

# Urban Resolutions - Auckland and Vancouver comparisons

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## ABSTRACT

The topic of Urban Resolutions is a research piece on Auckland's urban plan, with the inclusion of heritage builds for reuse or repurpose. An international comparative analysis with Vancouver's EcoDensity initiative was conducted, to establish whether that model or a similar one, might work for Auckland city; bearing in mind Auckland's unique landscape and culture.

The key Research Question was - 'How does Auckland Supercity intend to integrate a feasible and well-structured urban plan, that includes its heritage buildings?' This question was derived from a sense that there is a general lack of knowledge, regarding the continuous development of Auckland. In addition, there are the complications which occur in communities, when large cities such as Auckland become disconnected. By including the historic buildings in the research, this highlights the opportunities of restoration, to create new uses for heritage to suit today's lifestyles within society.

This research was conducted by undertaking qualitative semi-structured interviews with design and urban planning professionals within the construction industry, that were based in Auckland and Vancouver. This enabled access to experience and knowledge within their individual fields and their unique case studies in which they have been involved.

Auckland is large and growing rapidly, and this research gives an overview into the city's current status and attempts to highlight the obstacles that Auckland faces. Overall, undertaking this research, into 'urban resolutions', has provided an opportunity to open up discussion and review – of what makes a city liveable, and how communities can be created by developing usable integrated spaces, which in turn help form relationships.

**Keywords:** Global comparisons, Heritage buildings, Integration, Regeneration, Urban planning.

## 1 Introduction

Auckland's urban plan, with the 1.5 million + residents and continuously undergoing growth, suffers from 'suburban sprawl', a lack of infrastructure to support new developments, and an associated strong sense of disconnection from the city. The following statement from Latham still applies to Auckland today.

'New Zealand's cities are profoundly suburban cities' (Latham, 2000, p. 285)

Heritage buildings are often overlooked for their potential in creating a unique space to provide a residential or commercial space for communities, homeowners or businesses - due to the unforeseen complications which may arise in a repurposed or reused heritage project.

The reliance on cars as the main form of transport around Auckland city, has resulted in congestion and irritability

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amongst commuters, as the lack of public transport around Greater Auckland causes pressure to be put on the motorways and suburban roads.

With a growing interest in accessibility in the western world, there is a strong demand for amenities to be placed within walking distance to residential developments and incorporation of green spaces – as this provides people with a sense of space and the ability to move outdoors and interact with one another.

To establish how Auckland’s urban plan is functioning, this research looked to the professional experience of people in various job roles, who are working within the construction industry. This was conducted by assessing their main objectives including the constraints and evaluating changes that are occurring within their field, due to the lifestyle of Aucklanders and any influences from offshore.

“Each city has unique local challenges in promoting development, e.g. economic growth, but also needs to find a balance between these targets and demands for sustainable city solutions”. (Jokinen, Leino, Backlund & Laine, 2018, p. 551)

In addition to the main research question - How does Auckland Supercity intend to integrate a feasible and well-structured urban plan, that includes its heritage buildings? The sub-questions included to form the basis of the interviews:

Unitary plan & the Auckland plan (updated in 2018): As have other international cities like Vancouver, how does this compare to their EcoDensity initiative & the Greenest City Action Plan 2020 models?

In terms of heritage buildings, what else is on the agenda to ensure these remain part of New Zealand’s urban communities?

Vancouver based: It has been 11 years since the mayor at the time, Sam Sullivan was successful in proceeding with his concept ‘EcoDensity’ for the city of Vancouver. What

were the findings and general perception of the residents of Vancouver, in terms of what has been most successful, in regard to how the city functions and how people are able to access and move around the city while utilising the amenities provided?

For other countries interested in incorporating the EcoDensity model, in hindsight - what general approach or outcome could have been done differently in Vancouver? Which other international countries could take into consideration when looking at implementing a similar model.

## 2 Findings

### 2.1 Individual interviews

The data collection approach used was to conduct one on one semi-structured interviews with 5 participants within the industry, all with relevant and related professional experience, yet employed in very different roles from each other. This enabled an overview across a wide sector of the construction industry to establish contrasting discussions or similar themes between all parties in the topic of urban resolutions.

