Planning for town centre revitalisation in a declining context

A Thesis Presented in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Resource and Environmental Planning at Massey University, Palmerston North New Zealand

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Acknowledgements

This thesis is for my parents. These pages represent your undying faith and trust in me and my dreams. They also signify almost 20 years of my formal education coming to an end...which your wallets and ears will be thankful for.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE - THESIS INTRODUCTION

1.1 Decline and Revitalisation of the Town Centre

The public realm is the collection of spaces and places accessible to and used by the public. It has an economic, social, cultural and environmental function and quality and is arguably the most important part of the urban environment. The town centre, the focus of this research, is the part of the public realm that is the social, cultural, movement and economic nucleus of small urban areas. However, in communities experiencing long term population and economic decline, communities and local authorities often underprovide for the public realm; specifically, the epicentres of these communities, the town centre (Carmona, Tiesedell, Heath, & Oc, 2010; Desimini, 2014; Rhodes & Russo, 2013).

The management of the public realm is a primary function of local government in New Zealand. The Local Government Act (2002), defines the purpose of local government as "to meet the current and future needs of communities for good-quality local infrastructure, local public services, and performance of regulatory functions in a way that is most cost-effective for households and businesses" (s11A(e), LGA, 2002). The Act also includes the provision of "recreational facilities and community amenities" as core services of local government and as such local government must have particular regard to their contribution to the community (s10(11)(b), LGA, 2002). The reference to 'Quality' in the Acts purpose is defined by Section 10 (2)(a-c)) of the LGA as efficient, effective, appropriate and future focussed (*Local Government Act*, 2002). Therefore, the management of the public realm an town centre is mandated under the LGA. In considering the economic, social and cultural well-being of communities, this role becomes increasingly important in declining areas. The public realm and town centre are therefore matters of local government consideration.

Many local authorities are struggling with how to plan for urban decline. Reckien & Martinez-Fernandez (2011, p. 1375) constitute decline as "urban areas (cities and towns) or regions (system of towns) that over the past 40–50 years have experienced population loss, employment decline or/and protracted economic downturn". The cause of decline is not universal, but is experienced in many rural settings internationally. Oswalt (2005, p 14) attributes inter-town competition, deindustrialisation, suburbanisation, post-socialist political structures and demographic aging as just a few causes of decline. Decline is commonly viewed negatively as local authorities and communities are generally innately growth orientated. However, decline is not exclusively negative and can be planned for.

The Smart Decline principle is a widely implemented approach to planning for decline. Smart Decline strategically reduces the provisions of local government in order to provide for who and what remains, and capitalises on existing competitive advantages (D. Popper & F. Popper, 2002; Sousa & Pinho,

2015). Although contrary to the dominant paradigm in planning, government and society in general which promotes growth and development, Rhodes & Russo (2013) note that smart decline equally offers the opportunity for renewal, modernisation and environmental quality improvements, including to the town centre.

Revitalisation of the public realm, is a common response of communities and local authorities to address or avoid decline (Johnson, Glover, & Stewart, 2014). This research explores how the Ruapehu District views its decline and how this decline is addressed through town centre revitalisation. The research explored the effects of planning for revitalisation in addressing the decline of town centres, exploring the planning documents for Ruapehu District, and effects of a particular revitalisation project in Ohakune specifically as a case study.

1.2 Research Aim & Question

This research explored how the Ruapehu District views its declining population and economy, how town centre revitalisation has attempted to address decline in Ohakune, and the outcomes of this revitalisation, with the aim of developing guidelines for local authorities in declining contexts to consider when undertaking revitalisation to address decline.

As the Ruapehu District Council is including town centre renewal as part of their aspirations for economic development and reversing decline, this research looks at the effects of revitalisation of town centres in a declining context by asking the question:

What should local authorities in declining contexts consider when planning for town centres to enable people and communities to provide for their social, economic, cultural and environmental well-being?

1.3 Structure

Chapter 2 provides an overview of the Ruapehu, the case study Ohakune and the Council planning context. Chapter 3 reviews the relevant literature in order to define decline, the public realm and the town centre, and establish the benefits of urban design as a method of town centre revitalisation. The literature review establishes the basis of the research design chapter (Chapter 4) by identifying six central themes of revitalisation in a declining context. Chapter 4 also details the methods chosen, and the ethical implications of this research. Chapter 5 presents the results of the data collected and discusses them in light of the six themes. Chapter 6 concludes the research by answering the research question. This research concludes that there are both positive and negative effects of decline and town centre revitalisation, and based on the result of this research and the literature, establishes, a set of guidelines for local authorities considering planning for decline and town centre revitalisation.

CHAPTER TWO- DISTRICT BACKGROUND

2.1 District Context

The purpose of this chapter is to understand the state of decline in the Ruapehu District. The Ruapehu District is made up of over 673,019ha in the centre of the North Island of New Zealand. The area is home to a range of outstanding natural features and landscapes most significantly the Tongariro World Heritage and National Park. The mountains that are central to the park, Ruapehu, Tongariro and Ngauruhoe, are a key source of identity and pride for the people of this area. The outdoors in general is the overarching sense of identity and purpose for the entire district. Other natural features of the district are also important to the community, such as the rivers, forests and farmland. This is especially so in the northern parts of the district where the rivers and forests are growing in popularity with locals, domestic and international tourists (*Growing Ruapehu Economic Development Strategy 2015-2025*, 2015). The district is home to 11,847 usual residents, while peak populations reach over 20,000 during the ski season (*Growing Ruapehu Economic Development Strategy 2015-2025*, 2015). There are four major townships of the district; Taumarunui in the north and Ohakune, Raetihi and Waiouru in the South. Between these major townships are smaller settlements such as National Park, Owhango, Rangataua, Ohura and Horopito.

The Ruapehu is a predominantly rural district with a long history of farming and forestry throughout the area. The primary sector is the largest economic contributor of the district. The main townships are primarily agricultural service centres for the outlying settlements and farms, and increasingly service the growing tourism industry. The primary sector is the districts largest employer and business type with 641 business units (36%) and 1268 employees (24%) in 2014 (*Growing Ruapehu Economic Development Strategy 2015-2025*, 2015). The primary sector contributes 21.1% to the District's GDP which is well above the national average of 7.4% (*Growing Ruapehu Economic Development Strategy 2015-2025*, 2015). However, this sector has experienced the largest decline between 2004 and 2014 with a 2.3% decline in employment, 3.6% decline in GDP and 2.6% decline in business units in the primary sector (*Future Ruapehu: Long Term Plan 2015-2025*, 2015; *Growing Ruapehu Economic Development Strategy 2015-2025*, 2015). This indicates that the district can longer rely solely on the agricultural sector.

The significant outdoor experiences available in the district are increasingly being utilised. Tourism was once a seasonal source of income and vibrancy for the southern towns particularly in Ohakune and National Park in winter months due to the Whakapapa and Turoa ski fields and Mardi Gras. Visitor numbers overall continue to climb, with a 35% growth between 2004 and 2014 and an estimated million visitors in the 2013/14 year (*Growing Ruapehu Economic Development Strategy 2015-2025*, 2015). According to the Ruapehu District Council Economic Development Strategy, these high tourist

numbers has translated into a $30 million contribution to the districts Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2014, up 3% from 2013 (*Growing Ruapehu Economic Development Strategy 2015-2025*, 2015). Visitors have been spending an average of $125.6million annually since 2009. However, as acknowledged by Council, this is weather dependent and largely seasonal, thus leaving the district economically vulnerable to poor summer and winter seasons (*Future Ruapehu: Long Term Plan 2012-2022*, 2012; *Growing Ruapehu Economic Development Strategy 2015-2025*, 2015).

Recent developments including two National Cycle ways and the upgrading of the Tongariro Crossing are producing high summer and spring revenues (Harbrow, n.d.). This has resulted in the largest increase in visitor numbers in summer months with between 70-80% growth in the last ten years, and a 19% increase in overnight stays between 2013 and 2014 summer months (*Growing Ruapehu Economic Development Strategy 2015-2025*, 2015). It must be noted that despite the rising visitor numbers, the traditional bumper winter economy of the district is beginning to slow. Since 2011 both the Turoa and Whakapapa ski fields have been experiencing falling customer numbers of 18-35% over these years (*Growing Ruapehu Economic Development Strategy 2015-2025*, 2015; *Ruapehu Alpine Lifts Ltd Annual Report Year Ended 30 April 2016*, 2016). This is indicating that the district can no longer rely solely on the mountain to provide a strong winter economy.

The RDC Long Term Plan states that many of the smaller townships are "closing down (*Future Ruapehu: Long Term Plan 2015-2025*, 2015, p. 77). Between 1996 and 2013 the district has lost a significant amount of employment through the closure of meat processing plants, forestry operations, rail services and the reduction of the Waiouru military base. Over 500 jobs have disappeared in this time (*Growing Ruapehu Economic Development Strategy 2015-2025*, 2015). This indicates that the development of tourism has not entirely compensated for the losses across the district.

The economic decline of the district has resulted in population decline across all the townships and outlying rural areas. Over the past 25 years the district has experienced significant resident population loss particularly since 2001 ("QuickStats about a place: Ruapehu District," 2013). The usually resident population is expected by the Ruapehu District Council to "decline to continue into the foreseeable future" over the next ten years at an annual rate of -1.4% per year resulting in a 2025 population of 9,919 (*Future Ruapehu: Long Term Plan 2015-2025*, 2015, p. 77). However, this is forecasted by Council to shrink at a slower rate than previously experienced (*Future Ruapehu: Long Term Plan 2015-2025*, 2015). The population is significantly affected by the change of seasons. Particularly, the district experiences a population peak during the ski season. Winter will produce a 90% increase to the usually resident population, and this is expected to continue *(Future Ruapehu: Long Term Plan 2015-2025).* Nonetheless, decline still continues.

Ruapehu is experiencing significant economic and social changes. Most significantly, the district is in decline both economically and socially as evidenced by a shrinking population and employment and a

changing economy. This research explored the extent to which this decline is currently being acknowledged and addressed through statutory and non-statutory means and in particular how revitalisation of the town centre is used to address decline in Ohakune.

2.2 Planning for Revitalisation

The Ruapehu District is in a state of long term economic and population decline but is focussed on reversing this trend. Council's functions are specified in the LGA and include the requirement for the Long Term Plan. As well as this, the Ruapehu District Council has developed an Economic Development Strategy, which is a non-statutory document aimed at improving the economic and social position of the district. Town centre revitalisation is a tool used to address decline and is referred to in both the Ruapehu District Long Term Plan (LTP) and Economic Development Strategy (EDS). Both the Plan and the Strategy acknowledge the population and economic decline experienced across the district, and as a result are highly growth and development centric.

The Ruapehu District Long Term Plan 2015-2025 and Economic Development Strategy 2015 include the revitalisation of town centres as a priority for the next ten years of the district (*Future Ruapehu: Long Term Plan 2015-2025*, 2015; *Growing Ruapehu Economic Development Strategy 2015-2025*, 2015). The Economic Development Strategy lists 'Township Revitalisation' as part of the target of 'growing economic diversity' (*Growing Ruapehu Economic Development Strategy 2015-2025*, 2015, p. 15). Using town centre revitalisation to address decline reflects the typical response to decline by planning for growth and development as opposed to adopting an approach to plan for decline.

An example of recent revitalisation is the Waiouru Main St Renewal Project of 2014/15. It is the most significant investment outside normal maintenance by the Ruapehu District Council in recent years. The project included new toilets and enhancements such as new gardens and picnic tables, costing $200,000. Additionally, Council has also allocated $15,000 to Ohakune and Taumarunui and $7,000 to Raetihi to contribute to revitalisation projects in the 2015/2025 Long Term Plan. The Council has forecasted the development of an iconic I-Site and the revitalisation of the Taumarunui town centre and public toilets as the major capital works within the town centres in the Long Term Plan 2015/2025.

Ohakune has experienced a significant amount of ongoing revitalisation compared to the other town centres, making it an interesting example to reflect on. This work was predominantly led and delivered by a local action group, Ohakune 2000, in partnership with Council. Ohakune 2000 is a collective of businesses and individual volunteers established in 1997 to "develop and promote projects to better Ohakune and its surrounding districts" (*Ohakune Town Centre Assessment*, 2002) . Ohakune 2000 spear headed the revitalisation of the Ohakune town centre to develop a unique alpine look and feel in the early 2000's ("DoC," 2014; *Ohakune Town Centre Assessment*, 2002). This work included mountain themed street furniture and street lights, mountain shaped brickwork in the footpaths, the

incorporation of river rocks and alpine planting. Additionally, the iconic Ohakune I-site was developed following the success of the town centre revitalisation (*Ohakune Town Centre Assessment*, 2002). The Ohakune town centre renewal between 1999 and 2000 capitalised on the proximity of the Turoa Ski field and developed the town in a mountain theme (*Ohakune Town Centre Assessment*, 2002). The 2002 Town Centre assessment claims the work stimulated private investment and encouraged building owners to undertake building improvements (*Ohakune Town Centre Assessment*, 2002) The group continues to work throughout the town on community enhancement projects such as river walkways, cycling tracks, green spaces around the Big Carrot and Mardi Gras. The group is considered to be a partner of the Council with a relationship based on mutual trust and co-operation. In comparison, similar groups such as Raetihi Promotions and Enterprising Taumarunui Incorporated have struggled to make similar physical changes to their townships.

This research explores revitalisation in the context of a declining rural district by reviewing the content of the current Ruapehu District LTP and EDS, literature, secondary data and key informant interviews. The economic, social, environmental and cultural effects of the Ohakune town centre revitalisation are explored further in this thesis. By comparing the benefits sought and obtained from the Ohakune 2000 revitalisation project with the benefits anticipated in these current documents, along with a review of secondary data over the period 1996 to 2016, it was possible to determine that revitalisation has had some economic, social, cultural and environmental benefits. Using Ohakune as a case study to explore the effects of revitalisation, has resulted in a set of emerging guidelines being developed for the purpose of informing future statutory and non-statutory planning documents in relation to town centre revitalisation.

CHAPTER THREE - LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Introduction

Like Ruapehu, many local governments internationally are grappling with growth management and dealing with a declining population and economy. In response, local governments, the planning profession and communities, are making efforts towards economic development, including public space revitalisation, to reverse or avoid decline. This is occurring in the Ruapehu Distrit with the development of the Economic Development Strategy and investments in town centre improvements through the Long Term Plan. Alternatively, some local authorities have responded to decline by strategically controlling it in a manner that continues to provide for the community, through reorganising the delivery of services and goals. This is known as Smart Decline. Revitalisation of the town centre is commonly included in smart decline arrangements.

This chapter begins by reviewing the literature relating to decline and the concept of Smart Decline. It then looks at the role and definition of the public realm before looking at the revitalisation of town centres in declining contexts to develop an understanding of why planning for the revitalisation of public spaces is important for the economic, social, environmental and cultural functions of the public realm. The chapter goes on to address the economic, social, cultural and environmental effects of revitalisation. Finally, the chapter explores the role of planning and public participation in public space revitalisation and decline.

3.2 Decline and Smart Decline

Despite the global population increasing, many smaller towns and cities are experiencing shrinkage of their population, economy, land use and popularity (Haase, Rink, Grossman, Bernt, & Mykhnenko, 2014; Rink et al., 2014). Decline is not an easily quantifiable phenomenon, and there is variance globally as to what constitutes it (Desimini, 2014; Rhodes & Russo, 2013). For example, Lang (2012, p. 1748) interprets decline to be "a loss of density and intensity of use in demographic, economic and physical assets". Similarly, Reckien & Martinez-Fernandez (2011, p. 1375) constitute decline as "cities, towns or regions that over the past 40–50 years have experienced population loss, employment decline or/and protracted economic downturn". Decline is related to negative changes in population, employment and economic performance but is not easily definable.

