

Future Intensive: Obstacles and opportunities to achieving compact urban form in Auckland

Errol Haarhoff¹, Lee Beattie¹, Jenny Dixon², Ann Dupuis³, Penny Lysnar⁴ and Laurence Murphy⁵

¹ School of Architecture and Planning, University of Auckland. ² Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Strategic Engagements), University of Auckland. ³ School of People, Environment and Planning, Massey University. ⁴ Transforming Cities, University of Auckland. ⁵ Department of Property, Business School, University of Auckland.

Abstract: Policies and plans directing urban growth towards urban centres is common among cities in Australasia and North America, with the idea of establishing compact urban form, urban consolidation and housing intensification. The strategy typically requires the establishment of an urban growth boundary aimed at preventing unsustainable sprawl, and concentrating future growth in higher density housing typologies, where the outcome sought is an enhanced sense of urban 'liveability'. Experience from other cities reveals problems of implementation that include occupant resistance to higher density living and market resistance to investment in the associated housing typologies. This paper extracts key findings from a larger research project investigating three cases studies of medium density housing in Auckland. The project investigated the efficacy of the underlying urban planning tools to deliver the compact urban form; resident perceptions of living in their medium density accommodation and the associated town centres; and understanding the price dynamics of the developments. The findings suggest a degree of alignment with the compact city planning aims, but also underscores areas of disconnection. Positively, residents express reasonable satisfaction with their apartment living and the amenities of the associated town centre, and instances of child-friendly design. Among problems found to realising compact development aims are the ineffective nature of the planning tools employed, difficulties with strata title governance, that the perceived amenity value of town centres is not being reflected in property values, and the persistent aspirations for the suburban house. These are among potential obstacles to achieving compact city aims and also frame areas for more research.

Introduction

Auckland is a relatively low density city, dominated by detached, suburban dwellings built on relatively large sites in the post-War period, and infill housing of subsequent decades. Recognising the inefficiency of low density and urban sprawl, there have been planning initiatives over the past decade and a half, seeking to establish a more compact and sustainable urban form. This has resulted in the emergence of higher density development across the city, in part as a response to urban growth management policies developed by the previous Auckland Regional Council (1999), and the adoption of Plan Change 6 to the Auckland Regional Policy Statement (Auckland Council, 2012a). These responses sought to counter the adverse impact of low-density urban sprawl by establishing an urban boundary and facilitating higher density development around existing town centres across the urban region

Following the amalgamation of previous separate seven local authorities into a single body, the new Auckland Council has built on these initiatives and recently published the Auckland Plan (Auckland Council, 2012b). This Plan provides a framework to accommodate an additional one million inhabitants based on compact development principles, and directs the greater part of future growth (60-70 per cent) to designated metropolitan, town and local centres. The key policy aims of the Auckland Plan are currently being given legal effect, leading to the Unitary Plan, a zoning plan with related policies, objectives and rules.

This paper summarises key findings from a multidisciplinary research project, *Future Intensive*, completed at the end of 2012 (Haarhoff *et al.*, 2012) that addresses the extent to which conditions and experiences of three medium density housing case studies align with the aims of compact development promoted by the Auckland Plan.

Research Aims

Similar interests ten years ago led researchers from The University of Auckland and Massey University to undertake in-depth interviews with residents in medium density housing in Ambrico Place, located west of central Auckland in the suburb of New Lynn. At that time, Ambrico Place was a

flagship development promoting sustainable, transit-oriented, compact development situated alongside the associated town centre. This research produced important baseline information about residents' attitudes to the experiences of living in medium-density housing in Auckland (Dixon et al. 2001; Dixon, Dupuis & Lysnar, 2001; Dixon & Dupuis, 2003; Dupuis and Dixon, 2002).

Given the significant changes since the completion of the 2001 research, our initial research plan was to carry out follow-up research in the same development. This created the opportunity to judge the impact of changes over the intervening period. However, funding opportunities made it possible to extend the study to include two additional case study areas, and increase the scope of the research to include a review of international literature on urban growth management, an evaluation of the efficacy of the urban planning tools to deliver compact development, and an analysis of house price dynamics. The three chosen case studies used are described below:

New Lynn: Located 12 kilometres west of central Auckland, comprising 293 units in nine separate developments collectively referred to as 'Ambrico Place', with an average net density of 57 units per hectare, within walking distance of what is designated as a 'metropolitan centre' in the Auckland Plan, and close to train and bus services.

Albany: Located 16 kilometres north of central Auckland, comprises two developments ('The Ridge' and 'Masons') totalling 169 units with an average net density of 67 units per hectare, within walking distance of what is designated as an 'emergent metropolitan centre' in the Auckland Plan, and close to a rapid bus service.

Onehunga: Located 10 kilometres south of central Auckland, comprises a single development (known as 'The Atrium on Main') with 112 units with an average net density of 64 units per hectare, within walking distance of what is designated as a 'town centre' in the Auckland Plan, and close to train and bus services.

