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# **PLANNING NAPIER 1850–1968**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the  
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy  
in Planning

at Massey University, Manawatu, New Zealand

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2012



## **Abstract**

In the context of New Zealand planning history, planning can be seen in two forms. Informal planning describes planning-related activities already taking place before the establishment of formal town planning in the early 20th century. Formal planning describes planning activities based on legislation, a developing body of knowledge, and a planning profession. Whether informal or formal, planning has been concerned with the arrangement and control of activities in space, with the objective of creating a better living environment.

For Napier, a provincial centre, the influence of planning on the growth and development of the town is discussed in terms of four principal themes, covering the period from the birth of the town in the 1850s until 1968. These themes are reclamation, reconstruction, suburban growth, and place promotion/civic improvement. Reclamation planning was important, given that the original town was almost totally surrounded by sea or swamp, with insufficient land for future expansion. A major earthquake in 1931 destroyed the business area of Napier, but helped solve the expansion problem by raising the level of land so that reclamation became easier or was now unnecessary. From the 1930s to the 1960s, new suburbs were planned and developed as single entities. Throughout its existence, the Napier Borough/City Council endeavoured to promote growth and improve town amenities. From about 1900, tourism became an increasing interest.

The planning associated with each of these themes was largely informal, with the focus on project and development planning. This is not surprising, given that legislation creating the need for formal planning was not enacted until 1926. The informal planning undertaken involved liaison among public authorities, particularly the Council, the Harbour Board, and the neighbouring County Council. While the earthquake provided Napier with an opportunity to create a town that might have been fully planned under the

new planning legislation, the Commissioners, who assumed control of Napier affairs for two years, opted to introduce a partial town planning scheme only. This set a precedent so that future town planning schemes were initially developed on a sectional basis, with the town not becoming fully covered until the 1960s.

## Acknowledgements

A number of people and organisations have assisted this project in various ways. From within my family, my wife Jessie has helped in proofreading the text during the different stages of its production, and has accompanied me on some of my walks around the streets and suburbs of Napier. And she has allowed me freedom from participating in household management matters. My brothers Mark and Bruce have also assisted with matters related to computers and software, whilst my sister Alison helped with providing some photographs of Napier, along with her informal recollections from the time we lived together in Napier. I am especially grateful to her husband Ian Milne who also proofread the thesis as it was nearing completion. Our feline Pixie also helped by being a welcome distraction from time to time, and seldom interfered with my study materials.

I am also indebted to my supervisors, Associate Professor Caroline Miller and Professor Michael Roche, from Massey University. As well as reviewing the texts presented to them in the various drafts, they have made many suggestions about the content and overall approach to this study, and encouraged me to present papers on aspects of this thesis at a number of Urban History/Planning History Conferences. They have demonstrated a tremendous interest in the topic and have prompted me to look at matters from different perspectives on many occasions. Their assistance has been much appreciated.

My employers, Palmerston North City Council, have assisted by allowing me to vary my work hours, initially to enable me to travel to Napier and Wellington on work days to collect research information, and later to allow me time to write the thesis. A work colleague and fellow research student, Pauline Knuckey, helped as a mentor during the writing phase, and provided considerable support and encouragement at a time when my interest in the project was starting to lose direction.

I would like to thank the organisations and their staff who have provided information and have given permission, as appropriate, for their materials, as illustrated and referenced, to be reproduced. These include Napier City Council, Napier Public Library and the Hawke's Bay Museums Trust at Napier, the Hastings Public Library at Hastings, the Massey University Library and Palmerston North City Library at Palmerston North, and Alexander Turnbull Library and Archives New Zealand, both located in Wellington. This appreciation also extends to the *New Zealand Herald* and *Hawke's Bay Today* for permission to use images published in newspapers, including those from predecessor publications, the *Daily Telegraph* and *Hawke's Bay Herald*. The contribution of Napier City Council was particularly noteworthy. The Council provided work space for my research, tracked down seldom used files and maps, and generally provided copies of items requested free of charge. Special thanks go to Charles Te Paa and Lesley Tilbury of the Planning Department, and Maree Moyes of Corporate Support, for facilitating these arrangements. The assistance given by Gail Pope, Curator of Archives at the Hawke's Bay Museum & Art Gallery, in locating historical maps and photographs and other relevant items, was much appreciated. At Alexander Turnbull Library, the staff who looked after the Newspaper Room and Dave Small, Curator of the Cartographic Collection, were particularly helpful.

Finally, I am grateful for permission given by Ian Mills to reproduce two maps he had helped to produce (Figures 1.3 and 4.13), and for the time taken by him over an extended morning tea explaining the history of these maps and of books he had written.

*John Barry Annabell*

*July 2012*

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## **Note on Conversions**

For the period covered by this thesis, imperial measures were used, along with the New Zealand Pound as the principal unit of currency. Conversions of these measures to metric terms, and to the New Zealand Dollar, are as follows:

### **Length**

1 inch = 2.54 centimetres  
1 foot = 0.305 metres  
1 chain = 20.117 metres  
1 mile = 1.609 kilometres

### **Area**

1 acre = 0.405 hectares

### **Currency**

When New Zealand adopted decimal currency in 1967, \$2 was equivalent to £1.

### **Scales Shown on Maps and Plans**

Copies of maps and plans are on a much reduced size, and this should be noted when referring to scales shown on these documents.