There is no single explanation for decline. Oswalt (2005, p.14) argues that shrinkage is caused by the "transformation processes" of deindustrialisation, suburbanisation, and demographic aging. Most relevant to this research is the process and consequences of deindustrialisation. Deindustrialisation is the widespread tendency of capitalist societies towards lower levels of industrial production (Green-Leigh & Blakely, 2013; Reckien & Martinez - Fernandez, 2011). De-industrialisation exacerbates the

vulnerability of local economies to changing external conditions, such as changing market forces, changing technologies and globalisation, that occur in capitalist urban economies (Couch, Karrecha, Nuissl, & Rink, 2005). The departure from labour dependent industrial production has caused mass unemployment and migration (Carmada, Rotondo, & Selicato, 2015; Kullman, 2013; Reckien & Martinez - Fernandez, 2011). Korobar, Siljanoska, Stefanovska (2012) argue the process of de-industrialisation contributes to high unemployment rates that force those able to find jobs to migrate to bigger places. Economic factors are primarily the causes of decline, and unemployment is one of the most significant consequences.

There are positive and negative effects of decline. Decline results in multiple negative effects which include, job losses, vacant buildings, derelict land, reduced investor confidence, smaller rating bases, failing retail and service sectors, loss of government, health and professional services, poor public perception, poor land use decisions and community dissatisfaction (Sousa & Pinho, 2015; Oswalt, 2005; Hall, 2009; Rhodes & Russo, 2013). However, shrinkage does not have exclusively negative effects. Hall (2009) argues that decline is "different, but doesn't have to imply death" for a town. They argue that many outcomes of shrinkage are actually points of difference that contribute to the competitiveness of small towns (Hall, 2009). Positive outcomes of decline include housing affordability, natural amenities, sense of community, lack of congestion and pollution, and a slower pace of life (Hall, 2009; Leetmaa, Krisszan, Nuga & Burdack, 2012). These are qualities cities plan and spend for, yet are intrinsically a part of shrinking places (Hall, 2009; Leetmaa, Kriszan, Nuga, & Burdack, 2012). Despite the range of articles on the negative effects of decline, the positive effects can be equallyconsidered.

Admitting to shrinkage and decline is widely rejected by local authorities. This is due not only to the focus on negative outcomes of shrinkage but also the orientation of society towards growth, prosperity and traditional notions of success (Haase et al., 2014). Additionally, planning is an innately future and growth orientated profession (Elzerman & Bontje, 2011; Hall & Hall, 2008; Oswalt, 2005). In planning practice and society in general, shrinkage is to be avoided and reversed while growth is desired and prioritised despite its many negative outcomes (Elzerman & Bontje, 2011). Hall (2009) argues that shrinking or stagnant places develop distinctive planning strategies. Decline doesn't have to be a death sentence, rather there is the potential for implementing strategic shrinkage approaches such as the Smart Decline theory (Oswalt, 2005).

Smart Decline is a theory and tool related to the planning of shrinking places. Popper & Popper (2002, p. 23) define it as " explicitly planning for less- fewer people, fewer buildings, fewer land uses". Smart Decline strategically plans for who and what remains by the reorganisation of provisions to

communities and capitalises on existing competitive advantages rather than striving for new growth and attracting more people (Molotoch, 1976; D. Popper & F. Popper, 2002; Sousa & Pinho, 2015). Hall (2009) and Gonzalez (2006) argue that in planning for the elimination of infrastructure and service expansions, Smart Decline allows focus on improving current built form, and the quality of life and place. Smart Decline is ultimately an antithesis to the prioritisation, assumption and orientation towards growth of planning processes (Kullman, 2013; D. Popper & J. Popper, 2002; Sousa & Pinho, 2015). However, it is not an anti-economic development approach; rather economic development strategies are integral to the smart decline process; and competition is still highly relevant (Rhodes & Russo, 2013). Smart Decline is innately an economic development strategy.

Planning for decline is not a common strategy. The negative connotations that decline conjures has resulted in a reluctance by decision makers and planners to implement planning strategies in favour of it, such as Smart Decline (Carmada et al., 2015). This rejection has in turn caused a knowledge gap and a lack of tools and resources to the planning profession to cope with the complexities of planning for decline (Carmada, Rotondo, & Selicato (2015), Hall & Hall (2008) and Elzerman & Bontje (2011). Oswalt (2005) argues that the reason planning is ill-equipped is that shrinkage is an unplanned side effect of political and economic decisions beyond the realm of planning. Others argue that this is exacerbated by planners relying on the comfort and faith of applying conventional wisdom along with little experience in smart decline (Kullman, 2013; Bromley, Thomas and Hall, 2003). To plan for decline, planning needs to make assumptions towards goals that are less focussed on infrastructural growth and more on the development of who and what remains (Oswalt, 2005; Sousa & Pinho), 2015). The planning profession does not have to be exclusively growth orientated.

A feature of Smart Decline is strategic and focussed town centre management. Smart Decline is an opportunity for renewal, modernisation and environmental quality improvements of town centres (Strohmeier & Bader, 2004). Rhodes & Russo (2013) and Kabish, Haase & Haase (2006) maintain that public space revitalisation is a common feature of Smart Decline strategies with resources refocussed into public spaces. The public realm can benefit from the reduced pressure for growth by local authorities addressing neglected demands such as public infrastructure improvements and renewing spaces to help stimulate private consumption and investment (Bourne & Rose, 2001). Carmada, However, Selicato & Rotondo (2010) maintain that although physical intervention strategies are often used to address decline and are important it is clear that renewing the town centre is not enough to respond to decline (Carmada et al., 2015). Nonetheless, the implementation of Smart Decline strategies can assist in public space revitalisation.

Critics of Smart Decline note that it can exacerbate social and economic inequalities. Social issues such as poverty, unemployment, low wages, inequality and poor education opportunities, are present in shrinking places (Hollander & Nemeth, 2011) . When approached traditionally, the most viable areas

of a town are prioritised for attention and investment, the remainder are subject to the "highly exclusionary" reduction strategies under smart decline (Rhodes & Russo, 2013, p. 314). Although areas which are lower economic performers, such as back streets or alleyways, require additional support to these areas are most commonly excluded from investment. Smart Decline must therefore be evenly implemented to avoid inequalities.

Smart Decline is not solely concerned with physical and economic changes. In implementing Smart Decline focus must be on economic development and address ongoing social problems simultaneously (Rhodes & Russo, 2013). As Smart Decline is not always a socially just, democratic and equitable practice, focus on positive social outcomes for who remains can and should be attentively targeted to "'each locality's history, political and economic engines and existing power structures" (Hollander, 2007 in Mallach, 2011, p. 372, D. Popper & F. Popper, 2002) . To achieve this Smart Decline local authorities should prioritise wide spread consultation and community involvement as to avoid a system that does not reflect the local situation or people, is biased towards physical improvements and is focused on saving of funds in jeopardy of social considerations (Bontje, 2004; Selicato & Rotondo, 2010). Smart Decline should be implemented to address physical and economic considerations of the public realm and social concerns.

The key elements of decline that this research explored are the perceptions of decline and planning responses commonly undertaken by local authorities and communities. This research focused on the relationship between smart decline and town centre revitalisation in particular.

3.3 What Is The Public Realm?

Urban areas are comprised of both private and public realms. The private realm is essentially places of exclusive entry such as homes, offices and clubs. However, there is no universally applicable definition of the public realm as it serves a purpose defined by those who live in and use it (Purcell, 2013). Haas and Olsson (2013, p. 1), broadly describe it as an environment of "the collection of public spaces and places—buildings, squares, streets, landscapes, and ecosystems, as well as processes, mindscapes, and people that make up and shape any environment" (Haas & Olsson, 2013, p. 1). Bayat & Biekart (2009, p. 823) argue the public realm is a space for humans to live in and use. Yet as society has developed the public realms use is contested by its users whose ideas, influences, cultures, identities and actions shape it (Bayat & Beikart, 2009). Carmona, Heath, Oc & Tiesdell (2008) assert the public realm includes "all spaces accessible to and used by the public including… external public space, internal public space and external & internal quasi-public space" (Carmona et al., 2008, p. 111). However, the public realm is more than a physical space.

The social nature of the public realm is also widely recognised. Loftland (1998, p4) conceptualises the public realm as "a quintessential social territory" and "a form of social space distinct from private… its

existence is what makes the city". Loftland (1998, p4) goes on to argue, "in the obviously anonymous and impersonal world of the city there is social life". In the public realm most contact by strangers is trivial, however the public realm is rich with a variety of social interactions (Jacobs, 1961; Stone, 1954). Gehl (1987) conceptualises these interactions on scale from low intensity/passive contact to high intensity/close friendship contact (Gehl, 1987). Even passive contact, what Gehl (1987) refers to as "see and hear" interaction, is valuable not only to the individuals who use the space, but the vitality of the whole public realm as "social interaction…is critical for prosperous and vibrant cities" (Troy, 2007, p 6). However, in reality some parts of the public realm are both intentionally and unintentionally inequitable for some members of society through urban design, market forces and the social exclusion (Carmona et al., 2008). The public realm is unequivocally a social space but is not necessarily an equitable one.

Conversely, the social element of the public realm has been contested. In contrast to the view that the public realms core function is of social inclusion and interaction, early views such as scholars like Spykman (1926) argue that public realm is innately asocial as people avoid interaction and in the barrage of stimulation 'shut down' to the people around them. The work of Gehl (1978) which ordered social interactions in space can be considered a counter argument to Spykmans (1926) concept of stimulus overload. Rather than a state of 'shut down' it can be understood as a form of passive contact. However, contemporary reality is now beginning to reflect Spykmans (1926) earlier perceptions. The increasing privatisation of space is causing the public realm to deteriorate (Tiesdell (2008). The decline of the importance of the public realm is further exacerbated by the increased disengagement with the public realm in preference of individualised activities (Carmona et al., 2008). The contestations of the purpose of the public realm suggest that it is an idealistic notion and has never been the equitable, profitable and democratic space imagined. Providing for the social function of the public realm is a means of avoiding these concerns.

In addition to its social function, the public realm also has a strong economic function. Production and consumption is a core function of the public realm (Troy, 2007). Urban areas are unique economic areas as they are simultaneously spaces of specialised and diverse consumption and production (Haas & Olsson, 2013). As such, urban areas are the most significant economic actors as they produce an average of 85% of the GDP of developed nations (Weiss, 2005). The economic value of the public realm, locally and globally, positions the space as a competitive environment (Copus, Sweeting, & Wingfeild, 2013). Inter-local to global competition requires the investment of local and central governments, communities and the private sector in the public realm in order to be competitive and secure profits (Purcell, 2013). However, both Purcell (2013) and Tibbalds (2001 argue the competitive nature in neoliberal settings results in the prioritisation of economic activities over social ones (Haas & Olsson, 2013). Haas & Olsson (2013) suggest an adverse effect upon the social function of the public

realm due to economic gain being valued over social improvements or interactions. The economic value of the public realm is significant often to the detriment of other considerations.

The above discussion highlights the contested nature of the term 'the public realm'. For the purposes of this research the public realm is defined as '*the collection of spaces and places accessible to and used by the public that has physical, social, economic, cultural, environmental functions and qualities'.* This research looked exclusively at the public realm within the town centre. The above discussion also begins to discuss the economic, social, cultural and economic functions of the public realm, concepts that are further developed in section 3.5.

3.4 The Town Centre

The focus of this research is on the town centre, an integral part of the public realm (Hass & Olsson (2013). Defining what constitutes a town centre is also fundamental to understanding the implications of revitalisation. Just as the public realm is defined subjectively by its context and users so is the town centre (Schnore, 1971; Thurstain-Goodwin & Unwin, 2000). Although there is not one definition, numerous attempts to define what constitutes a town centre exist in the literature.

The literature highlights three central themes to the definition of the town centre. Firstly, the town centre is a place that is the "metaphorical heart of towns", and acts as a hub for the movement of people (Bourne & Rose, 2001; *Department of the Environment*, 1993; Thompson, Benson, & McDonagh, 2015, p. 123). The town centre is also the social and cultural hub that accommodates social interaction and are places of personal meaning for residents (Dobson, 2011; Johnson et al., 2014). The town centre is the main place where the culture and identity of the associated community is reflected (Johnson et al., 2014). Others define a town centre by its economic function. Hart, Stachow & Cadogan (2013) define the town centre as primarily an economic unit and a space of economic supremacy, being "the highest level in the retail hierarchy" (p. 13). This is supported by Guy (1994) who argues the town centre is "central to the town and forms the most important retail area" (Guy, 1994, p. 1). For the purposes of this research, the town centre is defined as '*the economic, social, cultural and movement nucleus of small urban areas'.*

3.4.1 Threats to the Town Centre

Successful town centres attract people and investment. Ravenscroft (2000) measures success by 'vitality' (busyness of places caused by people) and 'viability' (continued ability to attract investment). These two features, which are further discussed in section 3.5.1, have a symbiotic relationship, the more people are attracted to a place the more investment is attracted, the more investment that is attracted the more people are attracted and so the cycle continues (Ravenscroft, 2000). Dobson (2013) also contends that a successful town centre meets the needs and improves the quality of life for its residents. The success of the town centre is important for communities and local authorities.

However, the success of the town centre is under threat from multiple sources, two contemporary threats of relevance are periphery retail and online shopping. These phenomenon threaten the attraction of people and investment and contribute to decline.

Periphery retailing and out of town centre shopping centre or other nearby towns or cities are competing commercially and socially with town centres. The increased mobility of society has meant consumer choices have drastically changed, meaning the proximity of the town centre is no longer as important (Ravenscroft, 2000; Thomas, Bromley, & Tallon, 2004). This is particularly the case for comparison retail, where consumer mobility has enabled the development of retail facilities, such as malls or retail parks, in larger towns and cities, often at distance from rural areas (Eppli & Shilling, 1996). These places not only offer a wide range of retail services but also other amenities such as cinemas and playgrounds and are well maintained and secure (Crosby, Hughes, Lizieri, & Oughton, 2005). Thomas, Bromley & Tallon (2004) and Keane (1989) maintain the greatest impacts of these developments are upon town centres. Smaller town centres struggle to compete with the multi-functionality and economies of scale that purpose built facilities and larger towns or cities offer (Powe, 2012). Competition has social, economic, cultural and environmental effects on the functions of the town centre and negative land use planning implications.

E-commerce, or online shopping, is a very contemporary reality threatening and minimising the importance of the town centre. The internet has enabled retailing and socialising to occur more easily in private settings rather than in the public realm and town centre (Dobson, 2011; Kullman, 2013). Weltevreden & Atzema (2006) and Dobson (2011) argue that online retailing can both substitute and complement retail through stores that have both a physical and web retailing presence. However, this does not enhance the role of the town centre, as the benefit is limited to the growth of the store rather than contributing to the vitality and viability of the town centre. This demonstrates Carmona et, al. (2008) argument of the increasing privatisation of space and a growing disconnect from public life in favour of individualised activities. E-Commerce contributes to the social, economic, cultural and environmental effects to the town centre.

The spread of shopping facilities and e-commerce has implications for land use planning. The spread of stores out of the town centre has contributed to the urban sprawl phenomena (Dodds & Dubrovinsky, 2014). This has caused excessive land consumption, infrastructure expansion, contributes to carbon emissions and under-utilises the investment in the town centre (Karamychev & van Reevan, 2009; Turner, 2007). This sprawl also effects the strength of the social function of the town centre due to a loss of patronage in favour of other shopping facilities (Blanchard, Irwin, Tolbert, Lyson, & Nucci, 2003). Although perceived as having environmentally friendly qualities, E-Commerce is not free from land use planning implications. The popularity of online shopping requires the

construction of distribution warehouses (Dreschler, 2014; Rutner, Gibson, & Williams, 2003). These warehouses are predominantly located outside of the central business areas and town centres (Hesse, 2004; Shayan & Ghotb, 2003; J. Weltevreden et al., 2008). E-commerce also contributes to urban sprawl and greenhouse gas emissions (McKinnon, 2013). Not only do these threats contribute to the decline of town centres, but also produce negative land use planning effects.