This paper extracts some key findings from the wider research, that have relevance to understanding factors related to the promotion of compact urban form and housing intensification in Auckland. We report first on key findings to the follow-up study in New Lynn. Summary accounts of the three elements from the wider research follow: the efficacy of the underlying urban planning tools to deliver the compact urban form envisaged in the plans and policies; current resident perceptions from the three case studies of living in their medium density accommodation situated close to town centres; and understanding the price dynamics of the developments.

Compact Urban Form and 'Liveability'

Auckland's approach to urban growth management is not unique, and has typically been applied in other major cities in Australia and North America. (Haarhoff & Beattie, 2013; Haarhoff & Beattie, forthcoming; Beattie & Haarhoff, 2012; Haarhoff & Beattie, 2011; Ingram, Carbonell, Hong & Flint, 2009). Yet despite the widespread adoption of urban growth management strategies, delivering on the aims has been difficult and controversial. The experience of other cities reveals problems of implementation that include occupant resistance to higher density living and market resistance to investment in the associated housing typologies. (*cf.* Knaap, Song & Nedovic-Budic, 2005; Randolph, 2006; Phan, Peterson & Chandra, 2009; Jain & Courvisanos, 2008; Goodman & Moloney, 2011; McCrae & Walters, 2012; Searle, 2010).

The origins of the concern around urban growth management can be traced to the environmental movements in the United States during the 1970s. Concerns about uncontrolled suburban sprawl and the destruction of farmland and natural environments, led initially to the enactment of urban growth management programmes and strategies as a way of advancing environmental protection (Ingram *et al.*, 2009).

Early opposition to these strategies were based on the idea that environmental protection would constrain economic growth; indeed that urban growth management was essentially anti-growth (Ingram, *et al.*, 2009). This resulted in refocusing urban planning policies that emphasised economic growth *and* environmental protection: referred to in the US as 'smart growth'. At the same time, concerns about environmental pollution, climate change and sustainable economic growth led to the association of low density with inefficiency, car dependency, and noxious environmental emissions (Newman & Kenworthy, 1989; Newman, 2010). Linking land and transport planning was a key strategic move in what became known as 'transit-oriented development' (TOD), encouraging higher density development in proximity to transport infrastructure as a way of achieving more sustainable

urban form. With a renewed emphasis on economic development, Ingram *et al.* (2009) regard urban growth management as now focussed on policies aimed at revitalising cities, reforming local zoning to encourage compact development and infill, coordinating state agencies and their growth policies, and better aligning capital investments with sustainability agendas.

Strategies of this kind, however, have not been without controversy. Alves (2004), in his assessment of urban growth management in Australia, suggests that among "... alleged benefits by far the most frequently cited are those which appeal to notions of sustainability", derived from compact development and higher density. He goes on to suggest with some scepticism that "... the development of medium density housing, wherever it proves economically viable, has been cast in the role of improving the sustainability of the urban environment in Australia" (Alves, 2004, p. 2). In New Zealand property rights advocates and interests aligned with suburban development have argued that urban growth boundaries cause land scarcity which, in turn, pushes up land prices and housing costs, making housing less affordable (Productivity Commission, 2012). However, evidence from places like Portland, Oregon, indicates the opposite outcomes. Jaeger, Grout and Plantinga (2008) argue that the purpose of land regulations has been to guide and control the location of development rather than to limit the supply of developable land. Their findings claim that this does not "... produce scarcity-induced price increases as has been suggested in much of the prior literature" (Jaeger, Grout and Plantinga 2008, p. 15).

Notwithstanding, there is an on going backlash against urban growth management, and in the United States according to Ingram *et al.* (2009, pp. 8-9), this has resulted in the term 'smart growth' falling out of favour, and replaced by initiatives for 'quality of life' and 'liveable communities'. This newer terminology can be found in the more recent iterations of urban growth management policies, including the Auckland Plan. In relation to this Alves (2004) observes that compact development (and 'urban consolidation') has now been associated, albeit uncritically, with greater liveability and better urban quality of life. Accordingly, the Auckland Plan aims to create the 'world's most liveable city' (Auckland Council, 2012b, p. 10). In turn, the urban design protocol produced by the Australian Government asserts that 'liveability' is one of three cornerstones to creating quality urban places (Department of Infrastructure and Transport, 2011, p. 7). Similarly, the South East Queensland Regional Plan 2009-2021 (Department of Infrastructure and Planning, 2009, p. 8) states that "creating liveable communities and improving quality of life for residents in growth areas" is an essential aspect to managing future growth.

