effects such as adverse effects on amenity values. Such conditions may include cash contributions for reserve acquisition in the neighbourhood, on-site requirements for planting trees or retaining mature trees. These conditions could assist in mitigating effects of residential intensification on suburban amenity values.

⁴ The imposition of a condition requiring a financial contribution is not restricted to subdivision consents by the RMA.

4. IDENTIFICATION OF AMENITY VALUES

The three councils in this investigation have taken different approaches to define the term “amenity values” to reflect the different characteristics of their cities and communities.

4.1 Council definitions of amenity values

Auckland

The proposed Isthmus plan (Auckland City Council 1995) has as two of its principal objectives: to retain and enhance the heritage amenity of the district and to protect and enhance the residential amenities. The proposed Isthmus plan uses the terms “amenity values” and “amenities” interchangeably in various situations.

Special character or heritage quality is described in the proposed Isthmus plan to be when:

- ⌘ *components such as buildings, trees and views combine to create a distinctive character; or*
- ⌘ *landform or setting makes an important contribution to this character; or*
- ⌘ *the scale and or style of subdivision **and/or** building has a high degree of coherence and continuity, and or has remained **relatively free** of intrusions; or*
- ⌘ *there is a predominance or cohesion of individual buildings which are individually of merit (Auckland City Council 1995).*

The proposed plan identifies that heritage resources are an essential part of the city’s cultural values and the conservation of heritage resources enhances the identity and amenity of the city. The proposed plan provides for the recognition and protection of buildings, objects, places, areas, trees, sites and geological features. Conservation Area overlay provisions have been applied to six small areas of streets that display a considerable degree of unity in scale, form and historical origin.

Christchurch

The proposed Christchurch City plan (Christchurch City Council 1995) defines “amenities/amenity values” to have the same meaning as in s 2 of the RMA. The proposed plan comments that the identity of the city is defined through three principal elements: form (the overall shape of the city and the combination of features), amenity and heritage. City amenity is expressed through the attractiveness, pleasantness, aesthetic quality and coherence of its natural and physical features.

In terms of city identity, amenity reflects the quality of the city's environment. Amenity is also concerned with the quality, harmony and coherence of different elements in the city landscape. 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 management of amenity values has been one of the key concepts underpinning the development of the new district plan.

Waitakere City

The Waitakere City proposed district plan (Waitakere City Council 1995) uses the definition in § 2 RMA to define "amenity". Significant resource management issues identified in the proposed plan include adverse effects on amenity values (other than outstanding landscapes), effects on the essential character of local areas and neighbourhoods that is derived from the dominant activity, effects on amenity values (health and safety), and effects on heritage.

The protection and management of the natural environment is a feature of the district plan. Outstanding landscape elements (natural and physical features) and landscape character (the more intangible "feel" of the landscape) are recognised, and remaining general landscape elements and characteristics contribute to the amenity values of an area. The city's heritage consists of those places, buildings, sites, objects and trees that are especially valued by the city's residents and tangata whenua. Within the residential parts of the urban area, at the local environment and neighbourhood level, the differences and distinguishing characteristics of various areas arise from three factors: section size, housing style and location.

4.2 Description of amenity values

4.2.1 City-wide amenity values

The three case study councils have undertaken studies that have contributed to the identification of amenity values and include:

- landscape assessments;
- assessments of natural features;
- ecological assessments;
- cultural and heritage assessments;
- reserves acquisition strategies;
- stormwater management plans;
- noise studies; and
- infrastructure reviews.

Auckland City

The city-wide amenity values of Auckland include the heritage and landscape values of the volcanic cones, heritage values of the older residential areas, tree dominated suburbs, open space such as Cornwall Park and Albert Park, and areas of indigenous bush. Inner city residential areas display distinctive characteristics important to the preservation of the city's heritage with heritage features such as

buildings and trees. Views from public open space to the Waitemata and Manukau Harbours, Rangitoto Island, and the other Gulf islands are important features of the city.

Public open space and recreation space, which includes the foreshore and the harbours and the Hauraki Gulf, are of vital significance to the quality of life in Auckland City, providing areas of visual, cultural, educational, active or passive amenity. Public open space includes reserves and undeveloped or marginally developed land.

Christchurch City

The major city-wide amenity values of Christchurch include the garden city image, heritage buildings, tree cover, the network of open space, waterways, and the public 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.

The Christchurch City proposed district plan identifies 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 as part of city identity.

Waitakere City

City-wide amenity values are closely tied to the city's natural landscapes and, in particular, the outstanding landscapes. The urban areas have the Waitakere Ranges as a backdrop and views of them are an important feature of the urban area. The outstanding landscape elements and landscape character are recognised and described in the proposed plan at a city-wide, local environment and neighbourhood area scale. Landscape character is defined as the dominance of residential activities, a feeling of openness and greenness, and quiet (relative to other parts of the urban area).

During the preparation of the proposed Auckland Isthmus plan, a checklist of the main natural, built and socio-economic elements determining residential character was compiled. An Isthmus-wide street survey analysis was conducted by the council to assist in determining the residential zoning pattern. The analysis allocated points to each street for its different environmental factors and the residential zoning was then derived from this score. For instance, where areas scored highly in terms of access to facilities and there were few drainage or transport constraints, the zoning for the area would be assessed as medium to high density.

For the special character zones, the proposed Isthmus plan identifies the specific values of the different zones that contribute to the amenity values as shown in table 4.1. The amenity values that are provided by

4.2.2 Local area and neighbourhood

heritage features are particularly well identified in the proposed plan for the Residential 1 Zone and the six conservation areas (small areas of one or two streets with very high heritage values).

In the schedule of effects which may need to be addressed in resource consent applications (annexure 9 to the proposed plan), effects on or experienced by people include:

- effect on the amenity values of the area including dominant and special character elements such as spaciousness and design;
- effect on the visual coherence on the streetscape;
- effects of changes to local wind patterns on pedestrians;
- effects on sightlines to volcanic cones; and
- effect of any noise generated (Auckland City Council 1995).

Descriptions of particular amenity values have also been provided in the coastal edge strategies that have been prepared for some areas such as Pt Chevalier and Manukau Harbour. The strategies contain design guidelines for coastal structures, vegetation management and street patterns.

Table 4.1 Summary of the special character zones in the proposed Isthmus plan

Special Residential Zone	Character Zone	Summary of the Special Character Residential Zones
Residential 1 Built dominant Approx. 5.7% of res. zones.		Protects streets of mainly Victorian/Edwardian wooden houses regarded as part of Auckland's heritage. Generally a lack of large trees. Controls in these areas will ensure that renovations and new buildings are sympathetic with existing character. Much of Ponsonby and parts of Mt Eden and Kingsland.
Residential 2 Built/flora dominant		Protects neighbourhoods characterised by large, well-treed sections and period homes, particularly Edwardian villa, English cottage Revival and Garden Suburb Movement.
<i>Subzones:</i>		
Residential 2a	1.3%	Defines the neighbourhoods with the lowest density, largest site and tallest buildings.
Residential 2b	7.9%	Has voluntary design guidelines in order to allow new buildings to maintain architectural consistency.
Residential 2c	0.4%	A density of one housing unit per 1000 m ² , a maximum building height of 8 m and maximum coverage of 25 per cent.
Residential 3 Built/landform dominant		Protects established residential areas particularly on coastal cliffs and the slopes of volcanic cones from development which may be out of character with existing neighbourhoods and detract from the cones themselves.
<i>Subzones:</i>		
Residential 3a	0.1%	Comprises steep narrow cul-de-sacs, set out in Victorian times, with small period houses packed tightly together.
Residential 3b	0.8%	Similar voluntary design guidelines to Residential 2b.
Residential 4 Flora dominant	0.0%	Protects bush-clad or regenerating forest areas from high density or inappropriate housing development. Zoned for limited residential use.

Source: Auckland City Council 1995 Isthmus Plan update.

The concept plan process has been used to describe local area amenity values in parts of Christchurch, particularly for Sumner and Merivale (refer to chapter 4.3). However, there is limited identification and definition of particular amenity values for different areas and neighbourhoods in the proposed plan. Amenity values for some areas can be identified from other documents such as neighbourhood studies.

Particular landscape elements and character for various residential areas are described in Waitakere City Council's proposed plan. For example, in respect of the urban (Living Environment) landscape of Waitakere City, the landscape elements are described as:

- residential buildings (mainly post-1945) of 1-2 storey detached construction;
- similar bulk, form and roofline of houses;
- high level of planting on private spaces;
- areas of public open space with moderate levels of planting;
- complex road system and roading hierarchy; and
- open streetscape.

Waitakere City Council's proposed plan includes a description of landscape character for the different suburbs within the city (see table 4.2).

Table 4.2 Landscape elements and character of Waitakere City

Local area	Landscape elements and character
Older low-density suburbs of New Lynn, Green Bay and Glen Eden.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • larger lots (800 m² to 1,000 m²). • dominant cottages, villas, bungalows.
Kelston, Glendene, Te Atatu South, Te Atatu Peninsula.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • moderate sized lots (600 m² to 800 m²). • houses built since 1945.
The younger suburbs of Massey, Ranui.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • smaller lots (< 600 m² with moderate sized lots) and low cost housing.
The new suburbs of West harbour developing above the Waitemata Harbour.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • small lots with larger houses, often two storey. • important views and strong visual links with the harbour edge and the central city. • strong edge city effect.
The mixed area around Henderson based around the Oratia and Opanuku Streams.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mixed activities. • residential activities on the fringe of the town centre and commercial area.

4.3 Community involvement in identifying amenity values

Both Christchurch and Waitakere City Councils have used charrette workshops (an intensive planning and design workshop) to enable different communities to describe their area and how they want it to be developed in the future.

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 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. The charrette process is a new approach for the council and it has prepared a flow chart for responses to concept plans that detail the various stages of consultation and input from the community.

Representatives of key community groups identified the main themes and issues to be addressed in the charrette. Following widespread publicity, open workshops were then organised and facilitated by an independent consultant with the support of the council. The local community identified the important characteristics of their areas, 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 Sumner concept plan supports the recognition of the whole of Sumner as a special area in the proposed district plan 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 Sumner concept plan (Lucas Associates 1996a).

The preparation of the Merivale concept plan followed a similar process to the Sumner one. The Merivale concept plan identifies four areas with a definable character and some of the features of two of the areas include older houses, cottages, villas and bungalows with small quiet streets, gardens and mature trees, particularly on private property. It was noted there was an inadequate spread of public open space, and private open space was diminishing with infill (Lucas Associates 1996b).

In March 1996, Waitakere City Council organised a charrette workshop to plan for the future design of the New Lynn town centre using “new urbanism” design principles (see appendix 4). The charrette involved local residents, council staff and consultants in an intensive consultation and group design process in which the community’s knowledge and special interest expertise was an important component. The New Lynn town centre is recognised as a strategic centre as it is a transport hub for the city and is intended to be

one of the centres of medium density housing in the future. The charrette was preceded by a staff training workshop in January 1996.

The charrette involved both regional and local interested parties eg Trans Metro, the regional council, consultants, council staff and the community. The three questions that formed the basis of the initial part of the charrette were:

- what do you like about New Lynn?
- what don't you like about New Lynn? and
- what would be an improvement?

One of the outcomes of this charrette process was that the community was, in effect, articulating the amenity values of their neighbourhoods. The outcome of the five day charrette was the drafting of comprehensive drawings which detailed a structure for the New Lynn centre and the surrounding neighbourhoods. The benefit of the process was that information sharing between the various participants was encouraged. Following the charrette weekend, comment on the outcomes is being sought by the council and there is a long list of potential follow up projects.

A similar charrette has commenced for the Glen Eden town centre but the time frame has been lengthened so that there is sufficient feedback of ideas to the community within the process. The community was involved in surveys and heritage assessments prior to the commencement of the charrette process.

The management of amenity values is an important resource management issue for a council and the community, especially when changes that impact on amenity values are occurring.