Five interviewees which participated in the semi-structured interviews, consisted of the following job roles:

- Associate Architect – Heritage Consultant
- Building Surveyor (British Columbia & Auckland based)
- Property Developer
- Rezoning Planer (Vancouver)
- Urban Planner (Auckland)

By choosing a semi-structured method of data collection, it created a more relaxed environment, where the interviewees felt comfortable. As a result, conversation was able to flow more easily and a rapport was built, plus value was established as a result of what each participant shared in conversation.

Naturally, each participant was asked differing questions due to their knowledge, apart from the initial generic queries to establish the length of time in their particular role and any other involvement in unique areas of the industry throughout their career. The next stage of the interview was job-role focussed questions, which were open ended questions. They naturally led to further conversation, branching off of the initial questions, which was a real asset for the data collection process. Interesting findings around people's interactions were realised after the interviews concluded plus when listening to the voice recordings. It was necessary to give feedback and consistent acknowledgement of what was being said by the participants, as this aided conversations to be developed further.

Although the questions were created for their specific job roles, it was interesting to find that there were similar themes running throughout the responses. Which implies that an awareness of the constraints in Auckland has filtered down and across from professional points of view and the international influence on housing and urban planning.

### 3 Review of literature on innovative rebuilding

EQ Recovery Learning (2019) emphasized that “the disaster destroyed the box so ... have to think outside the box. There is a unique chemistry of circumstance that supports new thinking and ways of doing things”. As a result, new tools and approaches to rebuilding were adopted under new legislative and governance frameworks. The most notable ones include:

- Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Act (CER Act) to facilitate rebuilding
- Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Authority (CERA) to lead rebuilding
- Christchurch Central Development Unit (CCDU) to deliver the 17 anchor projects in the CBD

- Christchurch Central recovery Plan (CCRP) constituting of key redevelopment projects
- Anchor Projects as the prime rebuilding artefacts

Literature used for the review, constitutes of government reports, CERA archived documents, independent reports and academic publications.

#### 3.1.1 *Establishing the themes of: global comparisons, heritage buildings, integration, regeneration, urban planning*

“The idea of cities that are vibrant and successful like Melbourne, Vancouver, Toronto, New York, London and Paris, are cities where people are the most important, where the car is not king, where the pedestrian, rules.” (Campbell-Reid, 2019)

It is notable that it is a common issue for many international cities – to reassess their urban plan, to prioritise the pedestrians and how they are able to move amongst spaces, as opposed to cars dominating the streets, as they have for decades.

A good example of a success story was re-designing streets to create pedestrian only spaces in New York city – designed by Janette Sadik-Khan, (NY city department of transportation and advisor of urban issues). Although the concept was met with resistance, rethinking and redesigning cities resulted in the movement for safer, more liveable streets, pedestrians were then able to utilise and enjoy outdoor zones, which were originally allocated for cars. (Sadik-Khan, Solomonow, 2016)

Likewise, the motion picture, ‘The human scale – bringing cities to life’- featuring Danish Architect & Professor Jan Gehl. Highlights a Melbourne case study, where the inner-city side streets were redesigned to become inviting and usable. As a result, Melbourne is now known as one of the most livable cities in the world, by simply incorporating strategies to compliment the philosophy – the city is made up of people, not cars.

One potential Ponsonby case study which was not favoured by a majority and did not achieve a successful

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vote, was a good comparison of what could have been a reinvention of disused spaces: Running along the back of buildings, a pedestrian street was proposed, connecting the old with the new (cafes, shops, offices), providing developments predicted to be removed actually being removed. (Bower, 2009)

“The street would provide an interesting space as its width and direction would be continually changing and a degree of enclosure would create a more pedestrian-friendly feeling than that of Ponsonby Road. One development alone will not change the area and transform it. For neighbourhoods to work, people need to be able to gather and interact with each other, they need places to meet for recreation”. (Bower, 2009, p. 52)

Ponsonby is known for its heritage buildings and as pointed out by a number of the interviewee’s – you need have a great appreciation for heritage buildings to adopt a heritage project, as they are complex and can easily turn into a financial burden. There needs to be an incentive to encourage potential buyers to carry out a rejuvenation project to bring a new purpose back into historic buildings. As mentioned in the article ‘Architecture as a work-in-progress’.

“How can heritage buildings engage and remain alive and relevant to society if they are frozen in the past”? (Walls, 2013)

The following responses provided by the participants have been formatted to suit their particular occupation. By undertaking the interview methodology and choosing participants from the various fields within the building industry, it allowed for an understanding of how both Auckland and Vancouver are currently functioning in the present, the short term and glimpses into possible future plans.