This thinking associates the promotion of compact development, urban consolidation and housing intensification within walking distances of urban neighbourhoods and public transit, with the idea of enhanced 'liveability', in which the primacy of street life, a sense of urbanity, walkable neighbourhoods and connected communities prevail. Activity centres in Melbourne are thus described as being places that will enable "Melbournians to stay close to friends and family in their local area, while having access to goods and services and a reliable public transport network [... and] older people will be able to maintain their quality of life with access to quality services" (Department of Planning and Community Development, 2010, p. 2). Similarly, the Auckland Plan (Auckland Council, 2012b) articulates the advantage of a compact city as enhancing "social cohesion and interaction by attracting people across all demographic groups to a mix of cafes, restaurants, shops, services, and well-designed public spaces". The Auckland Plan goes on to suggest that such places 'provide a range of activities to meet the full spectrum of people's everyday needs – for work, for play, for shopping and for education' (Auckland Council, 2012b, p. 42).

These quality of life experiences are asserted to be the outcome of the compact city approach to urban growth management. A key consequence of this approach is that multi-storey, multi-unit housing forms will become the future dominant option, while low density suburban housing may remain static or decline. A key question this raises is the extent to which higher density housing implicit in the compact city model will fulfil the diversity of resident housing needs and satisfaction, whether the planning tools have sufficient efficacy to deliver desired outcomes, and if so, whether this results in the 'liveability' envisaged.

New Lynn: Then and Now

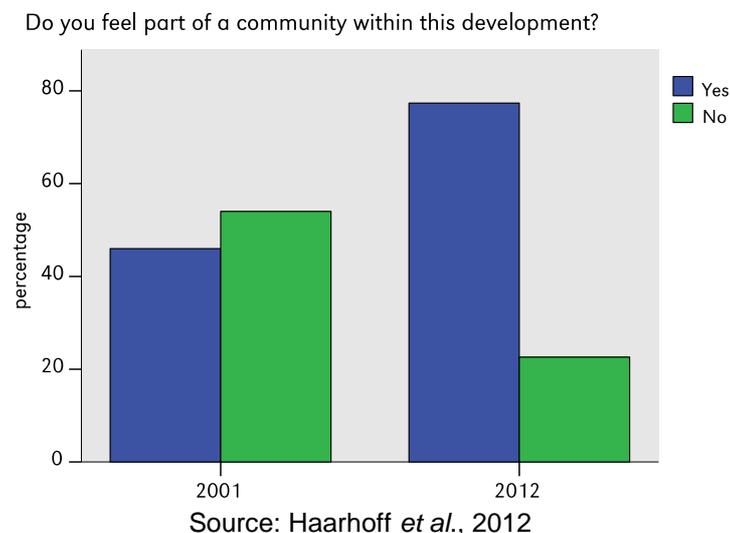
As outlined above, this research project offered a unique opportunity to compare findings from two separate studies of the same medium-density housing complex, Ambrico Place (the New Lynn case study), conducted over a decade apart. Since completing the 2001 research, there have been a number of political, infrastructural and local changes: the amalgamated Auckland Council; the publication of the Auckland Plan; the Unit Title Act (1972) has been replaced by new legislation;

infrastructural changes including the double-tracking and planned electrification of the western rail line, and the undergrounding of the New Lynn station; revitalisation of the New Lynn town centre including the Manawa Wetlands upgrade; and a kindergarten built within the housing complex.

Findings from the original research undertaken in Ambrico Place found positive responses with regard to the quality of the housing and the neighbourhood, and proximity to a range of facilities in New Lynn. Residents commented favourably on the physical features of the development, and its layout and traffic flows. Dixon, Dupuis and Lysnar (2001) suggested that the positive responses reflected three issues: that three-quarters of the residents had moved from other parts of West Auckland and had a preference for living in the area; almost 40 per cent of residents had experienced higher density living elsewhere, so did not need to adjust to this living style; and some valued the affordability of parts of the development. However, the residents who moved into the first housing development within Ambrico Place complained that they were unaware of other impending (and lower cost) developments on the site at the time they made their purchases. Also, despite the availability of public transport in the town centre and the transit-orientated intentions of the New Lynn Town Plan, car usage for a number of activities was high.

The 2012 research shows some changed perceptions. The duration of residency has obviously increased over the decade and suggests that Ambrico Place is becoming a relatively stable community. More than three-quarters of the interviewees had lived there for three years or more, a pertinent finding in light of earlier concerns about the high levels of transience and population churn. The proportion of owners over renters had increased, although this may reflect that construction defects ('leaky buildings') have stalled potential property sales until remediation has been completed. Notwithstanding, a higher proportion of those interviewed residents in 2012 reported that they felt part of a community within their development, compared to those interviewed in the 2001 research project (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: 'Do you feel part of the community?': Changes in perception between 2001 and 2012



An unexpected outcome of the finding in the first Ambrico Place study was the frustration and dissatisfaction expressed with the body corporate management companies responsible for administering and managing the various developments (Dixon, Dupuis & Lysnar, 2001). A lack of communication with owners, difficulty in changing rules, language problems (noting that 40 per cent of residents were born overseas), and off-site owners who did not advise tenants of body corporate rules, were among the negative issues identified by participants in the earlier research. Despite recent legislative changes (Unit Titles Act: 2010) body corporate issues remain problematic. Our 2012 findings indicated that much complexity still surrounds the operation of bodies corporate and their functions were not well understood by a significant proportion of residents. Of particular concern were the communication problems with body corporate management companies experienced by people for whom English was not their first language.

