



Urban Growth, Liveability and Quality Urban Design: Questions about the efficacy of urban planning systems in Auckland, New Zealand

* Lee Beattie¹, Errol Haarhoff²

¹ & ²School of Architecture and Planning, University of Auckland, Auckland, New Zealand

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ABSTRACT

Preventing sprawl and concentrating future urban growth at transit centres, typifies many urban planning strategies in a number of Australian, New Zealand and North America cities. Newer iterations of these strategies also argue that compact development delivers public benefits by enhancing urban 'liveability' through good urban design outcomes. Where neoliberal economic conditions prevail, achieving these aims is largely dependent on market-driven development actions requiring the appropriate urban planning responses to ensure these outcomes. However, there are growing concerns that urban planning approaches currently used are not effectively delivering the quality urban design outcomes expected and enhancing residents' liveability. This paper reports on an evaluation of three medium density housing developments located in areas designated for intensification in Auckland, New Zealand. Examined is the extent to which the development outcomes are aligned with the statutory urban planning requirements for quality urban design. The results indicated contradictions and points to limitations of the statutory planning system to positively influence quality outcomes, leading to enhanced residents' experiences.

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1. Introduction

Among others, an important goal of urban planning is directing future development towards outcomes that will deliver enhanced social, environmental, cultural and economic benefits. A number of urban planning approaches that restricted urban sprawl were thus initially promoted on the argument that this would preserve the natural environment and rural character surrounding cities as a necessary amenity for urban dwellers (Ingram, et al, 2009; Haarhoff, et al, 2012). The higher density development that is a consequence of containing urban growth within an urban boundary was subsequently justified by

evidence that a more compact urban form reduces fossil fuel consumption and noxious emissions, and leads to enhanced sustainability (Newman and Kenworthy, 1989; 1999). Characterised by Quastel et al (2012) in their study of Vancouver as 'sustainability as density', the outcome is also argued to deliver benefits to urban dwellers.

These arguments are key to underpinning urban growth management plans in many cities across Australia, New Zealand and North America

*Corresponding Authors:

University of Auckland, Auckland, New Zealand

E-mail address: l.beattie@auckland.ac.nz