### 3.1.2 Associate Architect – Heritage Consultant

Architecture is fundamental to distilling and understanding the essence of a neighbourhood. People’s

lives and how they interact in their community are shaped by the buildings they live and the streetscapes they pay, walk and travel along. (McEvoy, 2015)

How do you incorporate your architectural work into conservation projects?
It would be preferable to see a number of heritage builds be renovated for reuse, which obstacles are the most common for these projects, other than financial issues?
You have carried out your own personal repurpose build, which you then went on to register as a heritage building. What value-adds are apparent to you now since undertaking that project?
What design ideas would you as an Architect like to see, to integrate heritage buildings with their community?
Combating urban sprawl in Auckland - what would your top 3 design ideas be?
As an Architect, what is your biggest challenge when taking on a heritage build project for rejuvenation/repurposing/refurbishment?
Have you noticed an increase of people interested in taking on heritage projects? If so, what are your views on the relatively new concept of partial funding for foundation strengthening in historic builds?

#### 3.1.2.1 Summary of interview

The Architect interviewee acknowledged that Auckland is crying out because our infrastructure is not coping, the city is intensifying without building the other parts of it. With urban design placing people in close quarters, there is the need for incorporating spaces for them to expand into. A local park for example, needs to be within walking distance for it to be properly utilised – in combination with shops which would essentially cover the range of resources in which people need, to ensure neighbourhoods become easily accessible.

“People will live in a 30m<sup>2</sup> house if they have too, or by choice, if they have plenty around them to satisfy the need to socialise”. “Design should have a more holistic approach, as it is common practice to design within a site, how about a within a street or design within a neighbourhood”.

Not everywhere in Auckland is able to be like Hobsonville Point, where everything was built from scratch as it was bare land.

Top design ideas to combat these obstacles include: “Intensification – it is happening, but it needs to happen better, which leads on to the remaining 2 ideas - we are doing the buildings, but we are not supporting them and that would come in urban planning and infrastructure”. “Auckland has been good at getting the rail system up and running and that is a good start but that is not the only thing that people need”.

The Architect also expressed the importance for heritage buildings to be included in Auckland’s urban plan, for reuse or repurpose for future use – the builds need to be occupied, to ensure they are not left neglected as commonly seen throughout the city. As acknowledged, it is further explained that although there needs to be the will to take on a historic project, the issue with adopting heritage comes back to money every time; whether it be strengthening requirements, which needs to take place or the initial heritage features report. However, by establishing the purpose of appropriate use is essential although challenging, there needs to be the questions of what is actually needed by the occupant(s).

A good example also discussed was of a successful heritage build project within a community, is the Swanson road train station in West Auckland. Originally the old Avondale station relocated in 1995, then repurposed and functioning with the building split into two – 2/3 running as a café and a 1/3 is a room dedicated to the community. The community room can be used for free, with the costs of running and maintenance for the build is sponsored by the rental of the café. With profit in the bank, this has allowed funding of facilities within the community, such as the local Kindergarten playground and heat pumps for the Church. This highlights how communities could be planned to function, with a business serving its local

residents by donating a usable, interchangeable space to utilise.

“As a city evolves and functional requirements change, it is not uncommon for once important and notable buildings to become disused and derelict. At the same time new opportunities for the building’s future can arise. How architectural design which encourages and contributes to the functioning fabric of an urban centre while preserving its historic heritage can be applied to such buildings and surroundings”. (Collins, 2012, p. 100)

On a personal note, it has been almost 20 years since the Architect transformed a former old school house from Mangere into the character filled home it is today. From its relocation, it required 2 years of full-time work of fixing the outside - the value-add over the long term, established it a financially viable project to under-take. By retaining many original aspects and sourcing many materials such as old kauri floorboards it ensures that the home remains in the era of its previous life. While now listed as a heritage build, the adapted-to-suit dwelling acts as a comfortable home with central heating and period features, giving a sense of purpose and a strong sense of home.

### 3.1.3 Building Surveyor

Canada’s and New Zealand’s building codes are known for being quite similar. Apart from central heating, what differences do the builds have from each other in your experience?
Rejuvenating heritage builds for repurpose, what would be the ratio of the occurring in NZ, in contrast to the development of new builds in Vancouver?
What ideas could you see Auckland adopting from Vancouver’s strategic and implemented urban plan, which could be considered for improving the usability of a build?
What patterns from the same industry in Vancouver, have you seen occurring in Auckland to date, when it comes to building projects?
Auckland is quite disconnected, I am assuming due to the EcoDensity Initiative, that Vancouver is the opposite, is that true? If so, can you elaborate on this from a resident’s point of view?