Evaluation of Urban Planning Instruments

Giving effect to urban growth management strategies requires the deployment of planning tools and procedures that have legal force. In New Zealand, the Resource Management Act enforces a conformist method of planning that links district plan policy intentions to the built outcomes achieved 'on the ground' (Beattie, 2010; Beattie, 2011; Beattie & Haarhoff, 2011). In this research we evaluated the assumption that outcomes to planning policies are achieved through the district plan's stated methods (i.e. rules and assessment criteria), using two of the three case studies (Albany and Onehunga), developed under two of the Auckland Council's legacy district plans. The assessment was based on two primary sources of information: an urban design quality assessment of the case study developments, and interviews with the resource consent officials involved in the development consenting process.

While noting that each district plan enabled higher density development, we concluded that the district plans had limited impact on influencing and directing the development process, especially in terms of achieving the high quality medium density housing sought in the district plans. They both had weak policy direction with respect to how these outcomes would be achieved, especially in the quality of the actual district plan writing. In the case study area of Onehunga, the Auckland City District Plan's Business 2 Zone provided no policy direction for housing developments or any other land use activities apart from business activities. The objectives in the plans were typically too broad, loosely written, unquantifiable, and often the policies failed to sufficiently support them.

The North Shore District Plan's failure to prioritise the relevant issues led to rule-derived outcomes. In the Albany case study, for example, this resulted in car parking and density controls which largely determined the development design and apartment size, rather than being a design-led, quality outcome sought by the district plan. In this instance our findings suggest that developers prefer to minimise their risk and stick to district plan rules rather than enter into protracted discussions with councils about urban design options. Our key findings concerning the role that planning tools have in directing quality outcomes, and specifically, good 'liveability', reveals a disconnection between weak policy and the rules, and assessment criteria in both district plans. This highlights the fundamental weaknesses in the planning tools and processes used to deliver the plans' visions and policies for quality intensification. This raises questions about the efficacy of new tools (such as the Unitary Plan currently being prepared by the Auckland Council) to delivery on the compact urban visions of the Auckland Plan.

Living in Medium Density Housing: Resident Interviews

In-depth qualitative interviews were conducted with 84 residents from the three case study areas. For two case study areas the research was discussed with on-site managers who supported the project. The initial recruitment strategy for all three sites was a letter box drop to all apartments which included an information sheet explaining the nature of the research, what was being asked of participants and researcher credentials. Follow up recruitment strategies required some flexibility to achieve the numbers needed for the project and an appropriate ethnic representation so, for example, we modified our approach to take account of Chinese language requirements. Follow up strategies were site specific with respect to information distribution and participant recruitment. This flexibility of approach was rewarded by a sample that reflected the diversity of residents at each location. We were not able to recruit any participants for the Ambrico Place sample who had also participated in the 2001 research.

Despite exhibiting some similar characteristics, such as similar density (between 57 and 67 units per hectare net) and locations within walking distances of designated town centres served by rail or rapid bus, there were also discernable differences. New Lynn was perceived to cater well for children and offer a safe environment that is supportive of families; just over 80 per cent of those interviewed responded positively when asked about these aspects of living in their development. Reference was made to safe walking routes to parks, children's playing areas, a kindergarten, slow moving traffic, and facilities that included a tennis court, nearby parks, and a well-designed and safe pedestrian route to the transit station and town centre.

In contrast, Albany residents perceived their development's amenities as not being user-friendly for families and children. Outdoor spaces are dominated by parking and living units were small, as were the bedroom sizes. Participants' views concurred with our own assessment of the Albany developments as having significant design deficiencies. When compared with the other two case studies, the Albany developments have poor and unsafe walking connections to the town centre, in this case a large regional shopping centre and to the rapid bus station. Nevertheless, the development met the needs of students and younger people who made up the majority of residents. The

development in Onehunga was perceived by residents to have more of a cosmopolitan feel, with easy and safe access to a diverse array of facilities and public transport in the town centre, and a good location close to the airport.