4.4 Changes to amenity values from residential intensification

Auckland

In Auckland in 1990, the effects on amenity values from urban intensification were noted in a council report as part of the preparation of the new district plan.

It has also to be recognised that there are concerns within the community about the impact of intensive housing development on the overall character and amenity of established communities and residential neighbourhoods on the Isthmus. Such concerns are in part about physical change (more housing, fewer large trees, loss of privacy) and also social change (younger more mobile and affluent households apparently “replacing” older residents) (Auckland City Council 1990, p 44).

After the proposed Isthmus plan was notified, there was increasing community concern about the ability of the council to maintain and

enhance amenity values in areas subject to suburban intensification and the effectiveness of district plan policies relating to infill development, tree protection and the protection of neighbourhoods with special character and architectural features.

Community concerns about the adverse effects on the environment of urban infill and redevelopment, and lack of appropriate recognition of natural bush areas were vigorously expressed in public meetings called by the Residents Action Group in 1994. In 1995 the council initiated a series of studies to further assess the character and amenity values of parts of the Eastern Suburbs in association with residents groups and the University of Auckland. As a result of this study, eleven plan variations were proposed mainly to rezone some of the bush clad valleys and coastal areas in the Eastern Bays and to conserve the character and amenity values for certain streets in the Eastern Suburbs. Since notification, one of the variations has been withdrawn, six are now effective and four are under appeal. Other changes to zones applying to particular areas of land were made as a result of submissions to the district plan.

Christchurch

A 1993 council survey of Christchurch residents' attitudes to various city attributes reported that residents disliked urban sprawl and encroachment on to the hills, but some also disliked infill housing and high rise developments. Infill developments were seen to affect the character of existing houses, reduce open space, and increase congestion (Research Solutions Ltd 1993). The 1995 state of environment report documented criticism of local developments, 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, and loss of views and outdoor space. The lack of character and the poor quality of some new housing was also an issue (Christchurch City Council 1995b).

For suburbs like Merivale, infill and redevelopment has affected and is continuing to affect the amenity values of the area. Many new developments are not in sympathy with the design and form of existing houses, vegetation cover is being replaced with dwellings and hard surfaces, and in many narrow streets there is no space to offset these effects.

Although infill is also occurring in Fendalton, the effect on amenity values does not appear to be as dramatic due to the different rules that have historically applied there on open space and the identification of most of Fendalton as a Special Amenity Area (SAM) (see chapter 53.1).

Waitakere City

As part of the consultation process for the new district plan, residents in various parts of the city expressed concerns about amenity values. Although there was overall support for a range of housing types in the city, there were concerns about **infill** housing which included:

- the quality of housing and housing developments including relocated houses;
- design issues, particularly in terms of maintenance of privacy for adjacent homes, open space and amenity;
- the way these issues impact on the character of the area, neighbourhood and, ultimately, the city; and
- concerns about on-site and neighbour amenity, including the retention of large trees.

The communities within the city have identified some of the effects that have arisen from intensification of housing and, at the same time, have indicated that if intensification is done well, then it would be acceptable. Residents wish to retain those amenity values that are associated with their own private amenity such as private open space, sunlight and daylight. Public amenity values associated with the character of a street or neighbourhood are also important.

Effects on urban residential landscape elements that are identified in Waitakere City Council's proposed plan include:

- a reduction of planting on private sections with infill housing;
- a reduction of open space around buildings with more intensive settlement;
- possible dominance of surrounding sites by large buildings;
- feeling of openness and greenness undermined; and
- loss of relative quiet.

Effects on urban residential landscape character include the possible undermining of typical residential character to the degree that it is no longer the defining feature, and the overwhelming of any natural features.

The monitoring of the effects of housing intensification on amenity values as provided in the new district plans has been signalled by the councils but not yet commenced. One of the problems is defining the environmental indicators required for such monitoring. A major reason for monitoring is to evaluate whether the thresholds set by a council, in terms of what is a permitted activity, have been set so that amenity values are given sufficient consideration in the planning process.

Methodologies for systematically assessing the quality of the built environment have been developed overseas (eg as described in Green 1992 and Baird *et al* 1996) and it is suggested that these models could be used as the basis for the development of a set of indicators and

4.5 Indicators and monitoring

methodology to assess amenity values in New Zealand (Letter from G McIndoe, Architect and Urban Designer, to PCE February 1997).

Auckland City

The council prepared a monitoring strategy in 1993 and since 1994 has been monitoring aspects of the proposed Isthmus plan. Key issues targeted for monitoring in the proposed Isthmus plan include amenity values, Residential 1 Zone provisions, non-residential activities in residential areas, residential density, and the coastal management area. A resource consent monitoring programme was established in April 1995 to collect information about the resource consents generated by the policies in the Isthmus plan. The council's monitoring strategy is to be reviewed in the near future to refine existing monitoring programmes and to develop new programmes. The council has recently released a second state of the environment report that documents environmental issues and development trends in the city (Auckland City Council 1996).

Until late 1995 consent compliance monitoring in Auckland City was complaint driven, which did not give a comprehensive indication of compliance with conditions of a resource consent. In 1994 a sample of 40 resource consent site inspections showed that of those consents that were completed (about half), 44 per cent did not meet the conditions, most of which related to amenity controls such as screening. The council then implemented a more rigorous monitoring and enforcement programme and the new programme includes pre-consent site inspections, more accurate recording of complaints, a special enforcement team, and the development of a compliance monitoring system.

Christchurch City

The proposed plan contains a general monitoring statement and specific monitoring provisions are included in each section. As part of the identification of key indicators of change, the council has signalled it 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. The council is not intending to monitor the Living 3 Zone although it is in this zone where the majority of urban intensification is targeted and it is likely there will be significant effects on amenity values given current developments and concerns about changes to amenity values.

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 council's functions.

Waitakere City

In order to assess the effectiveness of the policies and methods, the council intends to set up a monitoring programme which will include the following monitoring indicators:

- surveys of people's perceptions of the quality and amenity values of the human environment, neighbourhood character, local area character, and their access to open space and recreational facilities;
- monitoring the council's complaints nuisance register for nuisance issues relating to amenity values such as parking, lack of privacy, over-dominance, loss of access to sunlight, vegetation removal and signs; and
- monitoring resource consents in the human environment relating to access to sunlight, air discharges, noise, dust, odour, vibration, vegetation removal, signs, building height, form and location, traffic and heritage sites.

5. MANAGEMENT OF AMENITY VALUES

For the purpose of this investigation, amenity values have been divided into on-site amenity values (ie the amenity values found on a specific site or property) and off-site amenity values which include neighbourhood and city-wide amenity values. This chapter examines the way in which the three councils are maintaining and enhancing amenity values given their particular combination of pressures and constraints. All three councils are using a variety of statutory and non-statutory mechanisms to fulfil their responsibility to have regard to the maintenance and enhancement of these amenity values. These approaches are summarised in table 5.1 at the end of the chapter.

The district plans of Auckland, Christchurch and Waitakere City Councils have articulated the overall policy and direction of urban consolidation and have encouraged intensification in certain areas while attempting to maintain and enhance amenity values.

5.1 District plan policies

A variety of policies have been used by all three councils to maintain and enhance amenity values including:

- the identification and recognition of special amenity and special character areas and the use of specific planning controls to provide for the protection and enhancement of those values. The particular areas may include built and cultural heritage, significant vegetation and geological features, public viewshafts, and open space;
- the use of universal planning controls to provide for the general amenity values of areas and mitigate adverse effects on those values; and
- the use of assessment criteria in the consideration of proposals for medium density housing developments and any effects on amenity values.

The three councils have each identified and provided for the protection of significant heritage items including buildings, places, objects, trees, natural features, archaeological sites, and sites of significance to tangata whenua. It is often the extent of the protection that differs eg Waitakere City protects around 70 heritage trees while Auckland protects around 2,100 heritage trees.

Auckland

In preparing the Isthmus plan, the council's strategy was to build on the city's considerable natural assets, protect its heritage, and foster suitable growth and development. The proposed Isthmus plan limits residential growth where the infrastructure is at capacity or is

inadequate or where the amenity of a particular area may be adversely affected if growth is allowed unchecked. Elsewhere, there are opportunities for residential growth in appropriate locations and controls are sufficiently liberal to encourage further intensification while offering reasonable protection to the amenities of neighbouring properties and the local environment.

The council has used a series of seven zones and some subzones to determine the residential zoning pattern. Residential areas with special character have more restrictive controls to protect and enhance their special character. This proposed approach was generally supported at public meetings that were part of an extensive consultation process. Four zones are described as special character zones and comprise 14 per cent of the city area (see table 4.1).

The remaining three residential zones are low intensity, medium intensity and high intensity, and comprise 86 per cent of the residential zoned area. These zones aim to recognise the wide variety of residential opportunities and environments that currently exist, as well as providing opportunities for the development of further housing.

☞ The Residential 5 Zone has been applied generally to areas characterised by detached homes, mainly low rise (1 to 2 storeys) on sites with relatively generous areas of open space. The purpose of this zone is to maintain or even enhance the environment of these areas.

☞ The Residential 6 Zone has been applied to areas where the environment is able to sustain residential development at medium intensity and it covers 53 per cent of the residential zones. Within this zone, there are two subzones Residential 6a and Residential 6b. The former has a density of one unit for every 375 m² of site area and an 8 m height limit. Residential 6b has a density of one unit for every 300 m² of site area and a 10 m height limit,

☞ The Residential 7 Zone provides for higher density residential development in appropriate locations with minimal development controls on sites within the zone, although affording some protection on the interface with lower density zones.

Urban tree management in Auckland City

The Auckland City Council has provided protection for more than 2,100 heritage trees that are listed in the proposed Isthmus plan. Specific tree protection also exists for the coastal area and for cliffline areas. General tree protection provisions require a discretionary activity resource consent to be applied for where removal or major pruning is proposed for indigenous trees over six metres in height and exotic trees over eight metres in height in the Residential 1, 3a, 5, 6, and 7 Zones. A six metre trigger height for all trees applies for the remaining zones. The total cost of administering these provisions is just under \$800,000, with approximately \$650,000 for the general tree

protection provisions. The council has signalled in the 1996 strategic plan that it intends to prepare an urban tree plan.

Christchurch

The proposed plan adopts an effects-based approach to determine 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, and city form and design sections of the district 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 1995a Vol 1).

The district plan outlines a number of policies on city identity - form, city identity - amenity, city identity - heritage, urban growth, and living. The living environment is divided among four zones:

- The Living 1 Zone covers most of the suburban area (excluding the hills) and provides for low density, permanent living accommodation where the minimum area of land required for a residential unit as a permitted activity is 450 m². The Living 1 Zone covers about 80 per cent of the city's residential zones.
- The Living H Zone covers most of the suburban area on the Port Hills and provides for low density, permanent living accommodation where the minimum area of land required for a residential unit as a permitted activity is 600 m².
- The Living 2 Zone generally covers the inner city living areas and includes parts of Merivale, St Albans, Linwood, Waltham and Spreydon and provides for low to medium density, permanent residential accommodation where the minimum area of land required for a residential unit as a permitted activity is 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 parts of 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.

Approximately 1,400 trees are listed in the proposed Christchurch City 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.

Waitakere

In the proposed district plan two layers of management areas form the basis for the management of effects of activities on natural and physical resources. The first is Natural Areas defined around certain key resources and the level of protection required to ensure their continued health and survival. The Natural Areas are further divided into six categories.

The second layer are the Human Environments, defined around the city landscapes and local areas. They form the basis for managing the effects of activities on landscape, amenity values, neighbourhood character and heritage. The Human Environment is further divided into 12 categories, including the Living Environment.

Significant resource management issues in the proposed district plan include:

- ~~✓~~ effects on amenity values (other than outstanding landscapes);
- ~~✓~~ effects on local areas and neighbourhoods. The key factors affecting local areas are changes in section size, style of housing, and the loss of the essential character of an area that is derived from the dominant activities;
- ~~✓~~ effects on amenity values (health and safety); and
- ~~✓~~ effects on heritage.