Despite the economic importance of the public realm and any commitment by local authorities to retain town centres as the focus of the commercial and social identity, it is under threat from multiple sources (Thomas & Bromley, 2002). These threats such as periphery retailing and e-commerce are commonly respond to via town centre revitalisation to avoid or reverse town centre decline (Thomas & Bromley, 2013). Understanding how revitalisation can address these threats and subsequently contribute to improved vitality and viability of the town centre is one way that local authorities can retain town centres as the focus of communities.

3.5 Revitalisation of the Town Centre

Threats to the town centre lead to responses aimed at reversing or avoiding decline. A common response in declining contexts is revitalisation of the town centre. Revitalisation has been defined by Roberts (2008) as a "comprehensive and integrated vision and action which leads to the resolution of urban problems and which seeks to bring about a lasting improvement in the economic, physical, social and environmental condition of an area that has been subject to change" (Roberts, 2008, p. 233). Revitalisation is a tool that Thomas and Bromley (2002) suggest can ameliorate the negative outcomes of decline and competition.

What constitutes 'successful revitalisation' is undefined and varies widely. Success can be measured by the improvements to tangible outcomes such as economic performance, and environmental target achievements or intangible outcomes such as improved social interaction and equality, or town centre identity and perception (Edgar, 2008; Green-Leigh & Blakely, 2013; Haas & Olsson, 2013; Kemp, 2011; Ravenscroft, 2000). The community and context in which the revitalisation is situated must define success. However, indicators could be categorised into economic, environmental, social and cultural improvements and these are further explored in sections 3.5.1. to 3.5.4.

Sustainability of revitalisation is an important consideration. The Brundtland Commission (1987) defined sustainable development as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." This requires the consideration of economic, social, environmental and cultural elements of a town centre. Ensuring that each of these elements is provided for assists in ensuring the long term success of revitalisation (Bararatin & Agustin, 2015; Newella et al., 2013). Revitalisation methods and initiatives must consider and provide for all elements to be successful long term.

One tool that is used to revitalise town centres is urban design. Research by The Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) & The Department of the Environment, Transport and the Region (DETR) (2000) and the Ministry for the Environment (MfE) (2005) concluded that good urban design adds value to places and developments by increasing economic viability and, social and environmental benefits (CABE & DETR, 2001; MfE., 2005). Revitalisation through urban design is intended to improve the aesthetics, function, viability and vitality of the town centre in response to threats faced (Ravenscroft, 2000; Whitehead, Simmonds, & Preston, 2006). Urban design is not easily or succinctly defined (Rowley, 1994). The terms process, profession, principles, actions and product are commonly used to define or as part of a definition for urban design. For instance, Carmona et al (2003, p. 3) assert that urban design is "the process of making better places for people than would otherwise be produced". Urban design encompasses the design of all elements of the physical urban environment. Thirteen direct economic and nine indirect social and environmental outcomes of good urban design have been identified by CABE and DETR (2001). The CABE/DETR outcomes are listed below:

The direct economic benefits for small towns included:

- producing high returns on investments (good rental returns and enhanced capital values)

- placing developments above competition at little cost

- responding to occupier demand

- helping to deliver more lettable area (higher densities)

- reducing management, maintenance, energy and security costs

- contributing to more contented and productive workforces

- creating an urban regeneration and place marketing dividend

- differentiating places and raising their prestige

- opening up investment opportunities, raising confidence in development opportunities and attracting grant monies

- reducing the cost to the public purse of rectifying urban design mistakes.

The social and environmental value is added by the following:

- creating well connected, inclusive and accessible new places

- delivering development sensitive to its context

- enhancing the sense of safety and security within and beyond developments

- returning inaccessible or run down areas and amenities to beneficial public use

- boosting civic pride and enhancing civic image

- creating more energy efficient and less polluting development

- revitalising urban heritage.

Despite the simplicity of the lists, unfortunately the relationship between design and value is not a straightforward correlation (J. Berry, Godfrey, McGreal, & Adair, 2010; CABE & DETR, 2001). Berry, Deddis & McGreal (1991) maintain that economic decline interacts with other indicators such as social, environmental, cultural and physical decline. In declining contexts, such as town centres of shrinking places, good urban design is correlated with economic, social, cultural and environmental value and benefits which are more immediately required and observable than in prosperous and maintained environments (CABE & DETR, 2001; MfE., 2005). As such, revitalisation must address both economic, social, cultural and environmental values to ensure success in the other areas. Each of these functions is addressed separately below drawing out the effects of revitalisation on each of these.

3.5.1 Economic effects of Urban Design

The economic success of a town centre is dependent on its physical quality. This is what Ravenscroft (2002) conceptualises as the vitality-viability relationship.   The 'Value of Urban Design' reports by CABE & the DETR (2001) support this. They claim that good urban design increases the attractiveness, competitiveness, vibrancy and ultimately viability of a place. Thomas, Hall & Bromley (2003, p. 145) maintain that although improvements into declining town centres cannot alone change its economic performance, "a better environment attracts more people, improves trade and helps to stimulate new investment". Providing for a town centre which provides for both business and consumer needs provides for the economic function of the town centre.

Retail is the basis of vitality and viability of the town centre. Troy (2007) and Padilla & Eastlick (2008) argue that this is as profitable consumer behaviours are experienced in high quality urban spaces. Environmental quality affects consumers' willingness to spend, and as suggested by Whitehead, Simmons & Preston (2006) can increase the value of purchases as consumers favour places to which they are attracted to and identify with. High quality urban design therefore encourages the improvement of vitality and viability of the town centre through retail.

The attractiveness of the town centre can also result in increased business investment and economic diversity of the town centre (Padilla & Eastlick, 2008; Whitehead, Simmonds, & Preston, 2006). This willingness to locate in a town centre of a high quality places a premium on revitalised areas and attracts business investment. Well-designed town centres commonly boast high rental markets and occupations as these areas are more attractive to consumers and can gather higher revenue (Lowe, 2005; Padilla & Eastlick, 2008). Furthermore, employment is also expected to rise due to new and/or

improved businesses (Whitehead et al., 2006). The viability can be influenced by the vitality of the town centre.

Evidence of a positive impact in consumption and investment universally is both inconclusive and imprecise. Although Bromley, Hall & Thomas (2003) and Whitehead, Simmons & Preston (2006) agree that environmental quality improvements are appreciated by the public and can re-inforce investment decisions by businesses, they conclude that there is little quantifiable evidence of the correlation. Rather benefit is experienced on a case by case basis and in relation to how a community measures success. A lack of quantifiable evidence is suggested to be due to a range of confounding factors such as inconsistent data collection methods, inconsistent data analysis and methods of measuring success, the uniqueness of each town centre, economic and political circumstances, and a variety of data collection methods (Bromley, Hall, & Thomas, 2003; Padilla & Eastlick, 2008; Whitehead et al., 2006). Whitehead, Simmons & Preston (2006) highlight that discovering the economic benefits of environmental improvements is problematic and that a specific method of environmental change such as pedestrianisation is more reliably assessed. The economic benefits are therefore not able to be conclusively and universally known. However, it is useful to have data in relation to economic changes to evaluate whether revitalisation is a tool that may be useful for town centre revitalisation in declining areas, evaluate projects and justify the allocation of funds through long term planning processes.

Physical improvements to the town centre are rarely evenly implemented. Bromley, Hall & Thomas (2003) identified that even in small town centres the main and peripheral areas of the centre experience different degrees of environmental improvement with main areas receiving more change than the peripheral. This correlates in a corresponding variation in reported benefits, with peripheral areas experiencing disproportional profits (Bromley et al., 2003; Thomas & Bromley, 2013). Therefore, the premium placed on revitalised areas can produce and exacerbate spatial inequality of economic benefits due to a concentration of investment and consumption in renewed areas when developed in isolation (Lowe, 2005). Padilla & Eastlick (2009) and Brodeur (2003) recommend a co-ordinated approach is taken to integrate the entire centre in the revitalisation to ensure, amongst other outcomes, a balanced distribution of benefits. The physical improvement must be evenly applied to assist in even benefit.

3.5.2 Social effects of Urban Design

The social function of the public realm was established in section 3.3, and the literature identifies many social outcomes of revitalisation through urban design. Kemp (2011) and Haas & Olsson (2013) maintain that ultimately the success of revitalisation is based in the improvements that support social exchanges. As society and space are intrinsically linked, the composition of public space largely dictates human behaviours (Carmona et al., 2008). Given the purpose of the LGA, understanding how

the design of the town centre effects the social equality, interaction, safety and quality of life the town centre provides is central to town centre revitalisation.

Physical characteristics of the urban environment have significant influence on the social interactions in space. A successful social function within the public realm and therefore town centre enables people to interact, socialise and connect with others (Gehl, 1987). Improvements to the physical environment also improve the actual and perceived quality of life the town offers (Haque, 2001). Further social effects such as social malaise, and negative health and safety outcomes are avoided when communities have equal access to high quality public places (Gehl, 1987). Urban design is a mechanism that allows for the most vulnerable in communities to be provided for in the town centre (Johnson et al., 2014). Physical alterations to space that encourage and support use by youth, elderly, disabled, homeless and minority populations produce a more socially equitable town centre and the quality of life for all users (Balsas, 2007; Thompson et al., 2015). From the literature, it is established that attractive, accessible, safe and equal public places often become the social focus of the community and provide for the social function of the public realm.

Revitalisation through urban design often causes social displacement and spatial equalities. As discussed by Linton et al., (2013) revitalisation often causes the displacement and exclusion of existing users through physical interventions. These users may be residents, the homeless and particular groups who congregate in the subject area. Jacobs (1961) rejects this notion when discussing the public realm in general, arguing that all people are legitimate users of the public realm and cannot be forcibly expelled and are in fact part of the essence of place. Therefore, the literature highlights that revitalisation of spaces often 'designs out' particular users in favour of others who are deemed more desirable.

Existing communities are often under provided for in revitalisation strategies. Johnson, Glover & Stewart (2014) have identified that the resident community is sometimes over looked in attempts to attract and provide for visitors and the tourism industry. This results in a town centre that attempts to cater for transient populations but fails to address the needs, desires and quality of life of the local community (Johnson, Glover and Stewart, 2014). Florida (2002) maintains that large developments such as casinos, conference centres, mega hotels, resorts and arenas are socially exclusive and do not produce long-term economic benefits nor do profits stay in the community. Rather, local town centre revitalisation provides for the community while producing local economic profits (Florida, 2002). This is supported by Thompson, Benson & McDonagh (2015), who express that revitalisation must be designed and delivered to local priorities to be sustainable and meaningful. Revitalisation through urban design must primarily provide for the resident population to be successful. The social effects of revitalisation must be carefully considered and planned for.

3.5.3 Culture and Identity effects of Urban Design

Urban design can also have an effect on cultural and identity outcomes for town centre. The characteristics of the urban environment reflects and supports the culture and identity of a community (Green-Leigh & Blakely, 2013; Johnson et al., 2014). Johnson, Glover & Stewart (2014) maintain that planning processes, such as the revitalisation of town centres through urban design, have the potential to make places that align with the values, beliefs and perceptions residents have about their town. The literature highlights that culture and identity of a place can be celebrated by urban design.

Image and place perception directly affects patronage of town centres, which, as noted above, is consistent with the viability- vitality argument. Attractive places are perceived positively by local and non-local consumers and investors (Green-Leigh & Blakely, 2013). Town centre revitalisation through urban design can physically alter the environment to provide for positive perceptions (Hart, Statchow & Cadogan, 2013). Town centres that are vibrant, reflect community identity and are inclusive improve place perceptions through improving personal sensory experiences, safety and the perception of belonging (Balsas, 2007; Johnson et al., 2014). Furthermore, a positive perception improves both the economic performance and social interaction within a town centre, demonstrating Ravenscroft's (2000) vitality and viability relationship for the success of town centres (Haque, 2001; Johnson et al., 2014; OECD, 1987). The literature has established that place perception has an effect on the culture and identity of places for visitors, residents and investors.

Urban design is a mechanism for physically expressing the identity, culture and history of a place. Relph (1976), supported by Schilling & Logan (2008), suggests that an expression of strong and positive identity disestablishes or avoids the identity of 'placelessness' declined towns often experience. Placelessness is conceptualised by Relph (1978, Preface) as "the casual eradication of distinctive places and the making of standardised landscapes that results from an insensitivity to the significance of place". Promoting the uniqueness of a community identity is argued to be a key determinant of a successful town centre (Balsas, 2007; Haque, 2001; Hart et al., 2013). Eliminating placelessness and improving the identity and culture of a place contributes to long term revitalisation success.

Commonly, the identity and culture of a community is poorly provided for. Haque (2001) contends small communities often struggle to identify where their strengths and uniqueness lie resulting in a community without a unified identity to promote. Simultaneously, local authorities prioritise investments in physical revitalisation that promote economic development goals as this produces tangible outcomes and are deemed easier to plan for, than reflecting the culture or identity of communities (Balsas, 2007). Further, Balsas (2007) highlights that in diverse communities especially the dominant culture is most commonly represented in revitalisation at the exclusion of other users. A lack of leadership and common identity can result in a town centre that does not reflect the

community it is central to. Successful revitalisation of town centres is designed for and reflect the residents and should therefore be planned and provided for.

3.5.4 Environmental effects of Urban Design

Urban design alters the physical environment. However, the natural environment in which the town centre is situated in, and depends on, is subject to negative effects. As the world steadily urbanises there is a need for the retention of natural elements in urban environments (Allen & You, 2002; Zhao, Dongbao, Lin, & Tang, 2010). Adverse effects such as inefficient land and water use, water pollution and air quality degradation are attributed to urban areas and which poor urban design can cause and contribute to. The selection of inefficient installations such as lighting and water features, the removal of green space and urban trees, inefficient land and water use and air and water pollution. Urban design can be used as a tool to reduce the negative environmental impact urban places inherently produce (Ameen, Mourshed, & Haijiang, 2015). As such revitalising a town centre presents an opportunity for designers, planners and communities to incorporate new and 'green' technologies. For example, storm water recycling, renewable energy use, landscaping with native vegetation and public transport are all features that can be retrofitted into urban environments to mitigate the negative environmental impacts of urban land uses on the environment. Ensuring positive environmental outcomes is important to the success of urban design in revitalisation.

One method of environmentally friendly urban design is the concept of Low Impact Urban Design and Development (LIUDD). This concept is focussed on development that avoids the adverse effects of conventional urban development in order to protect the ecological values (van Roon & Knight, 2004; van Roon & van Roon, 2005). Ignatieva, Stewart, & Muerk (2008) maintains LIUDD is cost effective urban design that works with nature. A key focus of LIUDD is on the efficient and integrated management of urban water, storm water and waste water systems in coordination with natural water cycles (van Roon, 2007). LIUDD aims to create management systems that collect and process storm water at its source to create urban environments with low ecological impacts (Holz, 2002). Urban design techniques such as swales, biofiltration, wetlands, reducing impervious surfaces, and water recycling for non potable water supplies, are idealised systems of LIUDD (Ignatieva et al., 2008; Krausee, n.d.; van Roon, 2007). LIUDD can contribute to a more sustainable town centre.

LUIDD also involves the use of local native vegetation. Ignatieva, Stewart, & Muerk (2008) support the LIUDD principle of incorporating and retaining geographically appropriate vegetation into urban developments. Krausse (n.d.) supports this by encouraging spaces to be designed to incorporate urban trees. The creation of connections with vegetation is promoted in the LIUDD concept. According to Ignatieva, Stewart, & Muerk (2008) techniques such as green corridors establishes landscape connectivity and cultural connections with nature. This not only supports wildlife and flora species but also creates a cultural connection to nature.