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What assets do you think your working background from Vancouver gives the Auckland industry, given our location is quite remote?

### 3.1.3.1 Summary of interview

With the background experience as a Building Surveyor in both British Columbia and now Auckland, this enabled insight into how each city (Vancouver and Auckland) either differ or contain similarities with each other for their housing, heritage builds and their current urban plan. An additional advantage conversing with building professionals from Canada, is the ability to draw from the country's previous experience with leaky buildings in the mid 1990's.

It was noted from the interview that the impression New Zealand gives within the industry, is that it is very much has a reactive approach to housing and urban planning as opposed to a proactive approach. Implying that NZ is not proactive in carrying out risk evaluations to the full extent as other countries and as a result either cause an immediate obstacle to a project, impacting on cost and time. Likewise, if an unforeseen issue is discovered much later eg; leaky buildings, these carry the same implications but on a greater scale.

To evaluate how this traditional reactive approach of NZ could be changed, one suggestion could be to adopt an equal standard of the Canadian building code, as according to the Building Surveyor, it is much stricter than NZ's building code.

"NZ's approach to the building code is also focused on keeping the outside elements out rather than what is happening within the home". "If denser living is a preferable option for housing and development in Auckland, then this focus needs to increase to air changes within a building".

As pointed out by the Building Surveyor, it is important to consider people's health within the building of med – high density living, as air changes are vital to ensuring that the

building elements are not sitting and rotting, especially considering many apartments are quite small and only contain limited access to fresh air.

Auckland and Vancouver are both expensive cities to live in, however Vancouver has established 'Micro-suites' (Micro apartments) to assist in easing the pressure for the cost of living in an expensive city. Micro-suites range from 150 sq feet (14 m2) to 350 sq feet (32.5m2) and offer relatively low-priced accommodation. Canada's building code addresses secondary suites more so than is seen in Auckland.

"They have a specific set of standards for it, where-as Auckland it is made to be more of a daunting task than it needs to be – it is therefore a lot of money invested for very little return".

A further explanation was given, emphasising - due to Vancouver's limitations on space and a number of restrictive jurisdictions, the city has nowhere else to go – except by intensification. Vancouver, however, has put pressure on Property Developers to provide green spaces, to ensure that residents have access to a comfortable outdoor environment that is inviting and creates interaction. Rooftops are an example of this being a popular option, especially in high density apartments, where the proximity to such locations are more difficult. Planners are now involved with densifying, including incorporating strategies to reduce cars on the road. Bearing in mind, Vancouver city has implemented pedestrian only zones for the city centre and is facilitated by the Sky Train for accessibility.

As acknowledged from a visitor's point of view of Auckland, that the culture is focused on car ownership. People do not take advantage of the public transport system as much as overseas – although the infrastructure is currently and predominantly designed for cars and until the focus changes into making Auckland more accessible throughout, this is unlikely to appeal for people to change.

## Heritage

New Zealand is on a par with British Columbia in terms of retaining heritage buildings, although it is noted that they are of a Victorian style heritage. This stems from being an older country than NZ. It would be valuable to undertake an assessment of the reuse or repurpose projects to assist in forming additional ideas for Auckland’s heritage buildings.

### 3.1.4 Property Developer

Popularity of apartment living is continually growing. What lifestyle changes have you noticed taking place, that attracts buyers to apartment living?
How does the Unitary plan affect your specific development proposals, in your experience?
Within the last 10 years, which changes in Auckland’s lay out have impacted property development the most, in your experience?
You apparently favour inner city suburb location the most, for your projects based in Auckland. Apart from city accessibility, what are some of the other reasons?
For the overall design of your apartments, do you look internationally for ideas? If so, where were they and why?
You also have had experience with heritage builds for commercial businesses. How was this experience in contrast to planning a project for the construction of new buildings?
Is this a type of project you would be interest in doing again in the future? If so, why would that be?
Adopting a large heritage build to transform in to apartments – from a property developer point of view, on top of financial reasons or building availability, why do you think that is this not a popular option?