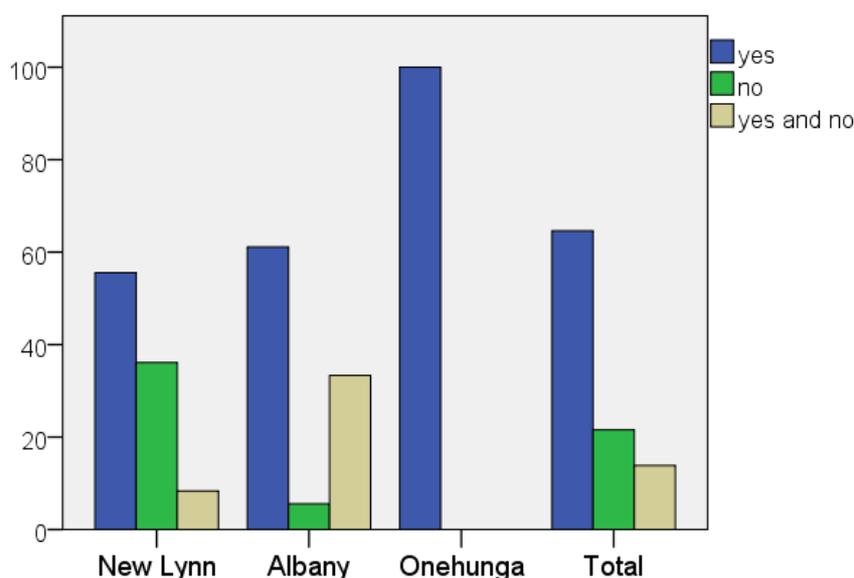
Notwithstanding the differences, it was possible to discern shared perceptions across the three case studies. Despite 70 per cent of respondents being born overseas (not unusual for a city that is an immigrant gateway city), the residents were relatively stable, with more than half having occupied their units for over three years. There are roughly an equal distribution of owners and renters, indicating the role of investors in the properties, noting that in New Lynn, that the proportion of owners had also increased since 2001.

Given that the previous residence of around half of those interviewed was a stand-alone house, we were interested to understand the motivations for moving to their current apartments. Overwhelmingly residents reported location and proximity factors as the key drivers, noting local services and amenities such as schools and parks, and access to public transit. Perceiving proximity to local town centres and the amenity offered as a positive factor aligns well with the aims of compact development.

Moreover, three-quarters of residents reported using active transport modes to reach these amenities and services, the greater part by walking. This also indicates an alignment with policies promoting compact development and neighbourhood walkability. However, this contrasts with the overwhelming majority using their cars to travel to work, despite many of the workplaces being accessible by public transport.

Another significant finding from the resident interviews, was their overall satisfaction with their medium density housing environment in the context of the associated town centres. Figure 3 below shows responses to this factor.

Figure 2: Resident survey: ‘Has living in the medium density housing met your expectations?’



Source: Haarhoff *et al.*, 2012

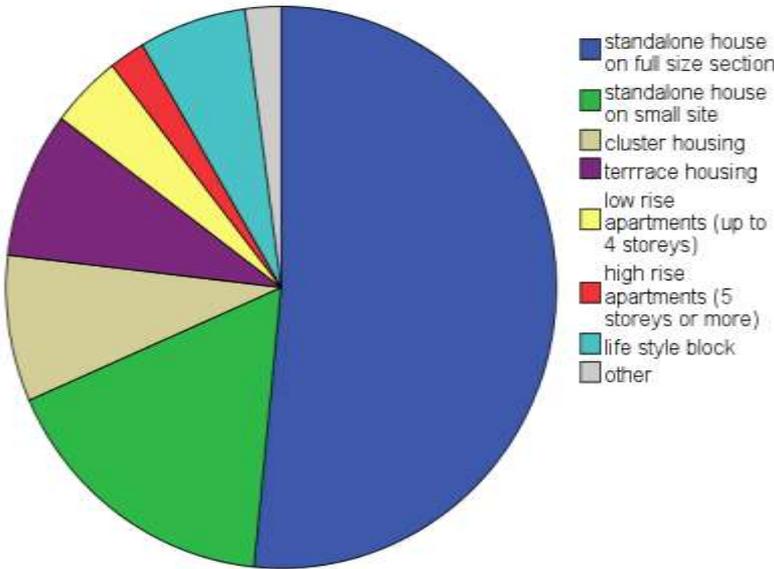
As can be seen, overall nearly two thirds of respondents indicated that living in medium density housing had met their expectations. The higher level of dissatisfaction with New Lynn is ascribed to the ‘leaky building’ situation reported.

Residents were also asked to identify the type of housing they would like to move to in the future, with options ranging from standalone houses to multi-level apartments. Given the high levels of satisfaction expressed with their current medium density housing, it was surprising to discover that well over half identified the stand-alone house as the likely housing type they would move to next.

When asked about their preferred housing type in an ideal situation, approximately three quarters of the sample opted for either a stand-alone house on a full site, a stand-alone house on a small site or a

lifestyle block (Figure 3). These data provide a clear indication that the 'Kiwi dream' of owning a detached house is still very much alive and well and extends to include overseas-born immigrants.

Figure 3: Resident 'ideal' future housing type.



Source: Haarhoff *et al.*, 2012

In summary, responses from the resident interviews across the three medium density housing case studies revealed diverse characteristics, but generally expressed satisfaction with their housing and associated neighbourhood. It was evident that residents were bringing up children in the developments and in the case of the New Lynn case study, child friendly conditions and facilities meant that residents felt this was a good place to raise children.