LUIDD is implementable in town centre revitalisation. Although traditionally implemented into residential environments, the use of principles and techniques can be implemented through town centre revitalisation (van Roon, 2007). Krausse (n.d.) argues that LIUDD presents an opportunity to reintroduce elements of functioning ecosystem in to urban places. The use of technologies with low land requirements, such as raingardens, swales, tree pits, permeable paving and green roofs, are options to include in the revitalisation of town centres (Krausee, n.d.; Simcock, n.d.) Although LIUDD is unlikely to restore ecosystems entirely, it presents an opportunity to reintroduce elements of a functioning ecosystem and improve the urban ecology such in streams (Krausee, n.d.). Van Roon & van Roon (2005) maintain that LIUDD has the potential to improve the quality of the inner urban environment by addressing issues of contamination and pollution while taking development pressure off green spaces and rural land. Krausse (n.d.) contends that LIUDD is more required and beneficial in modified urban environments, such as grey field and inner city areas, than in rural areas as these environments are already having significant environmental impacts. The environmental function of the town centre can benefit from interventions such as LIUDD implementation and the retention of nature.

3.6 Planning and Public Participation

Chapter One established that local authorities have a mandate under the LGA to undertake the planning of town centre revitalisation. The LGA also requires public consultation in relation to any decision or other matter such as planning for town centre revitalisation and decline. Section 82 of the LGA outlines the principles that local authorities must undertake consultation in accordance with which includes reference to reasonable access to clear and relevant information related to consultation, proposals and scope of decisions, encouragement and enablement of stakeholders by local authorities to present views, and the open mindedness of local authorities to views of stakeholders. Local authorities therefore have a statutory requirement to undertake public participation and planners have a particularly important role in this (s82, LGA, 2002).

Public participation is a process of democratic decision making that involves the collection and consideration of public views in various ways (Arnstein, 1969; Einseidel, 2008; Laurian & Shaw, 2008; Rydin, 1999). Public participation in the urban design process of revitalisation is widely considered to be crucial to successful revitalisation (Clifford, 2013; Connelly, 2014). The core purpose of participation is to involve the public to achieve an improvement in their lives (Clifford, 2013).

Public participation, executed well, is important for the following reasons: strengthens democracy; increases the responsive of governments to local values and desires; promotes the consideration of all people; helps to identify acceptable and quality urban design; improves legitimacy and trust of government; promotes individual social development and political engagement; raises public

awareness of local issues; increases social inclusiveness and capital; and ultimately assists in delivering public spaces that reflect and serve local communities (Biddulph, 2012; Laurian & Shaw, 2008). This highlights that democratic decision making can further assist in the development of spaces that reflect the community's desires and values, therefore contributing to the success of a place.

The literature suggests that participation occurs on a spectrum upon which local authorities consciously or inadvertently decide to the extent participation is to occur. One conceptualisation of the spectrum of participation is Arnsteins Ladder of Participation. The Ladder of Participation, as theorised by Arnstein (1969), suggests that the higher the level of participation, the more successful a decision, or in this instance a place, is. However, Bailey, Banford, Grossardt, & Ripy (2011) argue the ladder is conceptualisation is too simplistic and flawed. Particular Bailey et al. (2011, p.1) argue that there is a "significant difference between desired and actual levels of citizen participation in planning processes" due to the unrealistic expectation of local authorities and professionals have of achieving consensus in communities. Rather, Bailey et al. (2011) suggest that a higher quality public participation can be achieved by placing the community at the centre of decision making through providing high levels of information. However, participation is conceptualised local authorities must decide to what extent and how participation is to be undertaken when planning revitalisation and decline.

Various scholars note that planners particularly work with, and influence the desires of, the public and other professionals (Higgins & Forsyth, 2006; Kashef, 2008). Facilitating public participation is therefore one of the core roles of the planner both in terms of specific revitalisation projects, but also as they contribute to the development of statutory planning documents such as the LTP. The planner has an important role in achieving equitable outcomes in the urban design process. Biddulph (2012) argues that the execution of the involvement of those with vested interests such as the community is inherent to the urban design process but is not always appropriately undertaken. The emphasis planning places on public participation and collaboration in planning processes is not shared to the same extent by other professions, for example urban designers and engineers (Biddulph, 2012; Healey, 1997; Kashef, 2008).

Ultimately, local authorities and planners can only promote participation if they support the involvement of the public. The local/central government views, values and agenda influences the ways, extent and meaningfulness of the participation lead by planners (Lane, 2005). Clifford (2013) suggests that fundamentally there is a tension between maintaining professional control and allowing public power resulting in a reluctance to consult. Local planning culture influences public participation in design decisions. Connelley (2010, p. 334) argues that the "collective and dominant ethos of planners dictates involvement and therefore social outcomes". Influenced by their own values, education and experience; and the wider planning culture, planners do not always deliver equitable and effective public participation. The professional tension and lack of meaningfulness in participation

is argued to result in the prescription of normative thinking and the imposition of design that is deemed what should be rather than informed by the public (Biddulph, 2012). Arguably the weaknesses of participation can be overcome by following principles of participation set out in legislation such as in the LGA. Local authorities maintain the mandate and responsibility to undertake participation while the planning profession has the skills to facilitate meaningful participation processes.

3.7 Summary

Many local authorities are grappling with growth management, with many rural towns declining in population and economy. The purpose of this chapter was to explore the literature in relation to urban decline and town centre revitalisation. Often seen in a negative light, this chapter has explored how planning could contribute more positively to the decline conversation. In particular it has explored the benefits of decline, how decline can be planned for and presents an opportunity for town centre revitalisation. A number of key themes were deduced from this literature review, and were then used to inform the development of a set of guidelines for other local authorities who may be considering revitalisation of a town centre as a means of addressing decline.

Firstly, the way an authority perceives decline influences the way planning for decline is approached. The traditional response is to plan for the avoidance or reversal of decline. Alternatively, local authorities and communities implement Smart Decline which is a tool to strategically plan or who and what remain by reorganising provisions rather than striving for growth (Molotoch, 1976; Popper & Popper, 2002; Sousa & Pinho, 2015). As Smart Decline involves the reallocation of provisions towards existing assets and resources, town centre revitalisation is a common feature of Smart Decline (Rhodes & Russo , 2013; Kabish, Haase & Haase, 2006). Planning can assist in implementing this approach by re-orientating assumptions towards goals that are less focussed on infrastructural growth and more on the development of who and what remains (Oswalt, 2005; Sousa & Pinho), 2015).

Secondly, understanding if/how the economic function of the town centre is currently being planned for is essential for providing a sustainable town centre. The economic benefits of revitalisation are primarily in improvements in consumption and investment. These improvements are conceptualised by Ravenscroft (2002) as the vitality-viability relationship whereby town centre revitalisation increases the attractiveness, competitiveness, vibrancy and ultimately viability of a place. However, the economic effects of revitalisation are not exclusively positive. Revitalisation if not implemented evenly throughout a town centre can result in exacerbated spatial inequalities. The sustainable revitalisation of the town centre is dependent on evenly distributed attention.

Thirdly, providing for the social function of the public realm is a critical factor in the success of town centres. The social benefits of revitalisation are predominantly in the improvement of public realm equality and social interaction. However, revitalisation can cause the displacement of existing users in

favour of those deemed more desirable, in effect eliminating social interaction for some users of the town centre. Therefore, planning for the town centre must provide for social equality and interaction.

Fourthly, the culture and identity of a town centre and town community can be affected by revitalisation. Revitalisation is an opportunity to for a community's culture and identity to be physically expressed and reflected in the town centre and also to improve the public perceptions of place. However, the true identity of the community is not always reflected in the town centre spaces therefore carefully planning to reflect the true identity of communities is important.

Fifth, the environmental effects of revitalisation must be carefully considered. The retrofitting of environmentally friendly technologies and systems ameliorates some of the negative consequences of human urban activity. Then finally, preparedness for public participation when planning for revitalisation and decline is the final theme that may inform the development of a set of guidelines for other local authorities who may be considering revitalisation of a town centre. How each of these themes is further explored in the context of this research is set out in Chapter Four, the Research Design chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR - RESEARCH DESIGN

4.1 Introduction

The literature review established six key themes about the revitalisation of townships to address decline. These are 1) decline, 2) economic effects, 3) social effects, 4) cultural and identity effects, 5) environmental effects, 6) public participation. A reflexive practitioner approach has been used to explore these further, with the aim of identifying what planners and local authorities in areas experiencing decline, could or should be thinking about prior to planning for decline, and in particular prior to planning for revitalisation. As a reflexive practitioner the researcher is able to use experience and "reflective rationality" to make relevant observations and ultimately recommendations for the practical application of the findings of this academic research (Lissandrello & Grin, 2011, p. 224).

The research topic, revitalisation of town centres in areas of decline, has been explored in the Ruapehu District generally (in terms of the planning approach and response to decline), and using a specific revitalisation project in Ohakune as a case study on which to reflect. Using Ohakune as a case study, these effects associated with town centre revitalisation are explored in order to answer the research question, *What should local authorities in declining contexts consider when planning for town centres to enable people and communities to provide for their social, economic, cultural and environmental well-being?*

The aim of this research, as established in chapter one, is to explore how attempts to revitalise a town centre in a declining context through urban design results in economic, social, environmental, and cultural effects in small towns and establish a set of guidelines for local authorities planning for town centre revitalisation in declining places. This chapter begins by providing background to the use of a case study and its selection, as well as providing contextual background information. It then describes the methods used in this mixed methods approach to this research, and why they were chosen over other methods used. The validity, limitations and ethical considerations of the research close the chapter.

4.2 Case Study

A case study is an empirical enquiry that investigates a phenomenon within its real life spatial and temporal context (Lokee & Sorensen, 2014; Woodside, 2010); in this case decline and revitalisation in the Ruapehu District. Case studies "can 'close-in' on real-life situations and test views directly in relation to phenomena as they unfold in practice" (Flyvberg, 2004, p. 428). This approach is suitable for research that is looking to simultaneously describe, explain, predict and/or control subjects (Woodside, 2010). A case study is an effective approach for this research as it is going beyond describing and explaining the situation and findings, the research focuses on predicting the future

applicability of revitalisation methods. Although assumed to be a qualitative method, case studies are most effective when both qualitative and quantitative research methods are used, hence the mixed method approach of this research (Einshardt, 1989; Lokee & Sorensen, 2014; Woodside, 2010).

4.2.1 Background to Ohakune and Ohakune 2000

Ohakune is arguably the districts most well-known town due to the Turoa ski field on Mount Ruapehu and the big carrot. The town is home to 987 people, with steep population increases during winter months, and more recently in summer months. Like the rest of the district, Ohakune has experienced many years of decline. Between 1996 and 2013 the town lost 333 residents. The most significant cause of the decline in Ohakune were the numerous Mount Ruapehu eruptions in 1995 to 1996. These eruptions caused wide spread damage to buildings and infrastructure (Ohakune Town Centre Assessment, 2002). Subsequently, visitor numbers and the resident population dropped significantly (Becker, Smith, Johnston, & Munro, 2001; Ohakune Town Centre Assessment, 2002). Despite its years of decline, Ohakune is projected to grow by 1.2% annually (Future Ruapehu: Long Term Plan 2015-2025, 2015). This is the only place in the district projected by Council to show any positive population change.

The town is dominated by the working age to early retirement age categories (21-69 years old at 58%) ("Quickstats about Ohakune," 2013). The Ohakune community are predominantly low income earners with (31.1%), while just 15% of the community are classed as high income earners ("Quickstats about Ohakune," 2013). Unemployment is slightly higher than the district average but the town has a higher deprivation index than the district. The highest employment industry is the accommodation and hospitality services sector at 16.3% (Growing Ruapehu Economic Development Strategy 2015-2025, 2015). This is reflected by the numerous cafes, restaurants, bars and accommodation facilities in the urban limits in the town centre especially. As tourism is not a stand-alone sector, the tourism employment statistics are not accurately known. However, on a seasonal basis the tourism industry is the towns largest employer (Growing Ruapehu Economic Development Strategy 2015-2025, 2015).

Unusually, Ohakune has two main parts of the township. One is 'the Junction', which is based at the start of Ohakune Mountain Road and is the centre of winter nightlife with many bars and restaurants. The Junction is also home to the Ohakune Mardi Gras. The businesses at the Junction are predominantly closed over the summer, autumn and spring months despite the growth in tourism at these times. The main part of town is based on State Highway 49 and is where the majority of economic and social activity occurs all year round. This area serves as the traditional town centre. This research will focus on the main part of town, the area around the State Highway which is where the Ohakune 2000 project focused.

As aforementioned, the town centre has experienced significant revitalisation work. This revitalisation was undertaken with strong community leadership by Ohakune 2000. Ohakune 2000 is a collective of

businesses and individual volunteers established in 1997 to "develop and promote projects to better Ohakune and its surrounding districts" (Ohakune Town Centre Assessment, 2002). Ohakune 2000 spearheaded the revitalisation of the Ohakune town centre to develop a unique alpine look and feel (DoC, 2014; Ohakune Town Centre Assessment, 2002). This work included mountain themed street furniture and street lights, mountain shaped brickwork in the footpaths, the incorporation of river rocks and alpine planting. Additionally, the iconic Ohakune I-site was developed following the success of the town centre revitalisation (Ohakune Town Centre Assessment, 2002). The Ohakune town centre renewal between 1999 and 2000 capitalised on the proximity of the Turoa Ski field and developed the town in a mountain theme (Ohakune Town Centre Assessment, 2002). The 2002 Town Centre assessment claims the work stimulated private investment and encouraged building owners to undertake building improvements (Ohakune Town Centre Assessment, 2002). The group continues to work throughout the town on community enhancement projects such as river walkways, cycling tracks, green spaces around the Big Carrot and Mardi Gras. The group is considered a partner of the Council with a relationship based on mutual trust and co-operation. Conversely, similar groups such as Raetihi Promotions and Enterprising Taumarunui Incorporated have struggled to make similarly significant physical changes to their townships; making the guidelines produced by this research particularly useful in this instance. The economic, social, environmental and cultural effects of the Ohakune town centre revitalisation are explored further in this thesis.

The study time frame for the case study is between 1995 and 2015, incorporates five years prior to the establishment of Ohakune 2000 who were instrumental along with Council in delivering town centre revitalisation projects since 2000. Twenty years is considered an appropriate length of time and allows an assessment of the change in Ohakune over 20 years.

4.3 Mixed Method Approach

A mixed methodology approach utilises multiple methods to understand a phenomena deeply as it allows the use of wide range of methods and assists in triangulation of the data (Smith, 2015). Social science and planning research is commonly based in qualitative research while quantitative data is used less frequently, although is relevant and useful in these fields (Taylor, Bogdan., & DeVault, 2015). Qualitative research looks at the "what", "how" and "why" of a phenomena, and is gathered through an immersion in the experiences and perceptions of people (McCusker & Gunaydin, 2015). Qualitative data provides richness to research as it represents the elements of society that cannot be easily or even possibly quantifiable (McCusker & Gunaydin, 2015; Patton, 2005). Social, cultural, and even environmental effects are predominantly experienced rather than recorded numerically (McCusker & Gunaydin, 2015). This gives researchers real life, first-hand accounts and observations of phenomena which are difficult to obtain through quantitative data (Glaser & Strauss, 2012; Huberman & Miles, 2002).

The perceived trustworthiness of qualitative research is contested (Dowling, 2010; McCusker & Gunaydin, 2015). Qualitative research is often perceived as unstructured, non-transparent, soft, invalid and non-replicable as the data cannot always be supported by evidence or categorised and represented numerically (Huberman & Miles, 2002; McCusker & Gunaydin, 2015; Smith, 2015). The data gathered in qualitative research is subject to the individual interpretation of the researcher so can also lack objectivity (McCusker & Gunaydin, 2015). For these reasons qualitative research is often rejected by researchers as it does not conform to the perceived reliability and standards accustomed to with quantifiable methods (Smith, 2015; Taylor et al., 2015).

Qualitative research critiques and limitations can be overcome through research design and data organisation. Huberman & Miles (2002) advocate qualitative researchers engage in methods of collecting and structuring data so that evidence is discoverable and coherent but still maintains the original accounts or observations. However, this organisation of data still requires the individual interpretation of the research for both organising the data and deciding what information is relevant to the research. Huberman & Miles (2002) argue that although this organisation is important, qualitative data cannot be a mechanical process. Researchers must still use innovation, intuition and imagination as qualitative data is not always intended to be quantifiable (Huberman & Miles, 2002). Researchers must be aware of the benefits and limitation of using qualitative research methods.