The following are the proposed categories of residential activities in the Human Environment, Living:

- ≡ a single unit or multi-unit development is a permitted activity anywhere within the living environment, provided that the minimum area is one unit per 450 m². Standards are also in place to cover privacy, coverage, private open space etc.
- ≡ a single unit or multi-unit development is possible on smaller sites, one unit to 400 m² in Kelston and Te Atatu and one unit to 350 m² everywhere else in the living environment except Green Bay/Glen Eden. Such development will require a resource consent as a limited discretionary activity. (Note: Under the Transitional District Plan development to one unit per 350 m² is possible anywhere within the living environment provided that there was an existing approval for a dwelling unit on that site, otherwise the minimum site area was 450 m².)

There is a strong emphasis on the protection of native (indigenous) vegetation throughout Waitakere City and on planning for present and future reserves. The cutting and clearing of native (indigenous) vegetation 3 m or more in height or 300 mm or more in girth and of exotic vegetation 6 m or more in height or 600 mm or more in girth is a limited discretionary activity. One of the assessment criteria is “the extent to which cutting and clearance adversely affect amenity values and neighbourhood character” and another is “the extent to which the cutting is to preserve public views”.

Some 70 trees have been specifically identified as having particular importance to warrant protection under the proposed district plan. The trimming or pruning of any listed tree is a permitted activity whereas the cutting of a listed tree or any activity proposed within the dripline of a listed tree is a limited discretionary activity.

The rules in the district plans have a major influence on the 5.2 maintenance or enhancement of on-site amenity values for each housing development. On-site amenity values include privacy, access to sunlight, and private open space.

On-site amenity values

The density of housing 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. Residential amenity is, to a large extent, also determined by the layout of housing on a site and the relationship of houses to each other.

Each of the three councils has formulated a comprehensive set of rules including: density of development, site size, building location, building height, height in relation to boundary, minimum size of front yards, the

set back from the road, building coverage of the site, building location for privacy/amenity, outdoor space, car parking and driveways, noise, air discharges, odour, dust, glare and vibration, signs, works and services, infrastructure to maintain and enhance amenity values. Even so, there are public concerns over the effects of suburban intensification on amenity values and in the way some of the controls are being implemented.

Permitted activities

The provisions of a district plan that specify permitted activities will be crucial for the maintenance and enhancement of amenity values. Monitoring of amenity values as part of monitoring the state of the environment, as well as monitoring the implementation of the district plan, will be necessary to assess the effect of permitted activities on an area's amenity values. If the threshold for a permitted activity is too low and permitted developments are affecting an area's amenity values, then the district plan may need to be changed to provide for local amenity values.

Other agencies

Other agencies also have an important role in assisting to maintain and enhance amenity values in local areas as the design and density of larger housing developments can have important implications for amenity values.

Housing New Zealand is a major housing owner and housing provider with a total of 12,000 rental units in the greater Auckland area, most of which are located on the Isthmus within Auckland City. Housing New Zealand expressed concerns to the Auckland City Council that the downzoning in the proposed plan would have a major impact on the ability of Housing New Zealand to develop and redevelop affordable housing on the Isthmus.

Housing New Zealand appealed council decisions on its submissions to the proposed Isthmus plan and requested that the council should:

- amend the zoning pattern across the Isthmus to provide for more intensive development;
- reassess the low density Residential 5 Zone where it is applied to areas of significant Housing New Zealand interest;
- reduce the Residential 2b Zone in areas of state designed housing or amend to allow development; and
- provide for higher density development in the Residential 2b Zone subject to design.

Following discussions with the council, Housing New Zealand withdrew the appeals.

Housing New Zealand's objective in seeking higher densities of development is to facilitate the provision of additional housing for its

target customers other than in the dormitory suburbs on the fringes of Auckland. The agency seeks to provide its customers with desirable, affordable living environments that integrate appropriately into the communities within which it operates with the consideration of the environmental effects of its activities (Letter from Housing New Zealand to PCE January 1997).

The design and location of Housing New Zealand developments will have a significant effect on amenity values in some areas. The appeal to the Auckland City Council to allow more intensive development across the city and for specific areas of Housing New Zealand developments did not appear to **recognise** the existing amenity values of particular areas or the concerns of residential communities. It will be important that Housing New Zealand consider the effects of its developments on an area's amenity values for both social and environmental reasons. The company will need to liaise with a council in order to seek advice on appropriate planning for an area's amenity values and how best these values can be maintained and enhanced.

Off-site amenity values can be considered as neighbourhood or city-wide for the purposes of maintenance or enhancement (see table 2.1). Both statutory and non-statutory mechanisms are used by the councils for the management of these off-site amenity values.

5.3 Off-site amenity values

Streetscape

All three councils have **recognised** the importance of the amenity value of a street and are using different mechanisms to maintain or enhance the amenity values. These include the planting of street trees, the provision of design guidance and advice, and the recognition of special amenity areas.

5.3.1 Neighbourhood

Street trees

In Auckland there are many areas where mature street trees are a feature of an area eg Franklin Road in Ponsonby, and Tamaki Drive in the Eastern Suburbs of Auckland. However, in Auckland, there are big gaps in the age distribution of street trees as there has been no systematic planting over the last 20 to 30 years by the previous borough councils.

Street trees are an important part of the streetscape in some areas in Christchurch. The council is involved with neighbourhood improvement programmes and kerb and channel replacement which may include reducing the road width and planting trees in grass berms (see chapter 5.3.2).

In Waitakere City the planting of street trees is coordinated by the roading section of the council and may be carried out either by community groups such as Keep Waitakere Beautiful or by the council.

Waitakere has a plan for planting streets using selected species for different areas. Funding is allocated through the annual plan.

Design guidelines

Architectural design guidelines for period housing were produced by the Auckland City Council in 1993 to assist landowners to understand the character and distinctive qualities of the older houses. The guidelines are annexed to the district plan and are to be used in the consideration of resource consent applications for the Residential 1 Zone. The council has introduced voluntary design guidelines for building facades on Karangahape Road, the Tamaki Drive, the High Street/Lorne Street area, and the Otahuhu and Onehunga town centres.

Special Amenity Areas

Special Amenity Areas (SAMs) have been identified in Christchurch 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. SAMs may have additional controls compared to other areas 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 some are for larger areas including Fendalton and 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. Detailed design guides will be prepared to supplement controls and assist both the public and council in the exercise and consideration of discretionary powers. The submission process for the district plan resulted in a number of requests for streets to be included in a new SAM,

Neighbourhood design

Waitakere City Council is promoting the redesign of parts of the city so that people can live within walking distance of a range of facilities including buses, schools, shops, libraries, parks and railway stations. The return to design based on “traditional neighbourhood development” is known as “new urbanism” with higher densities and mixed land use (see appendix 4).

Traffic management.

Local Area Traffic Management (LATM) plans are being used by the three councils 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.

Neighbourhood Improvement Plans

The Christchurch City Council made a commitment to a 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 is 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. It was believed that council intervention to assist urban renewal was required as a gap existed between when the market would intervene to renew areas and create 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, p 1).

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 the:

- reconstruction of roads and new flat kerb and channels;
- installation of traffic calming measures on non-arterial roads (eg a narrow entrance and a reduction in width of the non-arterial road);
- undergrounding of overhead wires;
- planting of street trees in grass berms; and
- upgrading of existing reserves and the acquisition of new areas of public open space (Kensington 1996, p 7).

Mainstreet/town centre revitalisation

The Waitakere City Council has a ten year strategy of revitalisation of town centres based on the level of business commitment, public support and compatibility with the city's strategic goals. The strategy includes the coordinated tree planting of major routes and key points within the city. Several of the larger town centres have been completed and the smaller town centres will be targeted next. There will be quite different outcomes from each of these revitalisations, reflecting the diversity in the city's people.

Auckland City Council has also instituted Mainstreet Programmes at Glen Innes, Onehunga Mall, Otahuhu, Panmure and St Heliers.

Development model

The Waitakere City Council has formed a Local Authority Trading Enterprise (LATE) to manage the council's property and, in particular, to develop the northern residential zone of the Harbour View Estate of

some 110 hectares. An initial subdivision is expected to contain some 425 units in a mix of low and medium density development. There is expected to be a significant amount of high quality open space, including the coastal margins, with the residential estate covering 60 per cent of the overall site. The first stage of the development is expected to be a joint venture between a private sector partner and the council's LATE. The subdivision has been designed using the council's requirements for medium density housing, namely the roading network reflects connections between streets, some of the houses front open space areas, and the living areas of homes are located to overlook the streets to enhance the safety of individuals.

Small Local Improvement Projects (SLIPS)

In both Auckland and Christchurch City, community boards have the authority to administer Small Local Improvement Projects (SLIPs) funds so that local needs, on a small scale, are able to be determined and actioned. The kind of projects that are funded have a strong emphasis on improving amenities for communities and thus enhancing amenity values eg tree planting and upgrading parks and upgrading sports grounds to increase usage.

5.3.2 City-wide amenity values

Public open space

Christchurch is fortunate to have large public open space areas such as Hagley Park, the Botanical Gardens and parts of the Port Hills; Auckland has large parks such as Cornwall Park; and Waitakere City has the backdrop of the Waitakere Ranges. All three cities have a strong commitment to acquiring and maintaining public open space; one reason for this commitment is to compensate for reduced private open space as a result of housing intensification.

Auckland City inherited a variety of recreation areas and open space upon amalgamation comprising some 1,495 hectares of reserve land of varying standards and uses. In 1990 a recreation and open space policy review **recognised** that a high growth rate would place an increased demand on existing open space and recreation facilities. It also indicated that provision should continue to be made to accommodate future recreation and open space needs.

Priority needs and demands in 1990 were:

- ✎ an improvement in the distribution and availability of local open space within walking distance of residential areas. This included the provision of space in areas subject to **infill** and where there was a shortage of open space;
- ✎ improvement in the quality of reserves; and
- ✎ provision of open space to meet the demands of different groups.

Over the past few years, the Auckland City Council has acquired 50 hectares of land for open space in the city.

Christchurch has a total of 550 parks and reserves covering more than 2,300 ha (15 per cent of the urban area), approximately 8 ha per 1,000 people. Christchurch City is preparing a local parks acquisition strategy partly to address the needs of areas that lack public open space, including the inner suburbs. Twenty-two parks were purchased by Christchurch City Council in 1995/96 for purposes as diverse as natural heritage, conservation or sports fields. Ten of these parks were in the inner city. The council is committed to securing the protection of the upper slopes of the Port Hills and has an ongoing programme of strategic land acquisitions.

Waitakere City has over 400 parks and reserves covering 824 hectares located throughout the city area. The city has also developed a green network strategy for linking existing open space, streams and bush remnants into an ecologically continuous network extending from the Ranges, along the stream and road networks, and across open spaces, to the sea .

Waitakere City Council has developed a leisure strategy of which a vital component is the role that parks and open spaces have in respect of formal or informal leisure pursuits (Waitakere City Council 1994). The council will be developing a parks strategy that will identify the means of implementing the green network strategy and improving the amenity value of parks.

Coastal Edge Strategies

The Auckland City Council has produced coastal edge strategies for the management of various sections of the city's coastline. The Manukau Harbour Edge Strategy was produced in 1994 with the purpose of setting clear directions for the area's future management. The council **recognises** that the coastal edge is likely to come under increased pressure from urban expansion and demands for recreational uses in the future.

Harbour edge

The Auckland waterfront is another of the city-wide and regional amenities that contributes to the inner city and regional character. With the proposed siting of the America's Cup facilities at the Viaduct Basin, the Auckland City Council has set up the Harbour Edge development as a special project, in order to coordinate and advocate for improvements to the harbour edge. The council has introduced a plan change to identify areas of open space as this is a "one-off" opportunity to gain public access to this area.

Esplanade reserve management

In response to the changes in the esplanade reserve provisions of the RMA, the Auckland City Council developed management guidelines to provide policy direction for processing applications for waivers and

reductions of the esplanade reserve requirement. The council has adopted a policy for the setting aside of esplanade areas for the Isthmus area (Auckland City Council 1993a).