Residents also perceived the developments providing a good, and in the case of New Lynn an increased, 'sense of community'. Residents reported walking to a range of local services and amenities, although they remained car dependent for journeys to work. The most surprising finding was that residents' future housing aspirations were for a lower density form of housing, thus contradicting the compact city policies and aims for an increasing number of future residents in Auckland to be accommodated in high density housing typologies.

Price Dynamics

Examining the price characteristics and price dynamics of housing units within the case study areas offered insights into market processes and assisted in interpreting the experiences of residents (Murphy, 2012). Notions of affordability, value for money, and the potential for capital gains or losses shape owners' and investors' perceptions and understandings of the merit of this housing type, and these experiences are incorporated into the popular discourses that surround medium density housing development. Using several datasets, an analysis of key attributes and price dynamics was undertaken to reveal key insights.

In line with the New Zealand market, sale prices in all the developments in the three case studies rose during the mid- 2000s, declined after 2008, only to increase once again in 2011. New Lynn, the largest of the case study developments with the longest sales history, had the lowest average prices. The Ridge (Albany) development had the highest prices per square metre among the case studies.

In order to examine the relative performance of prices within the case study areas, a series of hedonic price models at different geographical scales were constructed. Arising from this analysis a set of price premiums and discounts were calculated for each of the developments and for the nine sub-developments that comprise Ambrico Place. The results showed that the Albany developments commanded substantial premiums within all of the models. The premiums that these developments commanded may have been 'frontloaded' and reflect the initial high average prices that they achieved. Despite the high average sale price of individual units (compared to the other developments in the study), the Onehunga developments sold at a discount. It is unclear whether the discount will be long lasting or is a reflection of the post-2008 property downturn and the financial problems encountered by the developer. There were significant variations in the relative price performance of different units in Ambrico Place, where the smallest units sold at the highest price premiums, whilst the larger ones with private access and tennis courts, recorded small premiums

It is clear from the analysis that while the case study developments are representative of medium density housing located in proximity to town centres, and thus share broad amenity and environmental contexts, there is no single price trajectory for this dwelling type. At a general level, the sales data analysis offers some important insights. Medium density housing does not necessarily generate price premiums or discounts. The price performance of individual housing developments is contingent on highly localised and specific issues including the development history, and the on-going management, of developments. Moreover, smaller sized units in Albany and New Lynn commanded price premiums compared to other multi-unit dwellings. Given the premiums commanded by smaller units in this study, future research on medium density housing could focus on the demand issues surrounding smaller sized units.

An analysis of ownership structures within the developments indicates that investors (rather than owners) are dominant in the Albany and Onehunga case studies. This presents a potential mismatch between what residents might prefer in their housing options, and what decisions developers and investors make with respect to multi-unit housing. This concurs with studies of housing intensification in Australia, which show that multi-unit housing tends to be shaped by the requirements and strategies of investors, rather than the needs of owner-occupiers, and that investors have a preference for smaller units (Randolph, 2006). In this respect the dominant position of investors and their demand for smaller units could have very significant consequences for the future of medium density developments in Auckland, especially for family households. Investor demands might result in the creation of a housing stock that is less attractive to owner-occupiers and might promote residential environments that are characterised by more transient communities. The level of owner or tenant 'churn' within medium density developments could have significant implications for community development processes.

The analysis of the price dynamics of the case study developments reveals other significant factors with regard to investment in medium density housing. It shows, for example, that the Albany developments obtained a price premium especially during the pre-2008 period, even though these developments have a number of poor design elements identified, and difficult pedestrian connections to the Albany centre and bus station. This contrasts with the other case study areas where the prices did not command a premium, but where the relation to town centres is much stronger. This suggests that amenities may not have been the key to success for the developer, but rather timing was the key in the release of the development to the market. The analysis indicates that while developers, owners and investors are willing to invest in the initial creation of medium density housing, this does not necessarily translate into appropriate high quality living environments over the long term.

Conclusions

The three case studies of medium density housing in the Auckland region demonstrate both opportunities and obstacles to achieving the 'compact city' being promoted by the Auckland Plan. Overall, residents in the case studies indicated a reasonable level of satisfaction with their experiences of living at medium density. The findings also indicate that higher density housing is able to support a more diverse range of household types and life stages. Participants responded positively about having good access to the services and facilities available in the associated town centres. The exception was the Albany case study where despite designation as a 'metropolitan centre' what exists is a large, car-

dominated regional shopping centre. Notwithstanding the fact that this places a wide range of amenities and services in close proximity, it is not easily walkable or indeed safe to do so.

The findings related to children living in the three case study developments suggest that good design is imperative in order to provide facility-rich and safe neighbourhoods for families with children. The findings also underscore the fact that well designed intensive housing is able to offer a larger range of housing types, sizes and costs to meet the needs of a wider spectrum of household types and lifestyle stages, in comparison to detached suburban houses.