In contrast, quantitative data is perceived as more valuable to research (Creswell, 2014). Quantitative research is concerned with gathering numerical and statistical data to understand a phenomenon (Barnham, 2015; Creswell, 2014). Quantitative methods are considered accurate, valid and reliable, as they are objective in nature (Bernard, 2013). It is most appropriately used for research relating to time and financial considerations (McCusker & Gunaydin, 2015). The use of statistics is efficient and reliable in ascertaining historic, present and future trends. However, data is never morally or ethically neutral as a human with values, backgrounds and agendas colour all research (Smith, 2015). Nonetheless, numerical data provides a more objective view of a phenomenon as the data is more separated from the subject and context (McCusker & Gunaydin, 2015). This objectivity is widely regarded as positive in research. However, this distance is dangerous as quantitative data is often assumed as the 'truth', but without social, cultural, environmental or political context. Researchers must be aware of the benefits and limitation of quantitative research methods.

Research does not have to be exclusively qualitative or qualitative. The difficulties of quantitative data in obtaining and representing the experiences of society, and the distrust of qualitative data can both be minimised when using the methods together (Creswell, 2014; Venkatesh, Brown, & Bala, 2013). Combining both qualitative and quantitative methods allows for the secondary data to have deeper meaning, and for empirical claims to have supporting evidence (Bishop & Holmes, 2013; Castellan, 2010; Tomczyk, 2015). Therefore a mixed methods approach is considered appropriate for this study.

4.4 Alternatives Method Options Considered

4.4.1 Qualitative Research Methods

Four qualitative research methods were considered for this research; focus groups, surveys/questionnaires content analysis and key informant interviews. This research required methods to analyse and make connections between the data collected to interpret the District. The following methods were considered.

Focus groups, the first method to be considered, are an interview with small group of people. Thi setting allows conversation to flow between the participants and researcher on a given topic (Glaser & Strauss, 2012). This provides not only validation of claims between participants but can also lead to information that is uniquely generated by the individuals in the group. However, focus groups can result in some participants dominating the conversation (Smith, 2015). Additionally, not all informants possess the confidence to speak in groups. For this research a focus group would most likely contain all participants in one group, as there are few participants required. This could cause a reluctance by community members to express their opinions and especially be critical of others due to living in a small town. This method was considered not appropriate for this research for those reasons.

Surveys or questionnaires, the second group of methods to be considered, are a highly structured form of gathering data from participants. These provide standardised data for the researcher (Creswell, 2014; Taylor et al., 2015). Additionally, a large amount and range of participants can be sourced as the survey can be easily distributed through multiple means in a short space of time (Patton, 2005). This presents the researcher with large amounts of highly representative data. However, surveys do not allow for detailed information from participants and do not provide further opportunity for elaboration (Patton, 2005). This is especially important when wanting to understand the experiences of individuals. Therefore, surveys are not considered appropriate for this research.

Content analysis was another approach considered for this research. Content Analysis is the systematic exploration of written communication. The purpose of this method is to analyse the form and substance of text to reveal underlying meanings and ideas (Krippendorff, 2004; Yang & Miller, 2008). These underlying meanings and ideas can be identified by occurrences of patterns and common sequences of phrases. Content analysis can be quantitative by looking at the frequency of words or phrases or can be qualitative to identify themes in the text (Krippendorff, 2004). Analysing text systematically allows for observations and inferences about particular themes or content to be made (Babbie, 1999). This research used content analysis quantitively and qualitatively and was chosen for this research in order to identify the themes relating to decline and revitalisation within the Ruapehu District Councils Long Term Plan 2015/2025 and the Economic Development Strategy. Content analysis of these documents identify the rationale behind the objectives of the Council in terms of town centre

revitalisation and addressing decline. The approach taken in this instance is described further in section 4.4.4.

Key informant interviews are one on one conversations between the researcher and the participant. These interviews can be highly structured, semi structured or unstructured depending on the purpose of the interview (Louise Barriball & While, 1994; Patton, 2005). Semi structured interviews are interviews which are based around topics relevant to the research, rather than set questions. Klenke (2008) & Yin (2009) outline semi structured interviews as flexible and ultimately take the path dependent on the participants answers. This flexibility allows unique points to be further explored rather than directed by a strict list of potentially researcher biased questions (Philly, 2002). Semi structured interviews are most commonly undertaken in the social sciences as they allow for further exploration of interesting or relevant responses (Creswell, 2014). This method is especially useful for hearing and understanding the experiences and opinions of others in the way they wish to communicate (Klenke, 2008). Key informant interviews were chosen for this research as first-hand experiences and opinions of community members and businesses provide the depth of understanding this research requires. The actual approach taken for the key informant interviews is described further in section 4.4.5.

4.4.2 Quantitative Research Methods

As part of this research the actual state of decline and other themes relating to the benefits/effects of revitalisation were explored quantitatively. Three quantitative methods were considered for this research; causal-comparative research, correlational research and descriptive statistics analysis.

Causal comparative research looks to uncover a statistical cause and effect relationship between two variables. This method attempts to determine the cause or consequences of differences that exist between or among groups of individuals (Schenker & Rumrill, 2004) . Specifically, how two separate groups are affected by a particular circumstance (Schenker & Rumrill, 2004). As this research is a singular case study the use of causal comparative research is not appropriate as another town, in which revitalisation through urban design has occurred, is not being investigated.

Correlational research tests the relationship between two variables; in this instance it would test the hypothesis that revitalisation results in a successful town centre and reverses decline. One purpose of correlation research is to facilitate the prediction of one factor based on the presence or absence of another (Feild, 2013). A correlation may be positive, demonstrating that the variables increase or decrease together or may be negative, demonstrating that as one variable increases the value of the other variable decreases (Wienclaw, 2015). Identifying either a positive or a negative correlation is important in this research, as this is the essence of the research. However, the use of this method must be carefully managed so as not to assume that correlation immediately indicates causation. It is impossible to claim or prove a correlation between a small set of indicators and phenomenon (Feild,

2013; Wienclaw, 2015), in this case decline and revitalisation. There are much wider contributors to decline than a lack of town centre revitalisation such as the global economic crisis, closure of industries and government centralisation. Testing the correlation between decline and revitalisation was therefore not considered to be appropriate for this research.

The weakness of these two techniques also lie in the inability to attribute decline or growth solely to the quality of the town centre, rather a range of confounding factors is at play (Bromley et al., 2003). It is more appropriate to describe the temporal changes of certain variables. To achieve this, a simplistic description and comparison of relevant secondary data is required. This analysis is a means of taking stock of changes over time to use as a basis for discussion in key informant interviews from which inferences can be made about the effects of revitalisation.

4.4.3 Secondary Data Collection and Analysis

The intent of revitalisation is improve the aesthetics, function, vitality and viability of an urban environment, and therefore address decline (Ravenscroft, 2000; Whitehead et al., 2006). The success of these intentions in relation to the work by Ohakune 2000 can be measured by a range of secondary data indicators identified in the literature, including; business units, retail vacancies and occupancies, retail rental costs, electronic spending, visitor numbers, employment, economic diversity and investor confidence. These indicators are detailed in sections 5.4.1 to 5.4.8. Data was collected for every census since 1995; the pre revitalisation period 1995 to 2015; these being 1996, 2001, 2006 and 2013. Although for many of these indicators there was no available secondary data, it was useful to consider these indicators in light of the literature and in determining what information requirements could help inform planning for town centres in the context of decline.

Where secondary data was available, the analysis involved simplistic examinations of the data for each theme identified in the literature review. The techniques available are simplistic but effective statistical tools such as averages, ranges, trends and totals. These techniques were used to analyse the possible effect of revitalisation by discovering changes in each indicators over the study period. Unfortunately, much of the data sought was not available. However, in the context of developing 'emerging' guidelines for local authorities this non-availability of data is actually useful as it helps local authorities to know in advance what sort of data they need to be monitoring and can justify funding allocation on the basis of existing knowledge and collecting further information to make future decisions.

The use of the secondary data allows inferences to be made about the effect of revitalisation in Ohakune which were then able to be tested through key informant interviews. However, a major limitation is that making inferences can be dangerous because as mentioned above, not all contributing factors to growth and decline could be analysed.

4.4.4 Content Analysis

Content analysis is the systematic exploration of written communication. The intent of this method is to analyse the form and substance of text to reveal underlying meanings and ideas (Krippendorff, 2004; Yang & Miller, 2008). The purpose of content analysis in this research is to identify the rationale behind the objectives of the Council in terms of themes from the literature, specifically in relation to addressing decline through town centre revitalisation. The Ruapehu District Councils Long Term Plan 2015/2025 and the Economic Development Strategy were analysed to discover ideas and objectives in relation to decline, town centres and revitalisation. The following phrases were of particular interest, decline, economic development, growth, town centre/s, revitalisation/ renewal. The frequency of these terms was not recorded, rather the context in which they were included in the documents and the intended outcomes these words and phrases were in relation to were observed. Content in relation to the economic, social, cultural and environmental indicators was also examined. The analysis will reveal the approach and rationale behind planning for decline in the Ruapehu in the Councils planning documents.

Content analysis is subject to some weaknesses which researchers are to be aware of. Firstly, the nature of content analysis is highly interpretative and subject to researcher bias (Krippendorff, 2004). Additionally, it can be difficult to interpret the intent of the material being analysed. This can lead to what Billig (1988:206) calls the "de-contextualisation" of phrases or words and result in misleading conclusions (Billig, 1988). To attempt to overcome these limitations, a coding system is a critical part of the methodology of content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Qualitatively, this is achieved through observing the occurrences of themes in the text in relation to themes from the literature. This is in effect a form of coding to improve the validity of the data (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). To provide structure a thematic framework is used to arrange the data. A Thematic Framework organises data from qualitative sources by theme (Huberman & Miles, 2002). In this case, the data from the content analysis is collected and organised by the relevant themes identified in the literature. The weaknesses of content analysis can be overcome with such a structured approach.

4.4.5 Key Informant Interviews

The purpose of key informant interviews is to explore the effect of revitalisation following Ohakune revitalisation on decline and through obtaining the opinions and experiences of Ohakune residents, business owners and Ohakune 2000 on the effect of revitalisation on decline. The intent of the interviews was to collect information that is not necessarily publically available, such as the observed and experienced economic, social, environmental and cultural effects of revitalisation on the community in general and business community. The intent of the interviews was to triangulate and test the inferences identified by the secondary data. Triangulation of the data is the cross validation when two or more methods are found to produce similar results (Jick, 1979). The interviews involved

discussions around the experiences and observations of Ohakune in the pre-revitalisation and post-revitalisation periods. Therefore, interviews were performed after the secondary data analysis was complete. Tables in sections 4.5.1 to 5.4.6 summarise the content of discussions.

The interviews for this research took a semi structured approach. Semi structured interviews are interviews which are based around topics relevant to the research, rather than set questions. Klenke (2008) & Yin (2009) characterise semi structured interviews as flexible and ultimately take the path dependent on the participants answers. These interviews were one-hour long, open-ended discussions based around broad topics informed by the literature and quantitative data collected.

Six participants were planned to be interviewed; two residents, two business owners and two Ohakune 2000 members. Participants were categorised into three groups; community, business and Ohakune 2000. The community participants were all long term residents who were in Ohakune prior to 2000 and have remained in the town until 2015. These interviews were primarily focussed around the decline, and social, cultural and environmental experiences of the effects of revitalisation. Some time was spent on economic effects. These participants were recruited by approaching well known locals with the information sheet. Each key informant was ensured anonymity and were given codes throughout the research to conceal their identities (see table 1).

The business participants were all long term business who have been operating in Ohakune since 2000 through to 2015. These interviews were primarily focussed on the economic effects of revitalisation, with some time was spent on the social, cultural and environmental experiences and observations. These participants were recruited through identifying and approaching the businesses who had been in the town centre since at least 1995 and presenting the information sheet. Unfortunately, the participants approached declined to be involved with the research, and there were no other businesses who had been in the town centre since 1995.

Finally, present members of Ohakune 2000 were interviewed in relation to the work of the group and the economic, social, cultural and environmental changes they have observed since 2000. These participants were recruited through discussions with the current chair of Ohakune 2000. The information sheet was sent to potentially interested parties.

Table 1 - Key Informants	
KI 1	Community
KI 2	Community
KI 3	Ohakune 2000

KI 4	Ohakune 2000
KI 5	Business
KI 6	Business

The data from key informant interviews was anonymised and entered into the framework in a manner that grouped issues or themes from previous research (the literature review and district background) and emerging and recurrent issues from participants. This assisted in organising, retrieving and exploring the data as recurrent matters are exposed.

4.5 Thematic Analysis

In order to answer the research question this research draws on various primary and secondary qualitative and quantitative data to explore decline and the effect revitalisation of the Ohakune town centre has had on Ohakune.

Primary data is information collected by the researcher for the specific purpose of their research (Malhorta, 2010; Polonsky & Waller, 2011). The specific information required for this research is empirical data relating to the experiences of the economic, social, cultural and environmental effects by the Ohakune community in general and business community.

Secondary data is information collected by someone else for their purpose but is utilised by a researcher for another purpose (Polonsky & Waller, 2011). The secondary information relevant to this research is data on decline, economic, social, and environmental indicators identified in the literature review in the period before revitalisation (1995 to 2000) and during the revitalisation projects (2001 to 2015). A combination of primary and secondary data will be used in this research.

4.5.1 Decline

The literature has identified reasons, outcomes and responses to decline and the results of each of these features (see table 2). Each feature and corresponding result is derived from the literature review. Data on the decline in Ohakune has been collected through primary data sources, namely key informant interviews and content analysis, and secondary data sources such as Statistics New Zealand and Ruapehu District Council documents and datasets.

Table 2 – Decline		
Features	**Results**	**Source**
Reasons	Deindustrialisation	Key Informant Interviews

	Suburbanisation Demographic Aging	Content Analysis
Outcomes	Positive Negative	Key Informant Interviews Statistics New Zealand Content Analysis
Responses	Economic Development Smart Decline	Content Analysis

4.5.2 Economic Data

The literature review has identified a number of indicators of economic benefits from revitalisation through urban design. Data on the economic benefits of urban design has been obtained from both primary and secondary data sources, as seen in table 3. Each indicator is derived from the literature review, and as such the supporting literature has been included in the table as matters for exploration. As noted above, not all the data was able to be obtained, table 3 shows what data was sought and section 4.6 details what data was not available.

Table 3- Economic Effects Data		
Indicator	**Source**	**Justification from Literature Review**
Business Units	Statistics NZ	The attractiveness of the town centre can also result in increased business investment and economic diversity of the town centre (Padilla & Eastlick, 2008; Whitehead et al., 2006).
Retail Vacancies and Occupancies	Key Informant Interviews	Well-designed town centres commonly boast high rental markets and occupations as these areas are more attractive to consumers and can gather higher revenue (Lowe, 2005; Padilla & Eastlick, 2008).
Retail Rental Costs	Key Informant Interviews	Well-designed town centres commonly boast high rental markets and occupations as these areas are more attractive to

		consumers and can gather higher revenue (Lowe, 2005; Padilla & Eastlick, 2008).
Electronic Spending (Reports on accommodation, apparel, Hospitality, Food Retailing, Fuel Hardware/Homeware, Majors (appliance, department stores, furniture/flooring, other retail, takeaways)	Market View Reports	High quality urban design encourages retail consumption (Whitehead, Simmons and Preston, 2006)
Visitor Numbers	RDC Visitor Data sourced from MBIE	Increased visitor numbers
Employment 15 years old+	Statistics New Zealand	Employment is expected to rise due to new and/or improved businesses (Whitehead, Simmons and Preston, 2006).
Economic Diversity	Key Informant Interview	Attractiveness of the town centre can result in increased business investment and economic diversity of the town centre (Padilla & Eastlick, 2008; Whitehead et al., 2006).
Investor/Business Confidence (viability)	Key Informant Interviews	Willingness to locate in a town centre of a high quality places a premium on revitalised areas and attracts business investment (Padilla & Eastlick, 2008; Whitehead et al., 2006)
Inter-local and E-commerce Competition	Key Informant Interviews	Out of town centre shopping centres and nearby towns or cities are competing commercially and socially with town centres. The increased mobility of society has meant consumer choices have

Table 4- Social Effects Data		
	drastically changed, meaning the proximity of the town centre is no longer as important (Ravenscroft, 2000; Thomas et al., 2004). Thomas, Bromley & Tallon (2004) and Keane (1989) maintain the greatest impacts of these developments are upon town centres. Smaller town centres struggle to compete with the multi-functionality and economies of scale of purpose built facilities and larger towns or cities (Powe, 2012).	