Waterway enhancement programmes

The Water Services Unit of Christchurch City Council administers the city's water supply and drainage functions. Since 1989, 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 landscaping. This is a large undertaking; about 20 km of enhancement work has been started with another 280 km still to be completed. The unit has provided the community with guidelines for indigenous planting alongside streams in Christchurch. The streams and wetlands can become community assets and provide important habitat for indigenous plants and birds.

The Auckland City Council has responsibility for the Orakei Basin, a city-wide amenity for recreation and an area that contributes to the amenity values of the Eastern Suburbs. The Orakei Basin Protection Society was formed in mid-1995 as a group of residents became very concerned at the degraded environmental and public health status of the Basin and wanted infill development to be halted until the stormwater problems were fixed. Only 15 per cent of the catchment has been subject to sewer separation and there are 14 sewer overflows which activate each time it rains. After several months of negotiation, the council agreed to a joint council-residents working group to describe the problems and identify options to achieve restoration of the water quality of the Basin.

Urban infrastructure renewal programmes

The Christchurch City Council's works programme includes urban renewal programmes such as the replacement of all kerb and channel within the next 25 years. To achieve this the council intends to spend around \$9.5 million per year. Where possible, the council will combine this work with the reduction of road widths in residential areas to reduce the level of through traffic. In conjunction with the electricity distributor, Southpower, the council will work towards the undergrounding of overhead wires within 80 years.

The Auckland City Council recognised in 1990 that stormwater management required a strategic approach and started catchment management planning for areas identified in the urban growth strategy. Sewer separation is one of the infrastructure issues still to be resolved in parts of Auckland City. There are a number of waterways into which the combined stormwater and sewage flow when there is some rain in the catchment. The council has identified a number of

catchments where the environmental effects are significant and has decided on a priority order for the separation of stormwater and sewage.

At its October 1996 meeting, the council agreed in principle to a number of actions over the next four years to improve the Orakei Basin, including the continuation of sewer separation, the building of stormwater treatment ponds in Orakei Creek, erosion control, and the imposition of building regulations governing surface water runoff.

Table 5.1 Council approaches to managing existing residential amenity values

	Auckland City	Christchurch City	Waitakere City
Special amenity or character -areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6 Conservation Areas. 4 Special Character Zones: built and flora dominant. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 35 Special Amenity Areas (SAMs) 	
Heritage protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schedule of listed heritage places, items, areas and waahi tapu. Design advice and advocacy. Heritage management fund. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schedule of listed heritage places, items, areas and waahi tapu. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schedule of listed heritage places, items, and waahi tapu.
Tree protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Notable tree protection: ~ 2,100 trees. Coastal tree protection. General tree-protection. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Heritage/notable tree protection: ~ 1,400 trees. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Heritage tree protection: ~ 70 trees. General tree protection.
Urban design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Special conservation and urban design unit: advice and guidance. Voluntary design guidelines for Residential 1 Zone, and areas eg Karangahape Road. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposed for selected SAM areas. Voluntary guide for siting of garages in front yards. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design guidelines for medium density developments. Charrette workshops (urban design). Design advice and consultation.
Other district plan approaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> View protection for significant public views of volcanic cones. 	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public view protection.
Open space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open space strategy. Strategic purchase of land. Management and conservation plans under Reserves Act. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acquisition strategy: separation of funding for strategic and neighbourhood parks. Parkcare and Streamcare. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parks Strategy. Leisure Strategy. Use of Green Network strategy to link areas of public green space.
Council street improvement programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Area Traffic Management Plans (LATMs). Street tree planting. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Neighbourhood Improvement Plans (NIPS). LATM plans. Street tree planting. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LATM Plans. Street tree planting.
Urban renewal programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Separation of combined sewage and drainage system. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NIPs and undergrounding of wiring, replacement of kerb and channel, removal of non-conforming existing uses. 	-
Community board funding for projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Small Local Improvement Projects: \$250,000 per C. Board. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Small Local Improvement Projects: \$250,000 per C. Board for annual plan projects. \$50,000 for other projects. 	-
Other projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Esplanade Reserve guidelines. Coastal edge strategies. Harbour edge developments. Mainstreet programmes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Charrette workshops. Waterway enhancement programme. Indigenous ecosystem mapping. Children's Strategy. Natural Environment Strategy to be prepared. Keep Christchurch Beautiful. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic planning in accordance with the eco-city concept. Green network strategy. Harbour view model development. Town Centre Revitalisation programmes. Keep Waitakere Beautiful.

6. DISCUSSION OF CRITICAL ISSUES

This chapter comments on some of the important amenity issues facing local authorities. It identifies a range of approaches that could be used to both maintain and enhance amenity values for local areas and for wider urban areas in general. While there can be many problems with intensification and higher density living, appropriate design and the explicit consideration of amenity values can ensure the ongoing management of amenity values so that the benefits outweigh any disadvantages.

The management of amenity values in established residential areas is an important resource management issue for residents and communities that are experiencing suburban infill and redevelopment. The strong reactions to infill and redevelopment by residents in the different communities consulted during this review have highlighted the importance of amenity values to people and communities. For local residents and communities, **residential intensification can have both real and perceived adverse effects on amenity values.**

A key issue is whether it is possible to manage amenity values on a street or neighbourhood scale while providing for urban intensification and higher densities. Existing amenity values will change with intensification but the question is: can they be provided for or managed in other ways?

Many councils recognise that intensification is required in order to progress towards urban sustainability, a sustainable urban form, and to avoid the environmental problems and infrastructural costs of urban sprawl. New planning approaches such as “new urbanism” and “transit oriented development” are predicated on higher densities and intensification (see appendix 4). To accommodate population growth within existing urban boundaries, development at greater densities than New Zealanders are traditionally used to will be required. Low density is now considered to be sections of around 500 m² as opposed to the traditional quarter acre section of 1000 m².

6.1 Can councils manage amenity values with intensification?

Site density (unit per area)	Traditional development	Auckland proposed plan	Christchurch proposed plan	Waitakere proposed plan
Low density.	1000 m ²	500 m ²	> 450 - 600 m ²	450 m ²
Medium density	500 m ²	300 - 375 m ²	300 - 450 m ²	350 - 400 m ²
High density	300 m ²	200 m ²	< 300 m ²	< 300 m ²

Residents' tolerance or acceptance of different housing types will vary according to their experience and the design of the development. A 1996 housing preference study within North Shore City highlighted the essentially conservative responses of many North Shore residents to different housing types, with detached houses still the most popular form of housing. A comparative sample of Auckland City residents displayed quite different values including a preference for town houses and acceptance of apartments.

There is an inherent conflict between the need of cities to move to more sustainable urban forms while managing the character and amenity values of different neighbourhoods. Where intensification is targeted for specific suburban areas (eg the inner suburbs of Christchurch), there is conflict between providing for the management of existing amenity values and meeting the strategic objectives of urban consolidation. 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), or new forms of development such as row housing with courtyards, but intensification of the majority of a street or neighbourhood will alter existing amenity values.

Widespread intensification and resulting changes to existing amenity values will test the ability of a council to manage the effects of the development on the amenity values of an area. Interested parties with a real stake in the outcome of an urban intensification policy are the residents of the city, as they are the people on whom the effects on amenity values impact.

Some of the areas affected by intensification, particularly the inner city residential areas, are also valuable from a heritage viewpoint and the need for heritage protection will become an increasingly important issue. Some urban areas have already been significantly degraded because of the absence of heritage conservation policies in the past. The current initiatives by Auckland and Christchurch City Councils to protect important heritage conservation areas and recognise heritage in special character zones and special amenity areas need to be continued and expanded to other areas where appropriate.

6.2 The importance of local amenity values

The amenity values of some residential suburbs are more evident than others through similar design, heritage values, mature trees and areas of open space. However, all suburbs are living environments and their residents have a very real stake in the management of amenity values.

Councils recognise that some areas have their own character through the use of special character zones or special amenity areas, but all areas have their own unique identity, amenity values and characteristics. This is illustrated by the results from the three charrette/concept plan

workshops in Christchurch which enabled the local community to define the particular amenity values of their areas. The local community then wanted these values recognised and provided for by the council.

It appears that for many suburban areas an assumption has been made by councils that these areas have no distinctive character or amenity values. The lack of recognition and planning for the amenity values of the majority of the urban area has contributed to residents' concerns that councils are not responding to the effects of intensification on amenity values.

In order for the policies and objectives of a district plan relating to amenity values to be implemented, amenity values for all areas and not just areas with special character or amenity need to be identified and described. Once these amenity values are identified, they can be considered in assessments of environmental effects and any changes to amenity values can be monitored.

The charrette/concept plan 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 any effects on these values. The charrette/concept plan 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.

An "urban landcare" approach to managing the urban environment could be adopted; this would assist the management of amenity values. Community boards could perform a key role in facilitating the growth of these groups or, if council delegations did not allow this, a particular council committee could facilitate an "urban landcare" approach.

There is a range of activities that community groups can be involved in, including the identification of amenity values for their neighbourhood, monitoring of changes in amenity values, and evaluating the effectiveness of enhancement initiatives. There need to be council-facilitated forums for ongoing community involvement in the process of intensification. It cannot be left to the planners and developers to set the agendas for intensification.

The increased potential for conflict between landowners and general nuisance issues (eg increased noise levels and traffic) in more intensely developed urban environments means that there will be increased demand for resources to manage these conflicts. This demand is being

6.3 Resource consent issues

driven by both the effects-based approach under the RMA and public expectations for an improved urban environment.

Council evaluation of resource consent applications

For the RMA effects-based approach to be effective, an application for a resource consent should include a detailed assessment of environmental effects (AEE) and a council should then ensure that the AEE is carefully evaluated. An evaluation of a resource consent application, including an assessment of the effects of an activity on amenity values, requires qualitative and quantitative analysis, the use of professional expertise, and the consideration of effects from on-site, off-site and community perspectives. The management of any complex ecological/human community system is going to be resource intensive if councils and other interested parties are to note the effects of resource uses and manage these effects. The effects-based planning system requires far more information and sophistication to administer than did previous planning legislation.

The assessment of the effects of a proposed activity on amenity values requires experienced professionals (eg architects, landscape architects and urban designers) to assist planners in the evaluation of resource consent applications. The inadequate use of professionals with the required expertise to assess effects on amenity values will compromise the adequacy of an evaluation.

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. An urban amenity team could also be responsible for policy development and the assessment of any changes in council policy and plans. An integral part of the evaluation of the effects of housing intensification on the amenity values of a community is consultation with the local community, possibly through a community board or representative community group, in order to gain the community perspective on the extent of the effects on amenity values.

For lesser resourced councils and where the issues are not so great as to require a specialist team operating on a permanent basis, a council could use professional advice from consultants specialising in areas relating to the management of amenity values.

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. The effect of a development on the context of an area or the streetscape should be considered as part of addressing cumulative effects. A regular monitoring programme of resource consent approvals and subsequent changes to the amenity values of particular areas would assist the recognition of cumulative changes to amenity values and subsequent management of the effects.

Notification of resource consent applications

The processing without notification of resource consents for some proposed activities has resulted in concerns being expressed by local residents and parts of the community that significant amenity values and other environmental values would be adversely affected by the development proposals. If an application is not notified then a community can provide no input of the effects of the proposed activity to the council.

The decision to notify an application or not is a difficult one, requiring a council assessment of who is affected and the significance of the effects with the community's assessment of an area's amenity values. In this situation, criteria in a district plan are required for assessing if an application should be notified and to improve the consistent implementation of the district plan. Notification criteria should recognise the policies that have been formulated for a particular zone, the type of resource consent being applied for and the degree of non-compliance with existing amenity values (eg a percentage height over the permitted level or the percentage of vegetation to be removed).

The council's processes for considering the notification/non-notification of a resource consent application should include an opinion from a professional such as an architect, landscape architect or urban designer with expertise in amenity values. Input from a community board member, ward councillor or community group member could also be provided to represent community input into the notification decision given that amenity values are part of community values.