Our research suggests that the planning tools used to deliver the outcomes envisaged in plans and policies are, in part, deficient. It also indicates that good plans and planning mechanisms on their own are not sufficient to ensure the delivery of the policy aims and quality outcomes anticipated. This is of significance regarding the Auckland Plan, and the planning tools being developed to deliver the vibrant, liveable, community-oriented local environments and compact urban form envisaged. This reveals that the planning instruments need to be more effective, and more flexible to respond to changing circumstances, in order to achieve the liveability envisaged.

Another issues that arises is the role and efficacy of engaging residents in the management of their development through the body corporate organisations, also identified by Randolph (2006) in his research in Australian cities. Anticipating that an ever increasing proportion of future development will be multi-unit housing, he goes on to conclude that for "... urban consolidation policies to succeed, strata title (unit title in New Zealand) must also succeed as a fully accepted and trouble-free form of property ownership" (Randolph, 2006, p. 13).

Our findings suggest that despite a reasonably high level of walkability to the associated town centre (except in the case of the Albany case study, for reasons given), car-dependent journeys to work remain, and there is an underuse of the public transport facilities in the three town centres concerned. This indicates that far better value could be leveraged off the large investments made in key public transport infrastructure such as the electrification and upgrading of the train system, and the Northern Busway.

We also found property prices in the case study areas are not overtly being influenced by the presence, or absence, of quality amenities and services in the associated town centres. Our review of literature indicates that in some cities such as Vancouver and Portland, the reverse prevails: that quality community amenities and services, and easy access to public transit is positively reflected in property values. Better understanding of the associated price dynamics to achieve a more positive outcome will enhance the promotion of housing intensification.

Despite the positive responses to living at higher densities, for whatever reason the aspiration of living in a detached suburban housing remains strong for both New Zealand-born and 'new' New Zealanders. However, this aspiration needs to be understood in relation to the reasons given for living in their present accommodation: such as 'proximity/location' and 'affordability.' In this respect, the suburban 'dream' might simply be unrealistic and unaffordable. Thus, keeping in mind the low national median income of New Zealanders and Auckland's high house prices, it can be surmised there is a disjuncture between the desire and aspiration to live in a standalone home and affordability considerations. Nevertheless, the aspiration for suburbia (no matter how unrealistic) is a barrier to the promotion of visions for a compact city that needs to be better understood. We need to better understand what the necessary 'trade-offs' are between the suburban lifestyle (whether affordable or not) and the urban lifestyle envisaged for a majority of future residents where compact development defines the future.

Our finding does show that there is sufficient evidence from the case studies that align well with the aims for compact development. Less clear from our study is the extent to which this may be regarded as the enhanced 'liveability' envisioned in the urban management plans. This aspect, along with gaining a better understanding of the dynamic issues that link urban consolidation and associated planning policies and tools, governance, the demand drivers for higher density living, what defines the community's perception of 'liveability', the extent to which the market is prepared to invest in the housing topologies associated with compact development, remain among key areas for further research.

Note

The project *Future Intensive: Insight's for Auckland's Housing* (Haarhoff, E. *et al.*, 2012) was funded

by the Auckland Council and Transforming Cities, The University of Auckland. The opinions and conclusions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the funders.