4.5.3 Social Data

The literature review has identified a number of indicators of social benefits from revitalisation through urban design. Data on the social benefits of urban design has been obtained from both primary data sources, as seen in table 4. Each indicator is derived from the literature review, and as such the supporting literature has been included in the table as matters for exploration.

Table 4- Social Effects Data		
Indicator	**Source**	**Justification from Literature Review**
Perceived Exclusion or Inclusion	Key Informant Interviews	A successful town centre enables people to interact, socialise and connect with others (Gehl, 1987). The revitalisation of spaces often 'designs out' particular users in favour of others who are deemed more desirable. in reality some parts of the public realm are both intentionally and unintentionally inequitable for some members of society through urban design, market forces and the social processes of exclusion (Carmona et al., 2008).

Perceived Quality of Life	Key Informant Interviews	Improvements to the physical environment also improve the actual and perceived quality of life the town offers (Haque, 2001).
		Weiss (2005) claims quality of life is the key to attracting and retaining consumers, workers, employers and investors
Opportunities for Interaction	Key Informant Interviews	Spaces which encourage and support youth, elderly, disabled, homeless and minority populations produce a more socially equitable town centre and the quality of life for all users (Balsas, 2007; Thompson et al., 2015).
		"Social interaction…is critical for prosperous and vibrant cities" (Troy, 2006, p.6)
Perceptions of Local Community or Tourist Targeting	Key Informant Interviews	Johnson, Glover & Stewart (2014) have identified that the resident community is sometimes over looked in attempts to attract and provide for visitors and the tourism industry.
		This results in a town centre that attempts to cater for transient populations but fails to address the needs, desires and quality of life of the local community (Johnson, Glover and Stewart, 2014).

4.5.4 Cultural Data

The literature review has identified a number of indicators of cultural benefits from revitalisation through urban design. Data on the cultural benefits of urban design has been obtained from both primary and secondary data sources, as seen in table 5. Each indicator is derived from the literature review, and as such the supporting literature has been included in the table as matters for exploration.

Table 5- Culture and Identity Effects Data		
Indicator	**Source**	**Justification from Literature Review**
Identity of town expressed in township	Key Informant Interviews	The town centre is the main place where the culture and identity of the associated community is reflected (Johnson et al., 2014). Haque (2001) contends small communities often struggle to identify where their strengths and uniqueness lie resulting in a community without a unified identity to promote.
Perception of Place	Key Informant Interviews	Image and place perception directly affects patronage of town centres. Attractive places are perceived positively by local and non-local consumers and investors (Green-Leigh & Blakely, 2013).
Placelessness	Key Informant Interviews	An expression of strong and positive identity disestablishes or avoids the identity of 'placelessness' declined towns often experience (Schilling & Logan, 2008; Relph, 1978)

4.5.5 Environmental Data

The literature review has identified a number of indicators of environmental benefits from revitalisation through urban design. Data on the environmental benefits of urban design has been obtained from both primary and secondary data sources, as seen in table 6. Each indicator is derived from the literature review, and as such the supporting literature has been included in the table as matters for exploration.

Table 6- Environmental Effects Data		
Indicator	**Source**	**Justification from Literature Review**
Installation of environmental improvement systems	Key Informant Interviews	Revitalising a town centre presents an opportunity for designers, planners and communities to incorporate new and 'green' technologies (Such as LUIDD).

such as Low Impact Urban Design		
Retention of nature in the town centre	Key Informant	As the world steadily urbanises there is a need for the retention of natural elements in urban environments (Allen & You, 2002; Zhao et al., 2010).

4.5.6 Planning and Public Participation

The literature review has identified the importance of public participation in the planning of town centre revitalisation. Although this research is not intending to evaluate the success of public participation by Ohakune 2000 it does look at the way this was undertaken in order reflect on the extent and effectiveness of public participation in the revitalisation of the Ohakune town centre and what needs to be considered for further or similar projects. The following data is required:

The literature review has identified a number of features of public participation from revitalisation. Data on public participation has been obtained from key informant interviews and content analysis, as seen in table 7. Each indicator is derived from the literature review, and as such the supporting literature has been included in the table as matters for exploration.

Table 7– Public participation		
Feature	**Source**	**Justification from Literature Review**
Opportunities to participate	Key Informant Interview – Community - Ohakune 2000	There are opportunities to participate in planning processes (Clifford, 2013; Connelly, 2014).
Perceptions of willingness or reluctance to include the public	Key Informant Interviews Content Analysis	The local government views, values and agenda influences the ways, extent and meaningfulness of the participation in planning processes (Clifford, 2013).

The level of public participation	Key Informant Interviews Content Analysis	The revitalisation of the town centre was sits high on Arnsteins Ladder of Participation (Arnstein, 1969).
Representation of public views	Key Informant Interviews Content Analysis	The views of the public are heard and represented in the revitalisation of the town centre (Biddulph, 2012).

4.6 Validity and Limitations

Validity is the trustworthiness of claims resulting from the analysis of data (Maxwell, 2002). Validity is threatened by a range of influences from researcher bias, positionality and values to the quality of data collection (Darawsheh, 2014; Halperin, Pyne, & Martin, 2015). The validity of qualitative research is commonly questioned, as the means for ensuring its legitimacy are different to those of quantitative methods. Specifically, Guba & Lincoln (1989) argue that the term validity itself is a quantitative term and that qualitative research should instead aim for 'authenticity'. Further as suggested by Maxwell (2002), understanding is more important in qualitative research than statistical validity. Quantitative research suffers less questioning of legitimacy as numbers are widely accepted and relied upon as a form of 'truth' as statistics are expected to be free from researcher bias as 'truth' is not solely defined or represented by numbers; experiences also represent and communicate reality (Maxwell, 2002). Validity a characteristic of any one type of data, it is in relation to the collection and analysis of data and conclusions from using a method for a particular context and purpose (Maxwell, 2002). A mixed methodology approach is accepted as improving the validity of research (Bishop & Holmes, 2013; Tomczyk, 2015). Therefore, the use of both qualitative and quantitative methods intended to produce conclusions that are rich in understanding and validated.

The lack of clear data collection and storage procedures in qualitative research is considered an obstacle to transparent and valid research (Creswell, 2014). Collecting, organising and storing qualitative data is important for not only the researchers convenience, but also for improving the validity of the data (Darawsheh, 2014; Huberman & Miles, 2002). A Thematic Framework which organises data from qualitative methods is suggested by Huberman & Miles (2002) and was used in this research. The framework used in this research involved organising the data collected from the qualitative research methods into the six themes from the literature.

Limitations to quantifiable evidence in relation to revitalisation are suggested to be due to a range of confounding factors such as inconsistent data collection methods, inconsistent data analysis and methods of measuring success, the uniqueness of each town centre, economic and political circumstances, and a variety of collection methods (Bromley et al., 2003; Padilla & Eastlick, 2008; Whitehead et al., 2006). These difficulties in data collection have been experienced in this research. Limitations for this research include data not being available at uniform times, some data being completely unavailable, and some being only available at the district level, not for individual townships. Additionally, a major limitation is present in the use of secondary data to make inferences of the effect of revitalisation. This can be dangerous as not all contributing factors to growth and decline can be analysed. The secondary data will therefore be tested in the key informant interviews to validation.

Unfortunately, the business participants approached were not willing to participate in the research. This presents a limitation in securing validation of some of the quantifiable data, and the opinions of town centre retailers are not represented in the research. This limitation is overcome with the in-depth content analysis, and including questions regarding economic activity with the remaining participants. Another limitation is the unavailability of electronic spending data before 2013. This limits the ability for accurate inferences to be made on the economic effect of revitalisation.

Nonetheless, these data limitations can be overcome via other means. To overcome the limitations of this research, an approach has been taken in the results and discussion chapter, whereby establishing guidelines for local authorities who are considering town centre revitalisation as a way to address decline. Key findings have been labelled '*emerging* guidelines', recognising that further research would be required to address these limitations, and that each context is unique so requires unique planning consideration.

4.7 Ethics

This research involves the collection of data through both interviewing and statistical analysis techniques. Prior to data collection, the research design was discussed with my supervisor and another senior staff member in the Resource and Environmental Planning programme. I have read and understood the Massey University Code of Responsible Research Conduct (herein known as the Code of Responsible Conduct), and the Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching and Evaluation involving Human Participants (herein known as the Code of Ethical Conduct). These principles are upheld throughout the research.

For the majority of the time I have been working on this thesis, I was an employee of the Ruapehu District Council. The potential ethical implications of my position at the Ruapehu District Council has been discussed with my supervisor, a senior member of the Resource and Environmental Planning

programme and Director of Ethics of Massey University. The research is of mutual benefit to the community, and myself and all work is transparent, the research is therefore not considered a conflict of interest. To ensure the research remained uninfluenced by the Ruapehu District Council, all Council past and current staff and current and prospective councillors were excluded from contributing to the content and direction of the research. A letter from the Ruapehu District Council agreeing to not influence the research was been obtained. Additionally, all information and publications sourced from the Ruapehu District Council are publically available. It is believed that these measures avoid a conflict of interest and researcher bias. This was confirmed by the Massey University Director of Ethics (B. Finch, personal communication, March 10, 2016).

The Massey University Screening Questionnaire to Determine the Approval Procedure was been completed and peer reviewed, and based on the outcome it was determined that this research was low risk. The Notification of Low Risk (LRN) Research/Evaluation Involving Human Participants was been endorsed by my supervisor, peer reviewed by a senior staff member in the Planning programme and lodged with the Massey University Ethics Office. The LRN has been registered with the Office.

4.8 Conclusion

Using a mixed methods approach, this research is looked at the approach of RDC in relation to decline, the economic, social, cultural and environmental effects of public space revitalisation for the Ruapehu District and the opportunity for public participation when planning for town centre revitalisation. Ohakune and Ohakune 2000 was chosen as the case study for this research as it has experienced a range of urban design treatments that have been delivered by a community business group Ohakune 2000 and Council, making it a useful example to reflect on.

This research is intended to inform further planning for town centre revitalisation being undertaken in other declining contexts to contribute to ongoing discussions on the applicability of urban design treatments in other Ruapehu towns, such as Taumarunui and Raetihi, and further afield.

CHAPTER FIVE - RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the research findings to answer the research question: *What should local authorities in declining contexts consider when planning for town centres to enable people and communities to provide for their social, economic, cultural and environmental well-being?*

This chapter begins by exploring if and how decline is considered in the Ruapehu District generally and Ohakune more specifically. It then presents the results of the exploration of how the Council documents and key informants view the role of the public realm and town centre. The chapter then presents the results of the research for the case study site (Ohakune and Ohakune 2000 revitalisation project) in terms of the four effects of revitalisation, economic, social, cultural and environmental and before a discussion around public participation in planning for the town centre.

Although there is limited generalisability of the Ohakune case study, the research provides a basis to examine town centre revitalisation in the Ruapehu, and contributes to the wider discussions around town centre planning as a means of addressing decline. On this basis, it has led to the development of 'emerging guidelines' for local authorities considering or planning for town centre revitalisation in areas of decline. These are presented at the end of each subsection of this chapter.

5.2 Smart Decline: Perceptions and Planning

Decline is a negative change in population, employment and economic performance. Decline is related to cities, towns or regions that over the past 40–50 years have experienced population loss, employment decline or/and protracted economic downturn. However, shrinkage does not have exclusively negative effects. Hall (2009) argues that decline is "different, but doesn't have to imply death" for a town. They argue that many outcomes of shrinkage are actually points of difference that contribute to the competitiveness of small towns (Hall, 2009). This research explored the data to see how decline is perceived in the Ruapehu District and specifically Ohakune. It then looked more specifically at if/how the district is strategically planning for smart decline.

5.2.1 Perceptions of Decline

Decline is traditionally interpreted to be a negative phenomenon and to be avoided at all costs. The literature suggests that people and cities are adverse to a label contrary to growth. This is due not only to the focus on negative outcomes of shrinkage but also the orientation of society towards growth, prosperity and traditional notions of success (Haase et al., 2014). Additionally, planning is an innately growth orientated profession (Elzerman & Bontje, 2011; Hall & Hall, 2008; Oswalt, 2005). Data was obtained from participants on the perceptions of the Ohakune community of decline. Additionally,

data was obtained on the planning for decline currently undertaken by the Ruapehu District Council by analysing the content of Council planning documents. This section explores how the key informant interviews and Council planning documents perceive decline.

In the Ruapehu District, the content analysis showed an acknowledgement that the district is in decline and that this is perceived negatively. However, the key informants did not believe Ohakune itself is in decline, while also perceiving decline as a negative phenomenon.   The results are explored in more detail below.

Secondary Data

To understand the actual 'state' of decline in the Ruapehu District and Ohakune township, secondary data on the declining population was obtained from the 2013 Census. Although these statistics do not refer to perceptions, the data provides a basis for exploring the perceptions of the decline experienced in the district and Ohakune.

At the district level, the Ruapehu districts usual resident population is expected to continue to steadily decline over the next ten years at an annual rate of -1.4% per year resulting in a 2025 population of 9,919 (*Future Ruapehu: Long Term Plan 2015-2025*, 2015). However this is forecasted to shrink at a slower rate than previously experienced (*Future Ruapehu: Long Term Plan 2015-2025*, 2015).

Like the rest of the district, Ohakune has experienced many years of decline in terms of population as evidenced in figure 8 below. Between 1996 and 2013 the town lost 333 residents. As noted above this decline has been attributed to the 1995/6 Ruapehu eruptions and subsequent drop in residents and visitors. The town is expected to grow but has experienced population and employment decline since 1995.

According to Becker, Smith, Johnson & Munro (2001) the most significant cause of the decline in Ohakune were the numerous Mount Ruapehu eruptions in 1995 to 1996. These eruptions caused wide spread damage to buildings and infrastructure (*Ohakune Town Centre Assessment*, 2002). Subsequently, visitor numbers and the resident population dropped significantly (Becker, Smith, Johnston, & Munro, 2001; *Ohakune Town Centre Assessment*, 2002). Despite these years of decline, Ohakune is projected to grow by 1.2% annually (*Future Ruapehu: Long Term Plan 2015-2025*, 2015). This is the only place in the district expected to show any positive population change.

Data which could further reflect decline in Ohakune includes home ownership and household income changes. This data would be helpful to understand the outcomes of decline or growth over the study period. Other secondary data that was unable to be sourced for the purpose of this thesis, but that would be useful to further understand the actual 'state' of decline in the Ruapehu District and Ohakune township, includes, retail occupancies and electronic spending between 1996 and 2013. This data would contribute to a greater understanding of economic, social and environmental decline in

the district and in the emerging guidelines below is suggested as an information source for local authorities considering or planning for town centre revitalisation in declining towns.