In conjunction with the notification/non-notification test of s 94 of the RMA, the use of notification criteria would assist in providing existing residents and the local community with some certainty that they would be informed via notification of any activity that may have more than a minor effect on local amenity values. Over time, thresholds for determining what are more than minor effects could be established, for instance using percentages over height or over site coverage as a guide. The criteria could be reviewed continually as the results of notified or non-notified applications are tested against the provisions of the district plan.

It is acknowledged that higher levels of consent notification will increase transaction costs for a council, an applicant, and individuals and groups in the community. However, the increased transaction costs need to be balanced against the increased consideration of the values and concerns of the local community and, with this, improved environmental outcomes.

The contents of an AEE will be a determining factor as to whether community values and concerns have been adequately considered by an

applicant and how any adverse effects will be avoided, remedied or mitigated. **If effects on individual and community amenity values have not been adequately addressed then additional consultation or notification should be required.**

Written approval

The RMA provides that, as the second part of the test for non-notification for non-complying and some discretionary activities, an application need not be notified if written approval has been obtained from every person who in the opinion of the consent authority may be adversely affected by the granting of a resource consent, unless it is considered unreasonable to require the obtaining of approval (s 94(2)(b) RMA). However if “person” is taken to be only an immediate neighbour then it is suggested that this provision does not recognise the effects of an activity on a community. In addition, landowners may be able to purchase an adjoining property and thereby purchase their own development controls which will also affect the adjoining property and surrounding area.

The ability of a neighbour to give written approval along with the provision that a consent authority shall not have regard to any actual or potential effect on that person may not promote the sustainable management of natural and physical resources. If written approval is given, it will be important that issues of cumulative effects on amenity values and the integrity of the district plan are still considered by councils in the wider context provided by s 104 RMA.

6.4 Urban design and the management of amenity values

A mixture of architectural styles and building types and forms has often resulted from suburban intensification. Recent townhouse development is more likely to be compatible with existing buildings than historical intensification (eg concrete block “sausage flats”) but there are many examples of incompatible styles and designs. The lack of emphasis placed by local authorities upon high quality streetscape design and upon high quality built form has made it difficult to manage amenity values in intensifying established residential areas. The scale of development, the rate of change and the cumulative effects on the character of areas undergoing intensification are major amenity issues.

As site and housing densities increase, design becomes the critical issue that affects amenity values. 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. Appropriate design can improve contextual relationships (ie compatibility), improve accessibility, promote safety, assist social cohesion, and identify and generally contribute to social well being which includes amenity values.

Waitakere City Council has taken a design approach to intensification to ensure that medium density developments are appropriate to their site and the wider area. The council has placed a strong emphasis on sustainable urban form with the design of a development being responsive to the physical and social environment in provision of infrastructure and services. Overseas work on city form and design has been used in developing a design philosophy that will meet the council's objectives for housing intensification and for transport planning. The design philosophy adopted by the council is different from previous approaches where low density subdivisions were permitted without much attention being given to transport, open space and community requirements. The council intends to hold workshops with developers to explain the district plan approach to medium density housing and increase support for this approach.

There are many international examples of alternative housing types that could be applicable to New Zealand (eg the use of terrace housing and courtyards). **However, there needs to be much more innovation and research in New Zealand to evolve urban form beyond the "quarter acre paradise" or overseas models to a South Pacific urban form that is adaptable for different climatic and environmental factors.** The relationships between transport corridors and residential density, and housing and public/private open space will need to be examined for New Zealand as few imported models are likely to be fully compatible with local attitudes and physical conditions.

A wide range of urban form models could be adapted for different situations and these include:

- post "new urbanism" models from the United States of America which show more adaptability to different landscapes;
- the Woonerf (shared street) model that began in Delft, Holland, and has been taken up in Germany and Britain which involves pedestrian/local community oriented development; and
- the continuing use of the cul-de-sac.

Auckland City Council urban design

The Conservation and Urban Design division (C&UDD) of the Auckland City Council has been responsible for all heritage policy, overview and urban design sections. The team was the first to be set up by a territorial authority in 1985 but it has recently been separated into heritage and urban design sections.

The division had functions which included:

- advocacy and public education on heritage and conservation, urban design and protected trees;
- the provision of expert heritage, architectural and urban design advice to the council's property division and to landowners and developers;

- ✧ reporting on resource consents involving scheduled items; and
- ✧ a “call-in” power from area **offices** to deal with applications of city-wide significance concerning conservation areas and all scheduled items.

One of the important aspects of the division’s work was to encourage early contact and discussions with landowners and developers to recognise and provide for the protection of heritage in the city. This architectural and urban design advisory work is considered by the division staff to be very important. Since the special character areas were promulgated through the proposed plan, many architects are now designing in sympathy with the character of an area and some innovative designs are being built after some 2.5 years of consultation with architects and land developers.

6.4.1 The use of design guidelines

Council design guidelines that describe acceptable building designs and features can provide landowners, developers and architects with some indication and certainty of what is desired by a council and community.

A design guide:

- ✧ is a generalised mechanism for guiding change;
- ✧✧ illustrates key principles;
- ✧ focuses on qualitative criteria rather than quantitative rules; and
- ✧ makes explicit the benchmarks for assessing the level of amenity and design quality of a development (McIndoe 1994).

The benefit of guidelines are that they are generally non-prescriptive, focusing on the articulation of design principles or intended outcomes, to allow a wide range of possible design solutions. Design guidelines will assist the controlled change of buildings and urban environments while retaining some flexibility and they can assist to eliminate substandard development.

It has been proposed that:

Guidelines should provide the basis of local development etiquette or good manners. They will vary in different settings.. . They should aim to guide, not to provide for detailed architectural solutions. They should not predicate particular styles, nor prevent ingenuity. Above all, they should not be rigid -for there will be times when architectural brilliance demands the exception to the rules and normal day-to-day conventions should be overturned (Hillman 1990, p 28).

In New Zealand, design guides were first used as planning controls by a small number of local authorities in the early 1980s. A comprehensive design guide can provide a clear statement about appropriate urban design while allowing for a council to exercise some

discretion and a flexible approach to assessing different designs (Mitchell & Brown 1995).

In general few councils include design guidelines in their district plans although some have adopted rules that deal with quantitative and/or qualitative aspects of design in special character residential zones (eg Auckland City and North Shore City). Waitakere City Council is in the process of preparing design guidelines for medium density housing developments (Mentz 1996).

The Auckland City Council provides urban design assistance through voluntary design guides. While voluntary design guides may encourage compliance through education and can be promoted, they cannot be enforced and they may not be applied to all developments. Without statutory support for design guidelines there is a risk that amenity values will not be provided for; this will increase uncertainty for existing residents.

In contrast to other council approaches, the Wellington City proposed district plan makes extensive use of design guides. The plan has a series of design guides for the central area of the city, as well as design guides for multi-unit housing, subdivisions, character areas, and non-statutory design guides for wind and design against crime. In Wellington, design guides are incorporated into the district plan with rules on the basis that while rules could provide more certainty, they often result in a crude design that does not necessarily achieve the particular design objective (Mitchell & Brown 1995).

Concerns have been expressed about the Wellington design guides in terms of equity, equality, certainty and cost (Allan et al 1995). In particular, references to “good” and “bad” design reflect the critical issue that they are subjective, value-laden concepts that change over time.

However, the subjectivity of design has been challenged in the foreword to a review of the case for design guidelines in the United Kingdom. Lord St John of Fawsley, Chairman of the Royal Fine Art Commission, commented:

The parrot-like repetition of slogans such as ‘it is all a matter of personal taste’ or ‘beauty lies in the eye of the beholder’ is not a resolution of the aesthetic issue but an avoidance of the problem. Worse this undermines the traditions of high aesthetic standards and the seeking of objective standards of truth and beauty and in the arts which is the foundation of our culture. . . . A society that lists buildings for preservation, designates conservation areas and selects other areas as being of outstanding

natural beauty, is clearly declaring its belief in objective standards (Hillman 1990).

Historically, most New Zealand councils have been reluctant to intervene in urban design. However, as intensification continues and the suburban environment is changed to an urban environment, councils will need to investigate the use of design guidelines.

Design guidance in England

Research into design policies in local plans in England has highlighted that:

outside of environmentally sensitive areas, planning authorities are more able to influence the quality of the built environment by defining and controlling those urban design qualities which give character and quality to public areas and which determine the most equitable use of public open space (Carmona 1996).

The Department of the Environment recently provided new design advice as part of the draft revision of Planning Policy Guidance Note 1 (Revised): General Policy and Principles (Department of the Environment 1996). The draft guide re-emphasises the importance of urban design as a material consideration in planning decisions and notes the role of urban and building design in preserving the character and quality of context¹ with specific mention of public spaces, streets, vistas and sense of place.

Urban design is defined in the draft guide as:

the relationship between different buildings; the relationship between buildings and the streets, squares, parks and other spaces which make up the public domain; the nature and quality of the public domain itself; the relationship of one part of a village, town or city with other parts; and the patterns of movement and activity which are thereby established: in short, the complex relationships between all the elements of the built and unbuilt space (Department of the Environment 1996).

The draft guide:

supports the inclusion of policies on mixed use developments as they reduce the need for travel and create both vitality and diversity, although it notes that these developments should complement surroundings and not jeopardise the character of existing residential areas;

¹ Context is taken to be the wider context and not just immediately adjacent buildings.

- promotes local distinctiveness (supported in plan policy and supplementary guidance that has been subject to consultation) as opposed to attempting to control detail and the imposition of unnecessary aesthetic control; and
- promotes a process-led approach to design control with planning authorities required to prepare design policies against which proposals can be considered. Design policies would be based on an assessment of the character of the surrounding built and unbuilt environment, and take account of the defining characteristics of each local area.

The loss of local distinctiveness has led to the preparation of many design guides by concerned planning authorities and resulting opposition from development interests about perceived design interference. The draft guide and a good practice guide should assist “urban design prescription without interference” and reduce the problem of design control bringing copycat, unimaginative solutions (Carmona 1996).

Trees and areas of vegetation are essential natural elements in the urban landscape that offset the dominance of the built environment. Trees and vegetation provide ecological habitat, visual amenity, heritage values, assist land stability, and support environmental processes but they are threatened by intensification with an increased number of buildings per hectare.

The continuing loss of urban vegetation including remnant areas of bush, significant trees, groves of trees, and private gardens as a result of urban intensification is a major amenity, landscape and ecological issue. The loss of urban vegetation can lead to a reduction in the biodiversity of a city and decrease food and habitat available for wildlife.

Notwithstanding existing tree protection measures in district plans (eg special character zones, the listing of notable trees, general tree protection), there is some uncertainty as to the future survival of urban trees in areas subject to intensification. Associated with the removal of tree cover to enable building and landscaping of a site is the potential loss of tree cover over the next five to ten years as urban trees that have been surrounded by hard impervious surfaces deteriorate and die. Without a tree inventory which identifies such “at risk” trees, councils will be unable to consider whether remedial action in the form of planting of street trees or other measures will be required.

The Waitakere City Council has recognised the overall importance of green areas in the city. The green network is an important element in the city’s open space provision and comprises four Natural Areas described in the proposed district plan viz riparian margins, protected

6.5 The management of urban trees and vegetation

6.5.1 Issues concerning tree and vegetation protection

areas of outstanding native vegetation, coastal areas, and managed areas of significant native vegetation. It links existing open space, streams and bush remnants into an ecologically continuous network extending from the Waitakere Ranges, along the stream and road networks, and across open spaces, to the sea. The council has identified and mapped areas that have the potential to be replanted as “ecological corridors” between isolated bush fragments. The green network serves a number of ecological and natural hazard purposes as well as enhancing visual amenity in the city.

6.5.2 Approaches to tree and vegetation protection

The promotion and enhancement of the tree and vegetation cover of urban areas could assist in mitigating any adverse effects of intensification. The particular fabric of different areas of the city needs to be taken into account in promoting the retention of vegetation cover. General tree protection provisions for significant trees (eg over a certain height and width), either city-wide or for specified areas, would complement existing notable or heritage tree provisions in many district plans. Tree protection will require skilled staff, including a combination of arborists and landscape architects, to assess applications for pruning or tree removal.