### Summary of the interview

It seems that people from the age bracket of late 20’s – early 50’s are predominately residents of apartments for this particular Property Developer, who specialises in medium density housing. There is an indication that apartment living has increased over the last 10 years and is no longer occupied by a majority of students. Influencer’s have come in from overseas, where this style of living can be an enjoyable experience. “Expats in particular come back to Auckland, demanding this

approach, and at the time there was a gap in the market for apartments built with design in mind”.

An example of projects is a current property that is 2200m<sup>2</sup> with 105 apartments. In the suburbs this would be commonly subdivided into 4 houses.

What prompts a person/couple or young family to apartment living, is usually driven by the time saved by not needing to commute back and forth to work; often being at a cost of 2 hours per day out of their schedule.

“Apartment living in the city fringe allows convenience to amenities and like all apartments it is a low maintenance option, allowing the ability to lock up and leave, in comparison to a stand-alone home”.

Further elaborated, were the developments in suburbs such as New Lynn in West Auckland have had an improvement in land values, up to triple due to the Unitary Plan with the development of an updated transport system.

“It is this sort of development occurring in Auckland which enables families to ditch the 2nd car for city accessibility”.

“A step in the right direction if we think about the future of Auckland, consider Sydney which is about 10-15 years ahead and New York 10-15 years ahead of them”.

“Looking at those 2 cities, you can see what Auckland will eventually be like”.

With international influence for a new build or the incorporation of including the building’s previous life into a regeneration project, some Property Developers have provided Auckland with well-designed and aesthetically pleasing apartments as an option for residential housing. This is an essential ingredient, for opening up the option to buyers as a way of living, as opposed to further adding to urban sprawl – where the continual spread puts the focus back on infrastructure, water supply and transportation to get the facilities out to these new developments.

## Heritage

Heritage is in actual fact quite challenging to undertake, whether residential or commercial projects the constraints are similar. Uncertainty around what needs repairing or replacing until the building element has been exposed. Often easier to demolish and start from scratch if the building is not protected by a heritage status. One particular dilemma of project managing a heritage build comes from the other professionals within the industry. “An example of this would be where a Structural Engineer would demand that an old sash windows be boarded up for earthquake proofing requirements. Whereas a Heritage consultant might say you must keep the original kauri double sash windows”. “Solutions must be reached, to balance both viewpoints.”

Therefore, the project becomes quite complex and less appealing for the majority of people to consider taking on.

### 3.1.5 Rezoning Planner - Vancouver

The EcoDensity initiative, in what ways has it assisted or been damaging in working towards the Greenest City Action plan 2020?

It has been 11 years since the mayor at the time, Sam Sullivan had been successful in proceeding with his concept ‘Eco-Density’ for the city of Vancouver. What has been the most successful aspects in terms of how the city functions, and how the residents are able to access and move around the city while utilising the amenities provided?

For other countries interested in incorporating a similar model, what could have been done differently in Vancouver, which other international countries could bear in mind whilst also identifying constraints in adopting such a concept?

What other international models are out there that are/were referred to in Vancouver’s plan as a worthy example of a good urban plan?

Having a pedestrian only zone in the central city, how has or hasn’t this benefitted the city?

What is the new focus for urban planning in Vancouver now in 2019?

#### 3.1.5.1 Summary of the interview

As a Rezoning Planner facilitating the rezoning process and negotiating with developers on a variety of policies including heritage, housing, form of development, sustainability and engineering – not a subject matter expert on sustainability and eco-policies but has a general sense of the City’s approach.

“There is the perspective that by putting pedestrians first as opposed to cars has been a focus ever since the EcoDensity initiative”. “Although the EcoDensity initiative allowed people to live, shop and work, within close proximity to their residence, there is still a large section of Vancouver that are single family neighbourhoods but there is a current push to change that; to create a more sustainable form of development. The city is currently doing a city-wide plan, so will probably see some changes in those single family neighbourhoods to increase the density, which includes widening sidewalks and adding cycle-paths, which both contribute towards accessibility”. The Planner addressed how Vancouver has a policy of creating job space outside of the central business district (CBD), resulting in certain areas of the city designated to have job space and office space along transit lines. The idea is to funnel people seamlessly onto transit.