Ohakune and Ruapehu Population
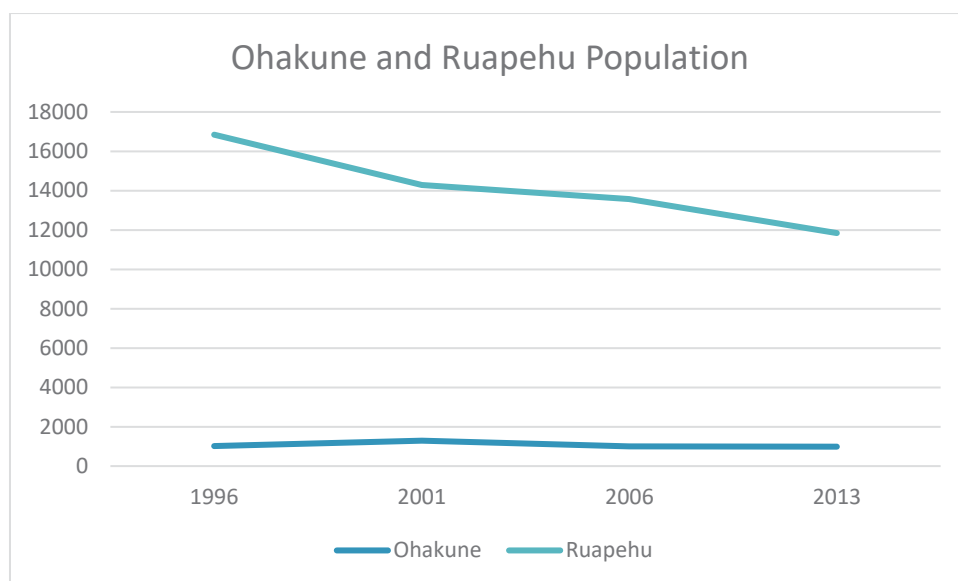
Figure 8: Population decline between 1996 and 2013 (Source: ("Quickstats about Ohakune," 2013).

Content Analysis

There has been a decline in the District population and in Ohakune, as noted above, and the statutory and non-statutory documents reflect this. Both the LTP and EDS acknowledge that the Ruapehu District is in decline and express this as a negative phenomenon. Both documents seek to reverse this long term trend. Neither document explicitly consider decline as having positive effects on the districts community or economy, for example, the EDS explicitly includes "reversing population decline" as a tangible outcome (*Growing Ruapehu Economic Development Strategy 2015-2025*, 2015). It also recognises town centre revitalisation as an important contributor to addressing decline as "township revitalisation" is also 'tangible outcome' of the strategy (*Growing Ruapehu Economic Development Strategy 2015-2025*, 2015). Despite not recognising decline as a positive phenomenon, the EDS does include common features of small and declining places as positive elements of the Ruapehu District. For example, the EDS identifies low house prices as a strength of the district which according to the literature is a positive outcomes of decline and are in fact points of competitive advantage (Hall, 2009). The EDS recognises the decline of the district and that revitalisation is a planning response to attempt to reverse this decline.

The LTP explicitly includes the planning assumption that the district population growth will remain static, and Council investment must be accordingly appropriate. For example, the Land Transport activity within the LTP stipulates that "Land Transport will respond to growth [if any] through private sector development… such as subdivisions….it is unlikely that the network will be expanded in anticipation of investment" *Future Ruapehu: Long Term Plan 2015-2025*, 2015, p. 41). The LTP explctly recognises the decline of the district and plans for this reality.

Despite clear evidence of decline, and the literature highlighting that decline can have both positive and negative effects, this research has found that Council holds a negative perception of decline. This suggests that while Council perceives decline as a negative phenomenon it is simultaneously planning for the declining reality of the district. This perception is expected as Elzerman & Bontje (2011) and Hasse et al. (2014) highlight that local authorities, communities and the planning profession are generally opposed to decline, and in effect opposed to encouraging shrinkage. Simultaneously, reduced spending commitments in response to declining situations is also an expected response. For example, Hall (2009) suggests that declining contexts require distinctive planning strategies, such as reducing spending in infrastructure by relying on private development contributions. This simultaneous acknowledgement of decline and aspiration for growth is suggested by Rhode & Russo (2013) to be a situation where the smart decline theory as a tool for economic decline is appropriate. The Council perceives decline as negative but a reality of the district, therefore planning decisions reflect both the desire for growth the need for realistic and prudent planning decisions.

Key Informant Interviews

Despite the evidence of Ohakune experiencing decline in population, employment since 1996, none of the participants believed that Ohakune is currently in a state of decline. This demonstrates that decline is difficult to define and is not easily quantifiable nor consistently interpreted (Haase et al. 2014). As one participant observed, Ohakune is "declining in number but not in activity" (KI4). All participants have observed a shrinking population, economy, job base and town centre occupancy but still consider Ohakune to be in a growth phase and attributed by this to a growth in tourism, and especially the emergence of a year round tourism economy. For example KI 3 stated "the core of locals has shrunk but tourism is growing" while KI 1 observed, "It [Ohakune] has had its moments with ups and downs seasonally but overall, doesn't feel in decline".

When discussing the positive elements of small towns all participants acknowledged elements identified by Hall (2009) and Leetma et al,. (2012) including housing affordability, natural amenities, sense of community lack of congestion and pollution, and a slower pace of life. The literature identified the following negative effects of decline: job losses, vacant buildings, derelict land, reduced investor confidence, smaller rating bases, failing retail and service sectors, loss of government, health and professional services, poor public perception, poor land use decisions and community dissatisfaction of the community (Sousa & Pinho, 2015; Oswalt, 2005; Hall, 2009; Rhodes & Russo, 2013. These factors were reiterated by all participants.

Despite their acknowledgement of the positive elements of living in a small town, ultimately, every participant viewed decline as a negative phenomenon and one that should be avoided. This reflects the findings of Elzerman & Bontje (2011), Hall & Hall (2008) and Oswalt (2005) who reiterate the arguments of communities perceiving decline negatively. Overall, each participant had aspirations for

better economic and social outcomes for the town which were perceived by them to be not supported by a declining context. These perceptions reflect the findings of the content analysis, and was not unexpected given the literature review had identified the perceptions of decline as a potential issue for planning in a declining context.

Discussion

Ohakune and the Ruapehu District have experienced decline as evidenced by the secondary data. Exploring the perceptions of decline, the content analysis and key informant interviews reflect that decline is perceived as negative and a phenomenon that must be addressed and reversed. This is consistent with the literature in that decline is a commonly rejected label and phenomenon.

However, the literature and key informants also highlights the positive effects of decline. These include natural amenities, sense of community lack of congestion and pollution, and a slower pace of life which are a result of low development pressures. It could be argued that much of Ohakune's charm is in part a result of decline, particularly given that the key informants did not perceive Ohakune to be in decline.

Emerging Guidelines for Local Authorities

When planning for decline:

- Local authorities need to be aware that communities and local authorities themselves generally reject decline so must undertake comprehensive public consultation when considering implementing Smart Decline and to consider and plan for the positive outcomes of decline.
- Local authority planning documents need to take a consistent and coherent approach to decline and be critically aware of any contradictions within the documents whereby they are simultaneously planning for decline but also planning for growth. This will ensure that decline is addressed consistently by a local authority.

5.2.2 Smart Decline

Smart decline is a theory related to the planning of shrinking places. Popper & Popper (2002, p. 23) define it as " explicitly planning for less- fewer people, fewer buildings, fewer land uses". Smart decline strategically plans for who and what remains by the reorganisation of provisions to communities and capitalises on existing competitive advantages rather than striving for new growth and attracting more people (Molotoch, 1976; D. Popper & F. Popper, 2002; Sousa & Pinho, 2015).

Although Ruapehu District is in decline, this is forecasted to shrink at a slower rate than previously experienced. Despite its years of decline, Ohakune is projected to grow by 1.2% annually (*Future Ruapehu: Long Term Plan 2015-2025*, 2015). As the district overall is in decline, it is in a position to consider implementing Smart Decline. Data was obtained from participants on the perceptions of the

Ohakune community of the smart decline theory. Additionally, data was obtained on the planning for decline currently undertaken by the Ruapehu District Council by analysing the content of Council planning documents. The results indicate that there is the potential for the smart decline approach in the Ruapehu. However, the key informants suggest that resistance is likely from the community.

Secondary Data

There is no secondary data in relation to Smart Decline in the Ruapehu District. However, data on the changes in funding allocations and planning decisions over time could be useful to understand the applicability of Smart Decline in the Ruapehu, and the extent of service provisions in relation to the population over time. This data would reveal the true extent of planning for decline undertaken in the district. This is included as an emerging guideline for local authorities considering planning for decline.

Content Analysis

The results of the content have established that the LTP and EDS both perceive decline as a matter to be reversed. These documents take a traditional, anti-decline approach. Smart Decline is not explicitly referred to in the documents.

The EDS is an implicitly growth promoting and decline rejecting strategy. While the document acknowledges decline, the nature of the document results in no reference to the Smart Decline theory. This is not unexpected due to the innate growth orientation of local authority planning and the perception of negative outcomes of shrinkage by the community (Haase et al., 2014).

Despite not labelled explicitly as 'planning for decline', there is some evidence that limited expansion of Council services is part of the long term planning focus of Council. The LTP states that 95% of spending is in asset renewals, rather than expanding the services networks. This could indicate that the Council is in a position to adopt a Smart Decline type planning philosophy. This is also consistent with Hall (2009) and Gonzalez's (2006) views which promote Smart Decline as the elimination of infrastructure and service expansions which allows focus to improve current built form, and the quality of life and place. This consistency suggests that the Councils desire for appropriate investment, town centre revitalisation and avoiding traditional decline could be addressed with Smart Decline in the Ruapehu District.

The literature also suggested that Smart Decline is not simply spending less. Bourne & Rose (2001) for example suggest that the public realm can benefit from the reduced pressure for growth by local authorities addressing neglected demands such as public infrastructure improvements and renewing spaces to help stimulate private consumption and investment. If Council were to adopt a Smart Decline approach, it is necessary to address the strategic re-allocation of funds rather than reducing spending, maintenance and renewals.

The Ruapehu District has the potential to explicitly plan for decline. However, Council is both incorporating measures to plan for decline in the LTP while also implementing the EDS. This suggests that the Council is simultaneously promoting a traditional growth orientated planning approach, but is also planning for a declining reality. This approach appears contradictory. While this is not a formalised 'planning for decline' approach, the existing planning provisions suggest that there is evidence towards the district being receptive of Smart Decline principals.

Key Informant Interviews

Upon explanation of Smart Decline each participant felt that while it is a sensible option overall the Ohakune community would be unlikely support the implementation in Ohakune. This potential community response is consistent with the literature. Elzerman & Bontje (2011), identify that people are naturally adverse to a label contrary to growth and that shrinkage is to be avoided and reversed while growth is desired and prioritised despite its many negative outcomes (Elzerman & Bontje, 2011).

This expected rejection highlights the importance of public participation in planning for decline as identified in the literature. As smart decline is not always a socially just, democratic and equitable practice Hollander (2007 in Mallach, 2001 p.372) advocates that Smart Decline should be targeted to "'each locality's history, political and economic engines and existing power structures". To achieve this, Smart Decline theory and practice should insist on wide spread consultation and community involvement as to avoid a system that does not reflect the local situation or people, is biased towards physical improvements and is focused on saving of funds in jeopardy of social considerations (Bontje, 2004; Selicato & Rotondo, 2010). This research does not reliably inform the Council of the opinions of the entire Ohakune and Ruapehu community so further research and consultation is recommended.

Discussion

This research explored the degree to which Council is already engaging in planning for decline and the potential acceptance by the Ohakune community to Smart Decline to discover the potential for the implementation of Smart Decline in the town or district.

Analysis of the LTP has revealed that Council is already be undertaking some planning for decline, although not explicitly labelling the planning approach as Smart Decline. The content analysis also revealed an inconsistency in the Councils priorities as the EDS and LTP have conflicting approaches to decline. However, the current approach taken in the LTP suggests that there is already an appetite and acceptance of Council to plan for decline. It can be assumed that there is also community appetite for this approach as the development of the LTP was undertaken with community consultation. The key informant interviews revealed that participants felt the community would not be accepting of Smart Decline. Further research is required into the appropriateness and implications of adopting a Smart Decline approach in the Ruapehu, or specifically in individual towns.

Emerging Guidelines for Local Authorities

When planning for decline:

- When planning for Smart Decline, local authorities should investigate the extent and outcomes of implementing Smart Decline on a case-by- case basis by considering the unique context of the region, district and town. This is necessary as each place is unique and Smart Decline needs to be implemented in a manner that reflects the local community, planning cultures and local power structures to be successful.

- If a Local Authority were to adopt a Smart Decline approach to plan for decline, while also planning for town centre revitalisation, it would be necessary to strategically re-allocate funds to town centre revitalisation. Smart Decline commonly includes town centre revitalisation when funds are reallocated to the town centre, not simply a reduction of funding provisions across all local authority provisions.

- Local Authorities need to be aware that Smart Decline may result in polarising views in communities, and so comprehensive community consultation is required when considering implementing Smart Decline. This will ensure that the needs and desires of the community are provided for as part of the implementation in order to provide for who and what remains. See further guidelines in section 5.8 relating to this.

5.3 Public Realm and Town Centre

The public realm is '*the collection of spaces and places accessible to and used by the public that has physical, social, economic, cultural functions and qualities'*, The literature suggests that there are four functions of the public realm; economic, social, cultural and environmental. The literature suggests that for a town centre to be sustainable and successful in the long term, each of the four public realm functions must be provided for equally (Bararatin & Agustin, 2015; Newella et al., 2013).

The integral role of the town centre as a part of the public realm was established in the literature. As an urban space the literature suggests that town centres are under threat from multiple sources, such as competition from periphery and out of town retailing and online shopping (Thomas & Bromley, 2002). Revitalisation is a common response to such threats and ultimately town centre decline.

This section explores the key informant interviews and Council planning documents to discover the role of the town centre in Ohakune and the planning for each public realm function. The results below indicate more planning for the social and cultural functions specifically is required. The results are explored in more detail below.

Secondary Data

No secondary data has been collected in relation to the role of the public realm and town centre.

Data on the funding allocations and planning decisions in relation to the town centre over time could be useful to understand the extent of town centre and public realm planning by both Council and Ohakune 2000 over time. This data would reveal the true extent of planning for the town centre undertaken in the district.

Content Analysis

The results of the document analysis indicate that revitalisation of the town centre is a matter Council is considering in the LTP or EDS. Improving the quality and perceptions of the town centres throughout the district are discussed in both the LTP and EDS. The EDS has a stronger revitalisation focus than the LTP. For example, the EDS includes revitalisation as a 'tangible outcome' (*Growing Ruapehu Economic Development Strategy 2015-2025*, 2015, p. 7). The EDS also recognises that the quality of the business environment is a factor for economic success, and that quality of place is an important factor to improving place perception (*Growing Ruapehu Economic Development Strategy 2015-2025*, 2015, pp. 15-17). Similarly, the LTP uses the term 'destination management planning', which could be considered a pseudonym for town centre revitalisation. However, town centre revitalisation (or similar alternative name) is not part of the strategic goals nor is it an explicit outcome of the LTP, suggesting that town centres are not a matter of priority. This is a matter of which the literature urges consideration as without explicit allocation of funds and planning provisions revitalisation cannot achieve successful change. Roberts (2008) states that revitalisation is a "comprehensive and integrated vision and action which leads to the resolution of urban problems and which seeks to bring about a lasting improvement in the economic, physical, social and environmental condition of an area that has been subject to change" (Roberts, 2008, p. 233). Therefore, explicit planning provisions are required to address decline through revitalisation.

Threats to the economic development of the district are identified in both the LTP and EDS, but town centre threats are not addressed specifically. The EDS is itself a response to the threats facing the district, and addresses town centre decline by including revitalisation as a tangible outcome of the strategy (*Growing Ruapehu Economic Development Strategy 2015-2025*, 2015, p. 7). This is an example of a traditional method of addressing threats as discussed by Elzerman & Bontje (2011). The LTP is a growth focussed document with language such as "thriving and prosperous'. However, addressing town centre specific threats and appropriate responses are not included in either document. This is inconsistent with the literature as Thomas and Bromley (2002) argue that revitalisation can ameliorate the negative outcomes of decline and competition. This suggests that the important role of the public realm and town centre in addressing decline is not fully understood by Council, and may not be adequately prioritised across all planning documents.

Overall, the LTP and EDS indicate a recognition of Council and the community to the need for town centre revitalisation as means of addressing decline. However, the documents also indicate a lack of understanding and prioritisation of the role of the public realm and town centre, and their threats.