Mechanisms to promote vegetation retention include:

- the preparation of an urban tree plan including an inventory of the existing vegetation cover of a city to assist with monitoring existing tree cover and to identify any major changes. The tree plan could also provide for means to encourage tree establishment and the planting of appropriate trees that can adapt to the city environment;
- the provision of incentives to promote the maintenance and renewal of general tree cover through rates relief, council provision of 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.

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, provision could be made for increased planting of public open space including parks and footpaths to offset the loss of private treescape.

A tree management approach - The Tree Council (Auckland) Inc

The Tree Council is funded by the local authorities in the Auckland region and it supports tree protection by the Auckland City Council.

The Tree Council is an incorporated charitable society which has been serving the community since 1985 in the protection of mature trees. The Tree Council aims to promote and coordinate effective programmes for the protection, management and planting of trees, particularly in the urban environment, to improve the quality of life in the Auckland region and to improve the Auckland treescape.

The activities of the Tree Council include:

- the organisation of seminars and the production of information on the importance and value of trees;
- the provision of assistance to councils to develop and implement comprehensive tree protection and management programmes; and
- the support of professional and community groups with tree planting, protection and maintenance and public consultation services.

The Tree Council in consultation with the territorial authorities in the Auckland region, the Department of Conservation, Ministry of Forestry and the Auckland Regional Council has developed a regional tree plan. The tree plan is to provide strategies for a consistent and coordinated approach across the region for the management, preservation and enhancement of the treescape.

The Tree Council regional tree plan contains four main elements:

1. Tree protection: guidelines for comprehensive tree protection mechanisms in a district plan, a mediation service to resolve disputes about trees, an advisory service to provide initial advice on tree matters to the community, and an evaluation system for the measurement and economic valuation of trees.
2. Tree landscape: a tree strategy to develop a consistent protection, enhancement, and management methodology for amenity trees in urban areas, local authority coordination and linkages to open space strategies, and clear policies, rules and guidelines for private and public landscape development.
3. Tree management: guidelines, information and professional advice for individuals, organisations and local authorities.
4. Tree inventory: guidelines for the preparation of a tree inventory, the establishment of an appropriate computer database showing the location of the treescape, and the location and assessment of rare, endangered and significant trees (Tree Council, no date).

In March 1996, a Private Member's Bill "urban trees" was introduced to Parliament and referred to the Planning and Development Select Committee. The Bill was prepared because of concerns that the RMA did not have adequate provisions to enable the protection of trees in urban areas, given increasing levels of development and intensification. The purpose of the Bill is "to give greater recognition to the importance of trees in urban areas".

6.5.3 The Urban Trees Bill

The Bill proposes amending several acts, including the RMA, by:

- ☞ adding the protection, maintenance and conservation of tree cover in any urban area as a matter of national importance; and
- ☞ requiring a territorial authority to include in the district plans rules making suitable provision for the protection, maintenance and conservation, so far as practicable, of the existing tree cover, whether of indigenous or exotic trees, in every urban area.

In their submission on the Bill, Local Government New Zealand noted that there is concern among local authorities about the loss of urban tree cover as a result of intensification. However, local authorities did not agree that trees should be provided with a special status under the RMA as this would not be consistent with an effects-based approach or the impartial treatment of all resources (Local Government News May 1996).

Greater recognition of the value of the urban treescape is needed; however, the need for this legislation has not been proven. The new provisions, if inserted in the RMA, would still serve only to be persuasive to councils and the councils should be responsive to local views as required by the RMA. If the councils are responsive to local views on tree protection then there is no need for this Bill and its enactment would not ensure that councils protect trees, as there is plenty of scope for discretion to be exercised.

Territorial authorities already have the power to make rules providing for the protection of trees or green areas in an urban area, and some councils are attempting to do this (eg Auckland and Waitakere City Councils). What trees or areas of tree cover are protected by district rules is a matter for discussion with the community through the preparation and submission stages of a district plan. The protection of urban trees and tree cover could be addressed through the consideration of RMA matters such as the protection of outstanding natural features and landscapes, the protection of areas of significant indigenous vegetation, and the maintenance and enhancement of amenity values.

6.6 The management of open space

As intensification proceeds and private space is reduced, public open space will increase in importance. Public open space may also be the only area where mature trees can be retained. As intensification leads to higher rise development, trees will become more important to offset the scale and visual dominance of buildings and provide relief from the built environment, air and sound filters and other amenity aspects. In general terms, the demand for public open space will increase.

The recognition of streets as significant public open spaces could provide an opportunity for enhancing the amenity value of residential areas and cities. Christchurch City has begun work to narrow the road width of some streets in order to plant trees in the berm and improve the streetscape. Some of this work involves adapting the concept of the shared street (Woonerf) to the suburban environment and integrating traffic and pedestrian activity as a positive principle for street planning (eg Ben-Joseph 1995).

In all three case study councils there is a recognised shortage of parks and reserves in some areas that are experiencing intensification and some of the areas targeted for intensification. The shortage of parks is particularly critical at the local neighbourhood level as these parks will become important areas of local public open space as intensification reduces private open space. Given the population density of the areas surrounding these parks, they will need to be well designed with high quality amenity values. **It will be essential that adequate reserve contributions are obtained from areas receiving 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.**

The Christchurch City Council has recognised the need to provide a variety of parks for the future and the council has separated reserve funding for strategic and neighbourhood parks. Discrete funding for neighbourhood parks will assist the purchase of these parks in the future.

Recognition and planning for open space

In any urban area, some areas of private open space may be undeveloped because of physical constraints such as steep topography with limited access and drainage problems. The public perception of this land may be that it is open space although, if new technology and building approaches can overcome these constraints, then the land can often be developed. This may affect the natural character and amenity values of these areas and the view of these areas from other parts of the city.

The development of public open space will also affect amenity values. For example, the 1980s development boom in England resulted in some local green spaces eg local authority-owned parks and open space being targeted for development. The loss of these green spaces affected local communities who had considered these areas public open space as a community asset and protected in perpetuity. A contributing factor to the development was a change to planning legislation in 1980 where the loss of open space and the provision of alternative areas no longer had to be considered in the planning process. The identification of local authority- owned land as corporate

assets can place pressure on some local authorities to develop premium open space to capitalise on the investment (Morphet 1996).

In New Zealand, attempts to develop open space and council-owned reserves at Basque Park in Auckland and the Harbour View Estate in Waitakere City have generated similar concerns to those expressed in England. The Christchurch “green belt” is another important area of open space that has no formal protection and this could be developed in the future. To recognise and provide for public and private open space, an open space strategy should be prepared which could consider:

- the relative importance of areas of public and private open space within the urban environment;
- the required mix of active and passive open space including a range of different sized parks and reserves;
- the type of development of areas of open space and ongoing management requirements;
- the size and location of areas of indigenous forest and bush, the minimum area required for the continued survival of the remnant area and the relative importance of the area as a wildlife corridor;
- the promotion of community involvement and community park planning; and
- the needs of future generations for open space and planning for the adequate provision of various types of open space in areas subject to intensification.

The development of a comprehensive inventory of open space within an urban area would identify important areas of open space, the type of ownership of these areas, and enable a council to plan for the management and adequate provision of public open space in the future.

6.7 Transport related issues

The implications of population growth on transport systems has been discussed only briefly in this review as the management of transport and the supporting infrastructure involves much more than a consideration of the impact on residential amenity values. However, it is advisable to plan not only for an extra 100,000 people living in Auckland City in 20 years time but also for the resources needed to accommodate the consequential increase in private vehicles (estimated to be 70,000 more private vehicles in Auckland).

Residential amenity values become affected by two main aspects of transport. The first is the change in the status of a road from a (quiet) residential street to a street that carries “through traffic” with a consequent increase in noise levels, issues of safety for other road users, children and pedestrians.

The other main aspect is that of car parking in residential areas. Housing intensification puts pressure on the provision of sufficient car

parking for residents and visitors. In some instances, car parking for commercial activities is not **confined** to the commercial areas but flows over into the residential areas with consequent congestion for residents. There are also other situations where commercial uses change (eg a dairy to a restaurant) without the physical provision of sufficient car parking for the restaurant **users**.² The use of resident parking only zones is one method of controlling the spillover into residential areas.

Responsibilities of councils

Suburban areas experiencing residential intensification will be subject to changes in amenity values. Local residents and communities often see these changes as having an adverse effect on existing amenity values. To some extent, rules set in the district plan can manage the on-site effects of residential intensification by ensuring that density, site coverage, height in relation to boundary and other controls contribute to a sympathetic development which does not dominate existing residential activities in a street or neighbourhood. However, if positive changes in amenity values are to be encouraged, councils need to be proactive and manage off-site aspects such as urban design, open space, vegetation management and streetscape.

Where there are negative changes in the amenity values of a street or neighbourhood, council action may be required to mitigate some of the effects such as the loss of private open space, the loss of mature trees and vegetation, pressure on car parking on streets, and the need for public open space and recreational opportunities.

Foremost amongst the council actions that assist management of amenity values is the provision of specialist advice on a range of issues eg on heritage, urban design, the use of design guidelines, advice on vegetation and tree management. This advice should be available to residents as well as land developers because it will assist the management of both on-site and off-site amenity values.

Future planning

The need to identify amenity values in targeted areas either before intensification commences or soon thereafter is crucial to the management of amenity values. The communities need to appreciate that there will be changes in amenity values and that there are some measures councils can take to mitigate these changes. Councils are, in effect, major shareholders in the management of public good amenity values.

6.8 Mitigation of effects

² Complaint to the PCE November 1996 by the Mission Bay-Kohimarama Residents Association.

There is a need to draw on international research to assist in devising urban forms that enable amenity values to be enhanced. Technological innovations with Geographic Information Systems and computer aided design will also assist councils (in evaluating the effects of housing intensification on streetscapes), and designers (in providing visual information to the residents and the developers). The assessment of the cumulative effects of developments could also be assisted by the use of this technology.

The strategic purchase of open space for reserves and neighbourhood parks can commence before intensification occurs and requires forward planning by councils. Retrospective action to purchase land to create small parks to offset changes in amenity values is often costly. In some instances, councils may consider that enhancement of amenity values can precede housing intensification and result in an upgraded neighbourhood within which intensification may occur.

Monitoring and enforcement

Monitoring the changes in amenity values that occur when residential intensification takes place is a very important aspect for councils. The development of indicators to monitor changes in amenity values will be required (as discussed in chapter 4.5). There is also great scope in urban areas to develop urban monitoring projects which involve the community in a similar manner to the rural landcare groups that have been established in New Zealand.

The conditions attached to resource consents relating to housing intensification can assist in ensuring that the effects of developments on the amenity values of a street or neighbourhood are mitigated. Some communities have identified that enforcement of resource consent conditions has not been a priority of councils. Conditions of resource consents relating to the management of amenity values are just as important as other conditions.

Community consultation

The processes and extent of community consultation adopted by councils are crucial to the management of amenity values. There are various measures that councils could use to facilitate consultation and to respond to the issues raised by the community. The development of new urban forms and for urban consolidation policies to manage growth in a sustainable way should be the subject of community consultation.

The role of major developers

Major housing providers and developers can play a key role in the management of amenity values. As previously discussed in chapter 5.2, Housing New Zealand is a major stakeholder in the provision of rental housing in New Zealand and particularly in the Auckland Isthmus. The construction of new housing by the company will

therefore have a significant influence on the amenity values of the surrounding area.

The principal objective of Housing New Zealand is “to operate as a successful business that will assist in meeting the Crown’s social objectives by providing housing and related services...” and to this end be “[a]n organisation that exhibits a sense of social responsibility by having regard to the interests of the community in which it operates” (s 4(1) Housing Restructuring Act 1992). In areas with residential intensification, amenity values are of major interest to a local community. It will be important that Housing New Zealand increases its focus on managing environmental effects as part of its operations, as well as meeting social and economic objectives, to recognise and provide for the amenity values of particular communities. It is desirable for Housing New Zealand and local authorities to confer on the way in which amenity values can be provided for in areas where comprehensive medium density housing development is being considered.

