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‘INTENSIFICATION VS URBAN SPRAWL’:

THE CULTURAL PULL TOWARDS LOW DENSITY SUBURBAN LIVING

*A dissertation
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ABSTRACT

With the population of the Auckland region expected to reach 2 million people within the next 50 years, the physical form of the city is topical. The Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) and various other planning documents for the region apply New Urbanist principles of urban design, including compact development, and alternative transports. The focus of the current research looks generally at peoples preferred growth patterns.

From the research conducted the following major themes emerged:

- Renters and/or younger respondents favoured peripheral growth over compact;
- Home Owners and/or older respondents favoured compact growth over continued peripheral growth; although compact development was only slightly preferred over peripheral and both options combined;
- Planners strongly preferred compact development, yet none of those questioned chose this option for themselves; and,
- Space, privacy, social issues, rural and natural values and proper provision of infrastructure were strong themes of discussion from all the respondent groups.

The findings also illustrated a lack of appreciation from the general public of the benefits of medium density housing. Education and experience could enhance this understanding and reduce opposition to intensive developments in existing neighbourhoods. Finding a common link between ‘consolidationists’ and ‘expansionists’ is vital to the success of the RGS.

Many of the concepts raised in support of compact development, including adequate provision of infrastructure, protection of rural and natural values and improved transport are likely to be positive outcomes of successful implementation of the RGS. The physical size of the city is important with regard to these three issues, as well as socially. Social issues were used to justify continued peripheral development by the respondents choosing this option, however a compact

city can equally produce positive social benefits. For example ‘walkability’ positively impacts on public health and good urban design can encourage social interaction. Physical size relates directly to these notions which are promoted through more intensive urban form. The interrelationship between reasons for and against compact development should be more closely examined in the public realm.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ACC	AUCKLAND CITY COUNCIL
ARC	AUCKLAND REGIONAL COUNCIL
MfE	MINISTRY FOR THE ENVIRONMENT
NSCC	NORTH SHORE CITY COUNCIL
NIMBY	‘NOT IN MY BACKYARD’
PCE	PARLIAMENTARY COMMISSIONER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT
RDC	RODNEY DISTRICT COUNCIL
RGF	REGIONAL GROWTH FORUM
RGS	REGIONAL GROWTH STRATEGY
RMA	RESOURCE MANAGEMENT ACT 1991
TLA	TERRITORIAL LOCAL AUTHORITY
WCC	WAITAKERE CITY COUNCIL

GLOSSARY

Climate Change Refers to a suspected phenomenon of increasing global temperatures brought by human activity.

High Density A compact form of urban development such as apartment blocks and high rise buildings.

Low Density A pattern of suburban development where dwellings are 'standalone' on a site of more than approximately 300sqm, such as the standard pattern of development for suburban Auckland.

Medium Density A form of development more intensive than the standard for suburban New Zealand, characterised by site sizes of approximately 150-300m²; including terrace and integrated housing.

Please Note: Often the terms high and medium density are used synonymously. While the term 'high density' is used in the questionnaire is refers to what would be known academically as medium density.

Sustainable Management See Part II of the Resource Management Act 1991.