References

- Alves, T. (2004, September). Medium density housing in Melbourne: the management of sustainability and democratic local communities under global pressure for increased urban efficiencies. Paper presented at the *19th EAROPH World Planning and Housing Congress and National Housing Conference*, Melbourne, Australia. Retrieved from <http://www.sisr.net/publications/0409alves.pdf>
- Auckland Regional Council. (1999). *Auckland Regional Growth Forum: a vision for managing growth in the Auckland region 2050* (Auckland, Auckland Regional Council).
- Auckland Council. (2012a). Plan Change 6 to the Auckland Regional Policy Statement, Auckland Council.
- Auckland Council. (2012b). *The Auckland Plan* (Auckland, Auckland Council).
- Beattie, L. (2010). Changing urban governance in the Auckland region: prospects for land use planning. *Proceedings of the 23rd Association of European Schools of Planning Conference*. Helsinki, Finland.
- Beattie, L. (2011). The Auckland Spatial Plan: the challenge of implementation. *Proceedings of the 4th World Planning School Congress*. Perth, Australia.
- Beattie, L., & Haarhoff, E. (2011). Governance: how to achieve urban growth management in practice: a practitioner perspective. *Proceedings of the International New Urbanism and Smart Growth Conference*. Perth, Australia.
- Beattie, L., & Haarhoff, E. (2012). Delivering quality intensification in the suburbs: a case study of University Hill. *Proceedings of the 5th International Urban Design Conference* (pp. 4-11). Melbourne, Australia.
- Department of Infrastructure and Planning. (2009). The South East Queensland Regional Plan 2000-2031. Brisbane, Australia. Retrieved from <http://www.dsdiq.qld.gov.au/resources/plan/seq/regional-plan-2009/seq-regional-plan-2009.pdf>.
- Department of Infrastructure and Transport. (2011). *Creating places for people: an urban design protocol for Australian cities*. Government of Australia. Retrieved from <http://www.urbandesign.gov.au>.
- Department of Planning and Community Development. (2010). *Activity Centre Toolkit: making it happen* (Melbourne, Victoria State Government).
- Dixon, J., Dupuis, A., Lysnar, P., Spoonley, P. and Le Heron, R. (2001). *A Study of Medium Density Housing in Ambrico Place, New Lynn*, Ambrico Place Research Project, Report for the Waitakere City Council, April, 2001, pp. 1-105.
- Dixon, J., Dupuis, A., & Lysnar, P. (2001). Issues in medium density housing, *Planning Quarterly*, 141, pp. 9-11.
- Dixon, J., & Dupuis, A. (2003). Urban Intensification in Auckland, New Zealand: a challenge for new urbanism. *Housing Studies*, 18(3), pp. 353-369.
- Dupuis, A., & Dixon, J. (2002). Intensification in Auckland: issues and policy implications. *Urban Policy and Research*, 20(4), pp. 415-428.
- Goodman, R., & Moloney, S. (2011) Melbourne's activity centre policy: a post-mortem. *5th State of Australian Cities National Conference*, Melbourne, Australia.
- Haarhoff, E., Beattie, L., Dixon, J., Dupuis, A., Lysnar, P., and Murphy, L. (2012) *Future Intensive: Insights for Auckland's Housing*. (Auckland, Transforming Cities/The University of Auckland).
- Haarhoff, E., & Beattie, L. (2011). Questions about smart growth: a critical appraisal of urban growth strategies in three North American cities. *Proceedings of the International New Urbanism and Smart Growth Conference*, Perth, Australia.
- Haarhoff, E. and Beattie, L. (2013). Trading Suburbia for an Urban Lifestyle: Obstacles and Opportunities in Auckland, New Zealand. *43^d Urban Affairs Conference*, San Francisco, April, 2013.
- Haarhoff, E. and Beattie, L. (forthcoming 2013). Delivering Quality Urban Consolidation on the Urban Fringe: A Case Study of University Hill, Melbourne, Australia. (Accepted for publication May 2012: *Journal of Urban Renewal and Regeneration*.)
- Ingram, G., Carbonell, A., Hong, Y., & Flint, A. (2009). *Smart growth policies: an evaluation of programs and outcomes*. (Cambridge, Mass., Lincoln Institute of Land Policy).
- Jaeger, W. K., Grout, C., & Platinga, J. (2008). *Evidence of the effects of Oregon's land use planning system and land prices*. Working paper. (Cambridge, Mass., Lincoln Institute of Land Policy).
- Jain, A., & Courvisanos, J. (2008, November-December). Urban growth on the periphery: ad hoc

- policy vision and research neglect. Paper presented at the 32nd ANZRSAL Conference, Adelaide, Australia.
- Knaap, G.-J., Song, Y., & Nedovic-Budic, Z. (2005). *Measuring Patterns of Urban Development: New Intelligence for the War on Sprawl* (Cambridge, Mass., Lincoln Institute of Land Policy).
- McCrae, R., & Walters, P. (2012). Impacts of urban consolidation on urban liveability: comparing an inner and outer suburb in Brisbane, Australia. *Housing, Theory and Society*, 29(2), pp. 190-206.
- Murphy, L. (2012). Asset-based welfare. In S. Smith, M. Elsinga, L. Fox-O'Mahoney, S. Ong, S. Wachter & C. Hamnett (Eds.), *International Encyclopedia of Housing and Home*. Vol. 1, pp. 81-86. (Oxford, Elsevier).
- Newman, P. (2010). Beyond the greenfield and brownfield: the challenge of regenerating Australia's greyfield suburbs. *Built Environment*, 36(1), pp. 81-104.
- Newman, P., & Kenworthy, J. (1989). Gasoline consumption and cities: a comparison of US cities with a global survey. *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 55(1), pp. 24-37.
- Phan, T., Peterson, J., & Chandra, S. (2009). Residential intensification in a suburban fringe local government area, Casey, Melbourne metropolitan area, Australia. *Australasian Journal of Regional Studies*, 15(1), pp. 81-100.
- Productivity Commission. (2012). *Housing Affordability Inquiry*. Report for the New Zealand Government. (Wellington, Productivity Commission).
- Randolph, B. (2006). Delivering the compact city in Australia: current trends and future implications. *Urban Policy and Research*, 24(4), pp. 473-490.
- Searle, G. (2010). Too concentrated? The planned distribution of residential density in SEQ. *Australian Planner*, 47(3), pp. 135-141.