Included in the conversation was how the Greenest City Action Plan 2020 initiative, seems to have morphed quite a bit into different policies, as the year 2020 rapidly approaches, and perhaps it is the ongoing pace of development in Vancouver, with a lot of pressure, as a result the affordability of the city is high with a lot of people struggling to afford living there. This is similar to Auckland in that sense. So, whilst Vancouver has made a

lot of strides with creating better spaces and density in Vancouver due to the EcoDensity plan, housing affordability is still a major issue in the city. A common complaint from residents that the Policies are not clear and open to different interpretations.

When asked about future projects in Vancouver, it was highlighted that a current proposal aligned with the Greenest City Action plan in the city, is a 60-storey residential tower built to passive house standards, which would be the largest passive house building in the world. This is the direction for construction standard the City is trying to incent and push, although it doesn't come without its impacts on other things, for example: shadowing on neighbouring buildings. There are a number of policies in place, that Vancouver City holds developers to certain sustainability standards.

### 3.1.6 Urban Planner - Auckland

Looking at the objectives in the Auckland 2050 plan, how does this impact your role here in 2019, in terms of urban planning?

The new development of Hobsonville Point seems to be a model of what future living in Auckland will be like. What is a common point of view, on the subject of density living as a Planner?

What are some of the strategies in place, for ensuring that heritage builds are part of Auckland's future?

Dealing with many project proposals in Auckland and seeing that there is a current trend for medium density housing, how popular are heritage renewal projects?

What do you think are the main factors preventing someone from taking on a heritage build project?

With the Government now providing financial assistance for foundation strengthening for eligible heritage buildings. What impact has this had on the number of applications for renovating a historic build?

What successful practices for the life cycle of a build could be implemented for heritage builds; when they are undergoing renovations?

There are pockets of growth and new developments around Auckland, which further result in urban sprawl. A better connection throughout the city if preferable, how is this planned for if we think of the unitary plan?

National Geographic printed an article in regard to London. "Planners fashion new neighbourhoods from defunct industrial sites, they balance the city's historic character with its future needs". Is this something Auckland could also facilitate, do you think? (Parker, 2019, p. 130)

Observing Auckland's current buildings and infrastructure, there are lots of international cities to model from. However, when I looked through the Auckland Plan, I only saw overseas cities mentioned once under the topic of cycling in and around the city. How do Planners assess what would make a city useable?

#### 3.1.6.1 Summary of the interview

Higher density living is necessary from a Planning perspective as it can be cheaper land where amenities are all close by eg; schools, supermarkets. A prime example of this is Hobsonville Point. However, many of the residents there will still need to commute to work as there is the need for denser living of this standard to be located closer to the city. The obvious implication there though is the lack of available land.

"The Resource Management Act (RMA) needs to be more responsive in getting density into city fringe suburbs, where the cost of land and the cost of building is prohibitive".

The Urban Planner interviewed, considers it shocking that people are still building stand-alone homes in Auckland.

"There are no incentives in terms of having an original home and then allowing more homes on the same piece

of land". "With the current subdivided properties, there is often a lack of thinking at the concept stage, resulting in terrible parking layouts, enforced infringements, height to boundaries, building coverage". "The difficulty with resource consents, the regulatory division cannot make people do anything". "A simple solution with the subdivision issue could be that the existing dwelling get moved to the front, to create more space and visually you would see the original dwelling plus 2 more".

Auckland does not seem to be a planned city in terms of connection, developments, urban sprawl, stated the Urban Planner. Currently future urban means that it is not serviced at all, no stormwater or wastewater, which becomes a reaction to get the services out to the new developments, as previously mentioned, a proactive approach would be more desirable. By following with a reactive approach, this takes resources away from other areas that had been previously planned for - but there is the need to prioritise resources. The Urban Planner acknowledged the Government has given the indication that there is money there to be given for infrastructure, but the Property Developers have to come onboard as well. Otherwise, it was concluded that the outcome will be big developments relying on cars, which is not ideal. "It is a difficult scenario, the plan did not facilitate development, as it didn't necessarily provide the transport links and hubs". "An example of this for a car owner – if an apartment is built, the developer does not need to provide a car park".

The conversation digressed to Hobsonville Point as it is an interesting case study to discover it was the first subdivision in West Auckland, where you weren't just allowed to have as many car parking spaces on your site as you wanted. Even under the Waitakere plan it limited you to one car parking garage and one car park space out front. The verdict is any additional cars will need to be parked on the street, but the street itself only contains

limited car parking. People are quite reluctant as Aucklanders and have a certain mindset on vehicle ownership. There is the need to change this mindset for things to improve. When thinking of the future, where not everybody will own a car, there is the unfortunate gap in between the present and the future, where public transport needs to catch up.