It will be important that key developers such as Housing New Zealand take a lead in setting examples of good design eg, through the use of comprehensive developments and medium-density housing.

Beyond amenity values

This report has focused on the management of amenity values in suburban areas that are subject to intensification. However, as outlined in figure 1 in the first chapter of this report, there are other factors that influence the recognised effects on amenity values.

Issues relating to demographics, population growth, family structure, the development of a more sustainable urban form, the provision of infrastructure, transport, and urban and building design will all need to be addressed in the next few decades if New Zealand’s urban areas are to become truly sustainable living environments.

7. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Urban form and intensification

7.1.1 Findings

1. Parts of the three cities that were the subject of this review are in transition from a suburban form to an urban form and all three cities have policies encouraging intensification of use 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.
2. The management of urban growth is a significant resource management issue for the three councils in this review. New solutions are required to accommodate urban growth within existing city boundaries instead of relying on traditional suburban development.
3. 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 inadequate understanding and appreciation of the role of urban design in planning future urban form.

Intensification and effects on amenity values

4. Existing amenity values will change with residential intensification and it will be difficult to maintain or enhance these values without management of both on-site and off-site effects. Urban infill will strongly affect amenity values, and the view of some communities is that it has adversely affected amenity values. Major housing providers or private landowners can affect amenity values in neighbourhoods by the manner in which properties are redeveloped.
5. There are differing perceptions between some councils and communities of the importance of the management of amenity values. Some communities consulted during this investigation expected little change in residential amenity values. 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.

The identification of amenity values

6. 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.

7. There is major variation in the level of and process of community consultation on amenity values. There are only a few communities that have described their neighbourhood amenity values through consultation processes, such as charrette workshops or as part of district plan preparation.
8. Describing amenity values is difficult because there are subjective aspects to be considered and, over time, values will change as communities change. However, there are aspects that are measurable and that can be identified.
9. It is important to document amenity values in the district plan so the rules relating to residential intensification can take into account those identified amenity values.
10. 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. Communities can assist councils in the description of amenity values with documentation of observable changes to street character from intensification. There are, however, no nationally developed environmental indicators that would assist councils and communities to describe and monitor changes in amenity values.

The management of amenity values

11. The identification and management of special amenity areas is a technique used by councils to impose stricter development controls for the purpose of maintaining identified amenity values. Precise criteria are required in order to identify these areas.
12. A critical measure for managing amenity values is the design of buildings and their relationship to adjacent buildings. 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 is a key factor in the community's acceptance of intensification.
13. Councils have the ability to mitigate some of the off-site effects of intensification through enhancement of the streetscape or the provision of additional public open space.
14. The provision of additional open space is a significant response to intensification and the management of amenity values although some areas subject to intensification lack sufficient areas of open space. It is essential that adequate reserve contributions are

obtained from areas receiving intensification to enable councils to purchase additional public open space in those areas. Adequate funds also need to be provided to upgrade existing streets, parks and reserves in areas subject to intensification.

15. Until 1991 there was a statutory gap that prevented cross-lease developments from contributing to reserves contributions. This has hindered councils' efforts to purchase open space for neighbourhood parks in areas subject to intensification as, without reserve contributions, councils cannot afford the high purchase cost of land in developed areas.
16. Major public concern has been expressed about the loss of urban vegetation with residential intensification. The identification of heritage/notable trees, the use of general tree protection and special indigenous bush zones can assist councils in the management of vegetation cover. The green network strategy of ecological linkages also contributes to the management of amenity values.

Resource consents and the assessment of environmental effects

17. In some resource consents 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.
18. With provision for mixed uses in residential neighbourhoods, the evaluation of the effects of these activities on residential amenity values should be assessed carefully and the subsequent effects of a variety of activities on amenity values should be monitored.
19. Professional staff with urban design, architecture, landscape, heritage and horticultural skills are required to properly assess the effects of intensification on the amenity values of an area. Community boards can provide input from residents and community groups as to the effects of a proposed activity on local amenity values.
20. The enforcement of conditions on resource consents that relate to the enhancement of amenity values, eg landscaping conditions, is crucial to community acceptance of intensification.

7.1.2 Recommendations To 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.
- ◌◌ 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.

To 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.

To 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.

To 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.

To 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*.

8. THE IDENTIFICATION OF “GOOD PRACTICE”

In this review of the three councils, many initiatives that contribute to the management of amenity values were identified. They include:

8.1 Council initiatives

District plan initiatives

- ▮ **Special character zones:** The identification of special character zones with more restrictive controls on density, site coverage, design and tree protection than other residential zones.
- ▮ **Special amenity areas:** The identification of Special Amenity Areas (SAMs) within residential zones to identify, define and retain special aspects or characteristics of these discrete areas.
- ▮ **Heritage protection:** The listing of heritage areas, buildings, sites, items and heritage trees and the use of resource consent procedures to provide some protection to these resources which contribute to a neighbourhood’s amenity values.
- ▮ **Vegetation protection:** The use of heritage/notable tree and general tree protection controls to ensure that a city’s vegetation cover is sustainably managed.
- ▮ **View protection:** Public view protection, through the use of viewshafts and height controls, for important visual landmarks such as the volcanic cones in Auckland.

Consultation

- ▮ **Early advice and consultation:**
 - The promotion by a council of early consultation by resource consent applicants with specialist council staff in order to gain architectural and design advice for developments in special character areas of a city.
 - The discussion of design requirements for comprehensive housing proposals before detailed drawings have been completed to take into account an area’s amenity values.
- ▮ **Concept plans:** Communities can describe the amenity values of their neighbourhood in a concept plan prepared as part of a charrette workshop. This process involves the community identifying the important characteristics of their area and preferred development options for the future in order to maintain and enhance amenity values and meet other environmental management objectives.
- ▮ **Community board initiatives:** Community boards actively liaise with residents and community groups with the objective of assisting residents and community groups to respond to planning processes.

- **Consent information system:** A consent information system instituted by council to assist affected persons with any query they may have about a proposed development, its potential effects and the implications of giving approval to a development.

Non-regulatory initiatives

- **Design guidelines:** The preparation of design guidelines for development in order for the policies and objectives on the maintenance and enhancement of amenity values to be implemented through sympathetic development.
- **Community programmes:** Small Local Improvement Programmes administered by community boards for the enhancement of local amenity values through specific programmes.
- **Open space provision:**
 - The strategic purchase of large areas of land around a city for green belt and town belt purposes.
 - The purchase and development of neighbourhood parks (ie small pocket-sized parks) in areas targeted for intensification.
 - The development of a Green Network concept to link the various open spaces and ecological areas within the urban and suburban areas of the city to enhance amenity values as well as ecological values in an urban environment.
 - The retention of road reserves to provide public open space that can be landscaped and planted to enhance streetscapes.
- **Coastal zone management:** The development of coastal edge strategies and the purchase of public open space in the coastal zone recognise the amenity values of this resource.
- **Urban renewal:** Neighbourhood Improvement Programmes and Local Area Traffic Management Plans contribute to improvements in the amenity values of a street or streets in a neighbourhood. The purchase and removal of non-conforming industrial or commercial uses in residential zones in order to improve the neighbourhood amenity values.
- **Waterway Enhancement Programme:** A 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 close involvement of the local community with these programmes is a benefit.
- **Expertise in urban design principles:** International urban research and development expertise has been sought by one council in developing strategies and designs, not only to maintain and enhance amenity values but also to meet objectives for housing and transport in an integrated way.
- **Keep New Zealand Beautiful** This organisation has branches in various cities and towns in New Zealand. It is run as a community and council partnership to improve amenity values by reducing the amount of graffiti and encouraging community involvement in cleanups of natural areas.

Other “good practice” approaches to maintaining and enhancing amenity values that have been identified in this report include:

8.2 Additional good practice

Urban landcare groups

- ⌘ Councils could assist urban **landcare** groups to provide for:
 - a) the identification of local amenity values by a community;
 - b) ongoing management of local amenity values through approaches such as the development of local community plans (eg concept plans) and the promotion of urban **landcare** groups such as **parkcare** and streamcare;
 - c) input into decisions that will affect local amenity values such as applications for resource consents; and
 - d) the monitoring of local amenity values in partnership with the council.

Mechanisms to promote vegetation retention

- ⌘ the preparation of an urban tree plan including an inventory of the existing vegetation cover of a city to assist with monitoring existing tree cover, and identifying any major changes. The tree plan could also provide for means to encourage tree planting and the selection of appropriate trees that can adapt to the city environment;
- ⌘ the provision of incentives to promote the maintenance and renewal of general tree cover through rates relief, council provision of 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;
- ⌘ encouraging living fences (eg hedges) rather than built fences; and
- ⌘ increased planting of public open space including parks and streets to offset the loss of the private treescape.

The management of open space

The development of a comprehensive inventory of open space within an urban area would identify important areas of open space, the type of ownership of these areas, and enable a council to plan for the management and adequate provision of public open space in the future. An open space strategy could be prepared which could consider:

- ⌘ the relative importance of areas of public and private open space within the urban environment;
- ⌘ the required mix of active and passive open space including a range of different sized parks and reserves;

- the type of development of areas of open space and ongoing management requirements;
- the size and location of areas of indigenous forest and bush, the minimum area required for the continued survival of the remnant area and the relative importance of the area as a wildlife corridor;
- the promotion of community involvement and community park planning; and
- the needs of **future** generations for open space and planning for the adequate provision of various types of open space in areas subject to intensification.

GLOSSARY

Design guide	A document that illustrates principles of design, provides design guidance for particular development types and makes explicit the benchmarks for assessing the level of amenity and design quality of a development.
Downzoning	A reduction in the density of housing in a particular zone or area as identified in a district plan in order to limit further infill and redevelopment (eg increasing the minimum site area from 300 m ² to 400 m ² and limiting infill development).
Medium density housing	Comprehensively designed, two to three storey housing developments.
Neighbourhood	A small local area, usually two or three streets, that a person identifies with and knows the best of all parts of a city.
Streetscape	The combination of physical features that make up a road and the combination of surrounding buildings and open space that overlook and are visually linked to a road or street when viewed from the street itself.
Suburban infill	The addition of another house or houses to a site with an existing house or to a vacant site or reserve land surrounded by low density residential housing.
Suburban	An area with predominantly low density residential development, detached housing and significant areas of private open space and vegetation.
Urban	An area characterised by high density development and a variety of housing styles including apartments, terrace housing and semi-detached housing. Reduced areas of private open space and vegetation.

Urban design	The general term for the design of groups of buildings and for the development of management policies for the urban physical environment.
Urban form	The three dimensional spatial qualities resulting from the collectivity of buildings that form the urban area.
Urban renewal	The physical change, or change in use or intensity of use of land and buildings, that is the inevitable outcome of the action of economic and social forces upon urban areas.

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APPENDIX 1 CONSULTATION LIST

Auckland Chamber of Commerce
 Auckland City Community Boards: Avondale, Eastern Bays, Hobson, Mt Albert,
 and Western Bays

Auckland City Council
 Auckland Civic Trust
 Auckland Regional Council

Canterbury Regional Council
 Central Auckland Branch Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society
 Christchurch City Community Boards: Fendalton and Hagley-Ferrymead
 Christchurch City Council
 Christchurch Civic Trust

Fletcher Homes Limited

Kingston Morrison Architects

Lucas Associates

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

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

Residents Action Group, Auckland
 Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society National Office

Sumner Residents Association

Thames-Coromandel District Council
 The Tree Council, Auckland
 Titirangi Residents Association

Universal Homes
 University of Auckland, School of Architecture
 University of Auckland, School of Planning

Venture Homes Ltd

Waitakere City Community Boards: Henderson and New Lynn
Waitakere City Council
Waitakere Properties Limited
Wellington City Council
Wellington Civic Trust
West Auckland Branch Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society

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

APPENDIX 2 ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

Criteria for assessing council performance

The extent to which:

1. the council has identified amenity values in specific areas or for the entire city.
2. the implications of urban growth and urban consolidation policies affecting the maintenance and enhancement of amenity values are considered by the council.
3. the council has developed policies and practices to maintain and enhance amenity values.
4. the council integrates the use of various environmental planning mechanisms to maintain and enhance suburban amenity values in specific areas.
5. the council implements agreed priorities for the maintenance and enhancement of suburban amenity values.
6. parties affected by the maintenance and enhancement of suburban amenity values are meaningfully consulted by the council at appropriate times prior to final decisions being made, particularly during strategic planning, the development of urban growth and urban consolidation policies, and the identification of suburban amenity values.
7. community action is encouraged by the council to maintain and enhance suburban amenity values.
8. the council monitors and reports on the state of amenity values.
9. amenity values are maintained and enhanced to a degree which meets community aspirations.

APPENDIX 3 PLANNING FRAMEWORK

Each of the three cities has experienced strong urban growth over the recent past and has responded by developing urban growth strategies. All three councils have identified urban consolidation as a key to coping with urban growth. These urban growth policies are recognised as having implications for the maintenance and enhancement of amenity values.

A3.1 City strategies for urban growth

Auckland City Council

In the 1993 strategic plan, the council recognised that

“The natural and physical environment has been put under pressure by the development of the city. We plan to reverse the damage and develop sustainable management to preserve the natural and physical integrity of the city for generations of future Aucklanders.” (Auckland City Council 1993, p 15).

The integration between the community, the natural environment and the (Auckland) economy conforms to the principles contained in Agenda 2 1.

The 1993 strategic plan was reviewed in 1995 mainly because the population and the local economy expanded at a rate exceeding the city’s expectations. The key strategic directions which were identified from the different interested parties are:

- alive, exciting and green;
- fresh and clean;
- good for work and business;
- a great community to belong to; and
- a place where it’s easy to get around.

The ‘alive, exciting and green’ strategic direction is the one in which city-wide amenity values have been recognised through the goal of “A city that values its distinctive built environment”. The council’s contribution to achieve these goals is:

- guidelines to encourage sensitive developments in special character areas;
- an “excellent architecture” award;
- green spaces in neighbourhoods;
- public buildings, street furniture, footpaths and plantings provided in a way that reflects the character of an area; and
- identification of heritage buildings and streetscapes for protection.

The council’s plan to work towards these goals includes:

- supporting owners of heritage buildings that have innovative restoration projects;

- purchasing new open space, particularly where accessible by public transport and where populations are likely to increase most; and
- developing and providing access to the Manukau Harbour and Tamaki Estuary waters edge.

The process of reviewing the district plan enabled the council to investigate growth and development on the entire Isthmus and target growth to the most appropriate locations. The council was aware that the ARC's regional policy statement proposed an urban consolidation policy and that the ACC approach had to be consistent with the regional policies.

The review of the district plan was seen as an opportunity to develop an urban growth strategy that balances the encouragement of intensification with the policy of minimal regulation of the built and natural environment and the allocation of substantial resources to the upgrading and improvement of the drainage and transport infrastructure.

The council's strategic response to intensification is to identify those mechanisms by which amenity values on a neighbourhood and city-wide basis can be used to offset the reduction in on-site amenity values (these mechanisms are discussed in chapter 5).

Christchurch

The city council recognised urban growth as a major resource management issue that needed to be addressed as part of the preparation of the new district plan. 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 Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) and acknowledges that other measures will be needed to complement it.

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

Twelve key issues were identified as being directly related to the form and direction of urban growth. Key issue number one was "the potential conflict between changes in urban form and effects on amenity and the overall character and identity of the city". It was noted that "[p]olicies 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.

Waitakere

The strategies being developed by Waitakere City Council relate to the Greenprint document (which outlines how the council should progress towards an eco-city concept) to encourage consistent policy responses by the council. The council's view is that it is difficult to develop an annual plan without having a longer-term view of significant resource management issues.

The urban development policies in the city's strategic plan include:

- ⌘ protection of the Waitakere Ranges;
- ⌘ preservation of the rural character of the foothills;
- ⌘ recognition of infrastructure opportunities/constraints; and
- ⌘ promotion of quality, affordability and high amenity values.

The city's growth policy is to use or encourage:

- ⌘ a limited area on the edge of the city for urban growth;
- ⌘ detached dwellings in established areas of the city (residential infill) although reduced potential for piecemeal infill development in areas of special character; and
- ⌘ medium density housing in selected areas around railway stations and transport nodes.

Medium density housing is described as around 15 - 20 dwellings per hectare, compared to traditional low density of around ten dwellings per hectare and high density development of 25 dwellings per hectare or more. The medium density housing could be in the form of town houses, terrace housing and, at the most, three or four storey development.

A3.2 Urban consolidation policies

All three councils have chosen urban consolidation as the intended outcome of their urban growth strategies.

Each of the three councils has policies to encourage a diversity of housing for people. The demographics and changes in family structure over recent times have encouraged the demand for houses for smaller families, inner city living, and housing for the elderly.

Christchurch

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

- ⌘ urban consolidation through redevelopment and infill with some fringe 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, p 3).

Christchurch City has outlined methods for achieving the objective of a diversity of living environments based on the differing characteristics of areas of the city. Those methods 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.

Waitakere City

Urban consolidation is one of the core strategies of the Waitakere City Council and is one of the major issues facing the city when considering the constraints to further development. The council decided to stop further urban sprawl because of its environmental, social and economic impacts (Waitakere City Council 1996, p 56). The council is currently devising a consolidation strategy comprising an urban strategy, a town centre revitalisation programme; a parks strategy; a transport strategy; the green network strategy, a leisure strategy; and the district plan. These various strategies also serve the purpose of maintaining and enhancing amenity values in the city.

The purpose of the consolidation strategy is to encourage more housing growth around town centres and along transport corridors, creating urban villages with the following features:

- ✧ significant numbers of people living close to the town or village centre;
 - ✧ mixed use development ; and
 - ✧ well designed streets that maximise connections and are safe and people friendly.
- (Waitakere City Council 1996, p 61).

The council is seeking to enhance amenity values for people by restricting piecemeal infill developments and encouraging comprehensive medium density housing developments in selected areas. The implementation of the concept of urban villages is also intended to enhance amenity values amongst other objectives.

A3.3 Future urban growth

The location and type of future urban growth is being addressed through regional forums in both Canterbury and Auckland regions.

As the present provision for urban development in Christchurch and the surrounding area was considered inadequate to meet projected needs beyond 2011, a technical working group of staff from Christchurch City, Hurunui, Waimakariri, Selwyn and Bank’s Peninsula District Councils, and the Canterbury Regional Council recently reviewed urban growth trends within the area 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: “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”. The Joint Council Committee on Urban Growth was established comprising elected representatives from the various councils.

The committee aims to prepare a 30 year development strategy. A joint working group of staff will provide the committee with technical reports on long-term urban growth options by 1997.

The Auckland Regional Growth Strategy Forum comprises the regional council and the territorial authorities in the region and has been established to address growth issues in the Auckland region. The purpose of establishing the forum is to ensure coordination and liaison on a regional basis and to facilitate the production of a regional growth strategy. A technical advisory group has identified issues relating to urban form, transport, physical infrastructure, **funding** of infrastructure, social infrastructure, rural development and environmental quality in assessing growth options for the region. Urban form is **recognised** as the central issue in the growth and development of the region.

The region's size, rate of growth and topography have also resulted in major transport planning and funding problems with public concerns over traffic congestion, noise, pollution and safety. In 1996 the Auckland Regional Council, the seven territorial authorities and central government will participate in a task force to assess and report on the transport infrastructure needs created by Auckland's growth.

APPENDIX 4 “NEW URBANISM” AND URBAN DESIGN

A “new” model of urban form called “new urbanism” has been proposed¹ as an alternative to continuing suburbanisation. The principles and characteristics of “new urbanism” build on established urban design practice. The “new” form is intended to address the environmental issues associated with urban sprawl: demands for new infrastructure, increased traffic flows, inefficient energy use, and the development of rural areas with significant natural values. Proponents of “new urbanism” argue that typical suburban development had created many unrecognised social, economic and environmental costs. Historical planning decisions to zone for the separation of different land uses and the typical suburban form have resulted in dormitory suburbs, large sections, and inefficient public transport systems.

“New urbanism” mirrors traditional small town design with blocks of villages consisting of a cluster of housing around a central place (eg town square or central park) where the optimal size of a neighbourhood is 0.5 km from the centre to the edge. The three key principles of “new urbanism” are:

1. increased housing density: one dwelling per 300 m² with a mix of detached, semi-detached and terrace housing and apartments;
2. public open space: the creation and enhancement of parks, squares, and public space for people to gather and interact; and
3. design guidelines: elaborate design and planning controls to enhance design and streetscapes (Adler 1995).

Features of “new urbanism” include:

- ⌘ efficient use of open space with larger public areas and smaller private backyard areas;
- ⌘ mixed use developments with housing, shopping, entertainment and other land uses;
- ⌘ a hierarchy of interconnecting streets with a selection of travel routes, narrower streets in residential areas and few cul de sacs;
- ⌘ design incorporates the needs of pedestrians and public transport users;
- ⌘ the use of urban boundaries beyond which growth is prohibited;
- ⌘ garages are placed behind houses or to the side to enhance streetscapes;
- ⌘ a mixture of housing types is provided;
- planting of streets;
- ⌘ the potential for public transport is enhanced through higher densities and nodal development and zoning and land use controls support the use of public transport; and
- ⌘ town centres are promoted as geographical reference points and as a focus of civic life.

“New urbanism” has been criticised on the grounds that it is not the type of development that people want to live in because people live in communities of interest (eg young singles, families with children, the elderly), in areas where they can afford and not in

¹ Proponents of “new urbanism” include Peter Calthorpe, Andres Duany & Elizabeth Plater Zyberk.

mixed areas. They suggest that more exclusivity and separation of different groups is required.

However, the principles of “new urbanism” are slowly being adopted in several ways. Transit Oriented Development has been undertaken in overseas cities such as Portland, Vancouver, Sacramento and Melbourne with the linking of public transport corridors and nodes, increased densities, mixed land uses, interconnecting street systems, and design of development to serve pedestrian and public transport users (Cairncross 1996).

In Australia, a study has been undertaken to quantify the relationship between greenhouse gas emissions, energy requirements, and the form and design of new neighbourhoods. The major conclusion of the study was that in comparison with conventional subdivision design (ten dwellings per hectare), substantial savings in energy requirements and reductions in greenhouse gas emissions (42 per cent) could be achieved through optimising land use and transport-related factors to reduce car travel, and by optimising the siting of dwellings and design to reduce heating and cooling-related emissions. Traditional neighbourhood designs with net residential densities of 25 dwellings per hectare and mixed use developments provided higher levels of emission and energy savings than dwelling-related changes such as additional insulation (Loder & Bayly *et al* 1993).

In New Zealand, in 1995 the Auckland Regional Council commissioned the preparation of urban design guidelines to shape a more public transport-supportive urban form that follows many of the principles of “new urbanism” (Cairncross & Crosby 1995). The guidelines are now part of the regional land transport strategy and can be used for new developments or to retrofit the existing built environment. The guidelines shape urban form through zoning and land use controls to support public transport, physical design, and process and incentives.

Waitakere City Council has also adopted “new urbanism” principles in its proposed plan and has used them in preparing assessment criteria for medium density housing developments. The criteria in the proposed district plan are designed to give designers and builders flexibility and to provide opportunities for site responsive designs, while ensuring that medium density housing developments provide a positive contribution to the character and amenity of residential areas. The criteria are grouped into the following design elements: neighbourhood character, site layout, building location, visual and acoustic privacy, car parking and vehicle access, on-site outdoor space, entries to buildings, site facilities and landscape treatment (Waitakere City Council 1995).