While cities such as London are looking to their industrial sites to create new neighbourhoods, for example the Battersea Power Station project has just gone through a regeneration project process to make it a residential precinct.

"Auckland is not there yet, as it still relies on the industrial land, where perhaps London pushes their industrial industry out of the city". "Auckland fights to protect the industrial land for industry, not residential use". "There are some industrial areas though, that are close to the inner-city suburbs that will possibly get rezoned".

One of the main objectives explained, is a Planner's job is about creating neighbourhoods, where it becomes walkable and consists of public transport and hubs. However, being a regulatory department, they are constrained by the rules, which they do not make. The rules are created by policy counterparts. International influence, but primarily Urban Planners would look to other countries, but it is necessary to bring back relevant considerations to Auckland's own landscape which includes water and volcanoes and Maori culture.

### 3.1.6.2 Heritage

The Urban Planner reflected that historic builds are often seen as too expensive to get the project off the ground, there are success stories in regard to their heritage protection, as long as the building is scheduled.

As explained, the unitary plan contains a schedule of all the heritage builds, listing 1,2,3 depending on their grade. One being the highest and three being the lowest. Without a schedule, it is harder to protect and some just

have a façade protection with the ability to incorporate any design behind the façade.

As also mentioned by the Property Developer in another interview, the Government funding for strengthening of heritage builds, is microscopic in comparison to the overall cost, so in the urban planning sector there is little interest due to the scheme. However, this could relate to the location of Auckland involved. Central suburbs may have a different story.

Established in the interview, there are additional challenges when it comes to a heritage project, the requirement to apply to council approval for resource consent, undertake their own heritage report and a specialist peer review is undertaken from the department, so the Planners cannot give advice unless there is the supporting documents. Resulting in a lot of work that in fact might not get the owner of a heritage build anything to allow commencing the works. Therefore, a lot of people rightly feel that a heritage project is too uncertain.

#### 4 Discussion and Analysis

As this research piece on urban resolutions was conducted, it was necessary to assess the current urban plan in Auckland while also addressing the need to preserve the city's historical culture. With a focus on the dis-use of heritage builds, resulting in buildings becoming neglected and a forgotten piece of NZ history; it was therefore acknowledged the importance of an assessment of how heritage builds could be re-integrated back into the communities that serve Auckland.

As a result, the research was divided up into the following themes: Auckland's urban plan, building and planning issues, heritage builds and Vancouver's EcoDensity initiative. With the five interviewees from the various areas of the construction industry, this allowed for a comparison to evaluate any similarities or contrasting findings from the interviews.

The participants' responses highlighted challenges in regard to Auckland's urban plan and housing issues, from their perspective. Due to the experience and background in the industry of each participant,

dissimilarities of feedback reflected their job roles - with discussions primarily about design issues of Auckland's or Vancouver's urban plan or the design of buildings. In contrast, building technology issues were addressed for both heritage or new builds from the technical occupation of the Building Surveyor. While interestingly, the Architect was able to elaborate on a broad scale for the design of buildings, Auckland's urban plan and the technical aspects of a building. This seemed to be a reflection of Architectural studies consisting of a more holistic approach, by incorporating a link between the design of a proposed building to integration within its surroundings.

As noted from a NZSEE (New Zealand Society for earthquake engineering) conference paper titled 'The relationship between seismic retrofitting & architectural qualities':

"Preserving and enhancing existing buildings for both architecture and seismic engineering aspects is critical. As they contribute to the economical cultural and visual identities of their communities" (Allaf & Charleson, 2014, p. 8).

Likewise, with feedback from the Architect during the interview, who expressed the importance of the urban plan supporting the buildings. A comprehensive approach is preferable, as opposed to design purely within a site. Kathryn Collin's article 'Provocative Preservation' had a similar echo. "The underlying theme throughout the project is the necessity to tie the building functionally back into the city" (Collins, 2012, p. 89).

Although the context of discussion with the participants were more aligned with similarities to each other, with the shared viewpoint of Auckland's necessity to move towards denser living and provide outdoor spaces within a close proximity for recreational use. It was likewise for Vancouver, where this remains a focus for the ongoing process of accommodating a large population, in a condensed environment. Reflecting back to the EcoDensity initiative for Vancouver's urban development, it was proven fundamental to ensure a connection between how people live and work by providing zones where communities could come together through their activities. The process of bringing residents onboard with the initiative proceeded to take time and compromise to finally being accepted by the majority

of the public - shows that from the implementation of EcoDensity in 2008 through to the published book 'Planning practice in New Zealand', a demand from the public to be included in the concept stage, has been heard when implementing new strategies for urban planning.

"There is a move towards placing the emphasis on public participation at the plan-making, rather than plan administration, stage". (Miller & Bettie, 2017)

It should be pointed out that even with the best of practises, it is not possible to have everybody onboard with leadership strategies. Marit Rosol's article 'Vancouver's "EcoDensity" Planning Initiative: A struggle over Hegemony?' is an example of opposing views on how successful the EcoDensity initiative was presented to the public.

The selection of Vancouver as a comparison to Auckland, is justified by the following:

Both Vancouver and Auckland are expensive cities with a shortage of housing (Rezoning planner and Building surveyor). Similar building codes (Auckland Council). Vancouver is listed as one of the world's most livable cities - an advertised Auckland city goal promoted by Auckland Council. New Zealand being a small country and with limited resources in comparison to Vancouver, could benefit from reviewing the long term outcomes as a result of implementing the EcoDensity initiative.

## 5 Conclusion

Auckland has a lot of potential to accommodate denser living, within a community that supports the residents by offering them the ability to be more self-reliant with close-by resources of parks, schools, shops and public transport systems. It is not feasible or possible to start a complete urban plan from scratch in Auckland, but with design in mind, new developments, refurbishments or repurpose projects, could take place with a holistic approach by creating builds which intentionally connect back into the community. This integrated approach of urban density and liveability, would offer economic, social and environmental benefits to the residents.

The following quote highlights the importance of good designs and is crucial when planning for deintensification.

"While a high degree of compactness is desirable, too much density can be detrimental to liveability, health and urban well-being". (Lehmann, 2016)

Lehmann went on to interview former city planner of Vancouver Brent Toderian about the urban overhaul. .

"For the last decades the environmental movement rejected cities and focused on pastoral areas. The truth is there is nothing greener than density if you do it well, because it diminishes the pressure on agricultural land, it significantly reduces the cost of growth in a sprawl pattern, and it improves everything from our climate footprint to our health, which has huge economic implications. Doing density well is as much about providing privacy as it is about civic life. Density brings people together". (Lehmann, 2016, p.

By looking to international cities, this has given insight to how Auckland could incorporate or adapt a model that suits the city's landscape and the unique culture. Auckland is obviously moving in the direction of denser living with many developments being constructed throughout the suburbs, allowing the residential market to accommodate a lot of people within a smaller space. With careful design and planning, a smaller square metre dwelling has the ability to be an enjoyable space to live. Together with repurposing heritage buildings, initiating infrastructure prior to developments taking place and listening to what communities want in their existing or new neighbourhoods – Auckland city has the ability to be an attractive, well-functioning and liveable city.

Urban resolutions research topic was not set out to provide solutions for Auckland's urban and heritage build predicaments. The aim was to provide a topic that initiated conversations, subjective in nature, to question what makes a city usable. A conversation also gives way to the reader being creative in forming ideas and further discussion to the topic.

### PROCEEDINGS

6<sup>th</sup> New Zealand Built Environment Research Symposium (NZBERS 2020)

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<http://nzbers.massey.ac.nz/index.php/2020-symposium/>

## 6 RECOMMENDATIONS

With reference to the conclusion in this report, it is recommended that any change of urban planning or housing developments are far more accepted and therefore more likely to achieve successful results, when change is broken down into smaller projects to achieve the overall new concept. People can find change difficult or overwhelming and are prone to resisting all ideas which relate to an overall proposed project.

i.e. creating pedestrian only zones within the city and re-establishing traffic routes to accommodate this. By working on smaller areas initially, this would be a feasible approach to both test out an idea and gain interest and acceptance of the change from the general public.

Assessing the urban plan to include historic buildings - repurposing or renovating heritage buildings needn't be so daunting if an integrated approach is adopted, between the professional parties involved in the early initiation stages of the project. By establishing the requirements as a team approach; this will avoid the conflicting advice which Stakeholders of a heritage project often receive and establish problem solving as a collaborative unit. As a result, Auckland would likely see an increase of heritage projects being adopted for rejuvenation, which would benefit the communities as a whole.

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