Key Informant Interviews

Key informant interviews were undertaken to understand the view of the role the town centre plays in Ohakune and the threats to it. The economic function is argued by Troy (2007) to be the most important function of the public realm as production and consumption are its core activities. All the key informants enjoy the Ohakune town centre to some extent, and appreciate revitalisation has had positive effect for the look and use of the town. Each participant recalled the dull and lifeless centre that existed before, and acknowledged that the current quality is contributing to the popularity of Ohakune.

The results of the key informant interviews presented a view that while each function of the public realm was provided for to varying extents, the economic function was the core function and is planned for more than the others. This is evident by most participants perceiving there to be a high patronage of the stores, cafes and restaurants occupying the town centre, and a Council and Ohakune 2000 focus on business improvement. The remaining functions of the public realm, the social, cultural and environmental, are all under provided for in the opinion of the participants. Of these the participants felt that the cultural function was the most underprovided for. The cultural function of the town centre is to reflect the history, identity and culture of the community the town centre supports (Green-Leigh & Blakely, 2013). Participants KI2 and KI3 noted that there is very little reference to Maori culture or heritage within the town centre. KI2 recognised that "there isn't enough Maori identity [in the town centre] despite the history and demographics". These participants felt that the culture and identity of Ohakune is not effectively or accurately represented in the town centre (KI2 and KI3). Empirical researcher observation of the town centre supports this belief as there appears to be no reference to Maori culture or history in the town centre while there is small references to the market gardening history of the town. The under provision for the cultural function is consistent with Balsas (2007) who suggests that in small towns dominant cultures are commonly represented in town centres, at the exclusion of others. The cultural function of the Ohakune town centre is in need of planning attention according to the participants.

The social function of the public realm should be a socially equitable and accessible town centre (Loftland, 2008). However, the key informants felt that the social function was neglected in the town centre (KI1, KI2 and KI3). While they all believe that the town is socially equitable and is not exclusionary, the participants felt that there were too few facilities encouraging people to spend time and socialise in the town centre (KI1, KI2 , KI3 and KI4). For example, they felt that while there were some seats the town centre itself is not conducive to socialising. KI1 particularly felt that the town

needed more places for locals and visitors to passively enjoy the town centre as "this town doesn't invite and attract people to enjoy it" (KI1). The under provision of the social function is consistent with Hass & Olsson's (2013) suggestion that the social functioning of the town centre is often compromised by the prioritisation of economic gain. Further planning for the social function of the town centre is therefore perceived as required.

The results of the key informant interviews also suggest that the environmental function of the town centre is under provided for. The environmental function of the town centre is both an environment to be in and move through, but also consists of supporting nature in the town centre (Allen & You, 2002; Haas & Olsson, 2013). The key informants noted that while the nature has been retained in the town centre such as improving access to the Mangateitei Stream, a large beech tree stand and smaller planted gardens they are keen for more (KI1, KI2 , KI3 and KI4). According to KI4 Ohakune 2000 intentionally featured these natural elements in the town centre plans and have continue to maintain these features. However, there is evidence of a desire for more. For example, KI2 is supportive of further native planting throughout the town in an effort to attract native bird life and minimise the effect of the town centre into the future. The ongoing retention and support of natural elements in the town centre is consistent with Allen & You (2002) and Zhao et al., (2010) who advocate for the retention of nature in a steadily urbanising word. Further incorporation of nature into the town centre is recommended.

The town centre is subject to ongoing threats. The literature identified just a few town centre threats including periphery or out of town retailing and e-commerce. These were discussed with the participants. The participants did not identify threats such as online shopping and periphery/out of town retailing as imminent threats to the Ohakune town centre. Instead other threats such as Council regulation, the temporary nature of some business (e.g. container stores/eateries) and poor maintenance of the town centre were identified. The participants all believed that locals did not commonly utilise online shopping and out of town retail options, except for items or services that cannot be obtained locally (KI 1, KI2, KI3, and KI4). The participants felt that online shopping and other towns were not direct competition or threating Ohakune. The participants also personally expressed a lack of desire to utilise other consumption options, such as going to other towns, despite the other potential positive outcomes for themselves, for example experiencing different attractions or services in the other town. This trend is inconsistent with the literature as Powe (2012) suggests that small towns struggle to compete with the multi-functionality and purpose built consumption facilities in larger and nearby urban areas. If this view was held by the community at large, rather than the small key informant base, this suggests that the town centre is successful in that the town centre meets the needs of the community, which is an indicator of success according to Dobson (2013).

The threats facing the Ohakune town centre are unique to the town, community and success of each public realm function. While not all functions seem to be equally provided for, the key informants felt that continued revitalisation was an acceptable and effective means of responding to town centre decline. The participants confirmed that the original town centre revitalisation effort has appeared to effectively slow the decline of Ohakune, and improved its economic viability. This is consistent with Thomas & Bromley (2002) who support the notion that revitalisation can ameliorate the negative outcomes of decline and competition. However with time, the town centre is now starting to be perceived to be less effective with time, and further revitalisation is called for to address the needs of the town centre and community. This suggests, as warned by Barantin & Agustin (2015) and Newella et al. (2013), that as each function is not equally provided for the long term sustainability and success is in question. The threats to the Ohakune town centre need to be carefully considered in relation to the Ohakune context.

Discussion

This section explored the results of the research in light of the four public realm functions and the threats the Ohakune town centre is facing. The literature suggests that for a town centre to be sustainable and successful, each of the four public realm functions must be provided for equally. The results of this research suggest the town centre in Ohakune is not successful or sustainable as all four functions are not equally provided for. The document analysis revealed that overall, the LTP and EDS indicate a recognition of Council and the community to the need for town centre revitalisation. The documents also indicate a lack of understanding and prioritisation of the role of the public realm and town centre.

Data from the key informant interviews also indicate that the town centre functions are not equally provided for. As the public who live in and use the town centre define its use, purpose and priorities, and as functions are perceived to be poorly provided for is suggested that the Ohakune town is centre is not meeting the needs of the community it serves. However, all the key informants enjoy the Ohakune town centre, and appreciate the positive effect that the revitalisation has had for the town. Each participant recalled the dull and lifeless centre that existed before, and acknowledged that the current quality is contributing to the popularity of Ohakune. It can be reasonably assumed that while the revitalisation of the Ohakune town centre is supported by the key informants, and some benefits have arisen, that there is still improvements to be made in order for a successful and sustainable town centre for Ohakune. This potential acceptance by the community indicates that there is presumably room for the functions of town centres and specific threats can be better addressed in Council documents such as the LTP EDS.

Emerging Guidelines for Local Authorities

When planning for decline:

- Local authorities need to have a clear understanding of and prioritise the role and functions of the public realm in order to adequately provide equally for each function in order to provide strengthen the public realm and create a successful town centre.

- Local Authorities need to identify and consider the threats to town centres on a case by case basis in order to respond to the unique context of each place rather than uniformly.

- Local authorities need to research the full extent of historical planning and funding allocations in town centre infrastructure. This will help to understand previous levels of investment, evaluate outcomes of the allocation and determine matters or areas in need of attention prior to undertaking revitalisation.

- Local Authorities should research and, with the community, establish the measures of success for individual communities. Understanding what success means to a community will assist in developing a town centre that meets these requirements and in evaluation.

5.4 Economic Effects of Revitalisation

The public realm has a strong economic function with production and consumption as a core function according to (Troy, 2007). Urban areas are unique economic areas as they are simultaneously spaces of specialised and diverse consumption and production (Haas & Olsson, 2013). The LGA mandates the consideration of the economic function of the public realm. Data was collected on a number of economic function indicators identified in the literature review. These included an increase in business units, retail rental costs retail occupancies, electronic spending, employment, economic diversity and visitor numbers. Business investment confidence is also expected to rise. This research explored the effect of town centre revitalisation in Ohakune has had on these indicators in particular.

It is noted that the validity of data regarding the economic function is limited as the literature suggests that that collecting evidence of a positive impact on consumption and investment is both inconclusive and imprecise (Bromley et al., 2003; Padilla & Eastlick, 2008; Whitehead et al., 2006). This is due to a range of factors such as inconsistent data collection methods, inconsistent data analysis and methods of measuring success, the uniqueness of each town centre, economic and political circumstances, and a variety of collection methods. This has proven true in this research with many necessary data sets being unavailable and a range of data collection dates outside of the census years.

5.4.1 Business Units

Well-designed town centres commonly boast high rental markets and occupations as these areas are more attractive to consumers and can gather higher revenue (Lowe, 2005; Padilla & Eastlick, 2008). This can be demonstrated in a rise in business units.

Secondary data was obtained from the Ruapehu Economic Development Strategy (2015) on the changes in business units over time. Data was also obtained from key informants regarding the

observed change in business over time. The results reveal that there has been a fluctuation in business units that has ultimately resulted in more business units since the revitalisation of the town centre. The results are explored in more detail below.

Secondary Data

Most business units in the district, and in Ohakune, are based in the primary sector, business services sector and the retail and services sector (*Growing Ruapehu Economic Development Strategy 2015-2025*, 2015). Ohakune experienced a sharp rise in business units between 2001 and 2006 with 42 new businesses born over these five years (*Growing Ruapehu Economic Development Strategy 2015-2025*, 2015). The peak was experienced in 2006. From 2006 to 2013 the town lost 33 businesses (see figure 9). However, there are more business units in Ohakune in 2013 than 2001. Although this data includes non-town centre businesses, due to the timing the 2001 to 2006 rise could be attributed in part to the town centre revitalisation of Ohakune, as the rise corresponds with the timing of the revitalisation period. The fall in 2006 could also be attributed to the Global Financial Crisis of 2007/8, although this needs further research. There was also reported amalgamation of farms and market gardens, and the closure of local vegetable packing facilities in this period resulting in less business units (KI1 and KI4). However, despite the fluctuations Ohakune has been the only town in the district to increase overall its business units since 2001 (*Growing Ruapehu Economic Development Strategy 2015-2025*, 2015). In 2001, Ohakune was home to 24% of the districts business units and in 2013, this rose to 29% (see figure 9). Total business units have not returned to pre-2001 levels. Ohakune has experienced a fluctuation in business units across all sectors.

This data indicates that while the district is declining in terms of population, and Ohakune has experienced a fluctuation in business units the town is better performing than the rest of the district and is recovering from a decline period unlike the other towns. The data could suggest that the town centre revitalisation work of Ohakune 2000 has resulted in a positive effect on business units in Ohakune. This finding is consistent with the suggestions of Padilla & Eastlick (2008) and Whitehead et al. (2006) that a high quality urban environment supports high levels of business investment and town centre occupation. The data is also consistent with the view of Ravenscroft's (2002) notion of a vitality-viability relationship is in effect in Ohakune.
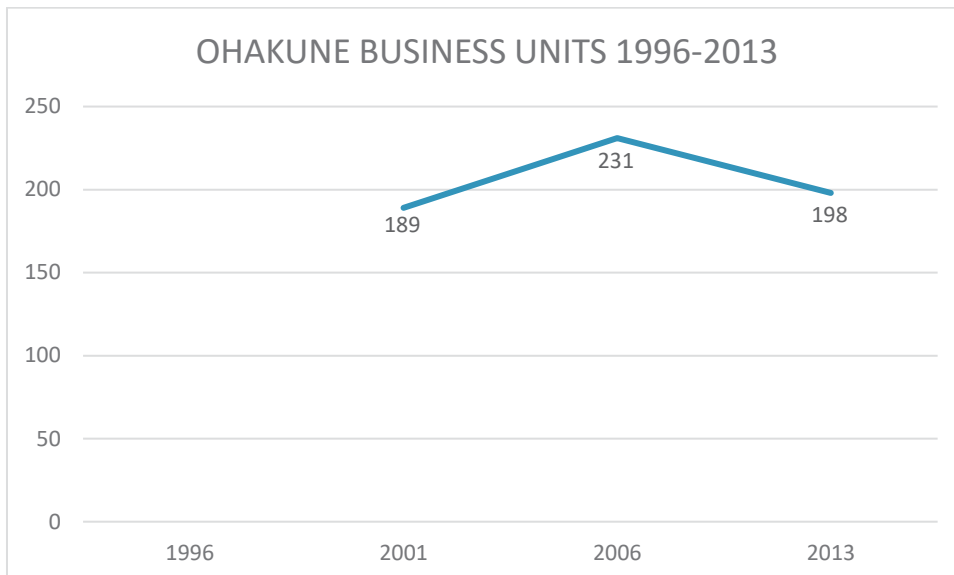
Figure 9: Ohakune Business Units 2001-2013 (1996 data not available)

Content Analysis

The LTP and EDS were analysed to determine if and how each were attempting to attract new businesses. The Long Term Plan makes no reference to improving the quantity of businesses in the district. However, the EDS focusses heavily on attracting new businesses and includes improving the quality of place to attract people and businesses to town centres. For example, target one of the strategy is 'Growing Business Development'. This target is specifically focussed on supporting the establishment of new business across all sectors. Additionally, the EDS includes 'quality of place' as a focus and connects town centre revitalisation to this focus (*Growing Ruapehu Economic Development Strategy 2015-2025*, 2015, p. 15). This focus acknowledges that "quality of place is a critical factor in attracting and retaining the people who stimulate economic growth" (*Growing Ruapehu Economic Development Strategy 2015-2025*, 2015, p. 15). Good place perceptions are expected by the EDS to increase business units both in the urban and rural setting. This is recognition and approach I supported by Green-Leigh & Blakely (2013) who assert that positive place perceptions positively affect the patronage of town centres and businesses within the town centre. Further, this is consistent with Padilla & Eastlick (2008) who argue that high quality urban environments stimulate new business investments.

Key Informant Interviews

Despite more business units since 2001 all participants perceived an overall decline of businesses in the town centre over time. In particular, the instability of businesses was more prominent to the participants. The participants, particularly KI1 and KI3, identified a high turnover of businesses occupying the town centre and a seeming inability for the town to retain stores and services for long periods of time. KI1 has observed that "Everything has been tried and failed… so maybe the town centre is the problem" despite the work of Ohakune 2000. These perceptions are inconsistent with

the secondary data which has revealed overall business unit growth since 2001 but are consistent with the decline between 2006 and 2013.

This perception of decline by participants are is inconsistent with the literature as Padilla & Eastlick (2008) expect revitalised town centres to be more positively perceived and desired by occupants which in effect is thought to create stable business investment. However, this disparity between perception and reality is consistent with Whitehead, Simmons and Preston (2006) who argue that as conclusive evidence of a positive impact does not exist, success is determined on a case-by-case basis and by community opinion. This suggests that the Ohakune community may perceive stable town centre business investment as an indicator of success. The findings suggest that more research is needed to understand the effect of well-designed town centres on business units, rental markets, employment and revenue.

Discussion

The number of businesses in the town centre are expected to increase as a result of town centre revitalisation. The results of this research indicate that revitalisation of the Ohakune town centre has improved business units. Despite the business units experiencing a fall since the peak 2006 level, the fact that 2013 levels are higher than those in 2001 could indicate that revitalisation of the town centre has had a positive effect on Ohakune and its rate of decline. The data supports the notion of Thomas, Bromley & Hall (2003, p. 145) that "a better environment attracts more people, improves trade and helps to stimulate new investment". Additionally, the presence of a vitality-viability relationship, as theorised by Ravenscroft (2002), in Ohakune is reinforced by the data. Overall, the data and literature indicate that revitalisation has had a positive economic effect on Ohakune.

Emerging Guidelines for Local Authorities

When planning for decline:

- Local Authorities should collect data regarding the changes in business units in the town centre over time, especially before and after town centre revitalisation. This will assist in evaluating the success of revitalisation in relation to business units.

5.4.2 Rental Costs

Retail rental costs are commonly affected by the quality of the town centre. Well-designed town centres commonly boast high rental prices, while places which are poorly designed and are negatively perceived cannot demand high prices (Lowe, 2005; Padilla & Eastlick, 2008). Good quality urban environments are more attractive to consumers which can gather higher revenue so the rental costs are commonly high (Lowe, 2005; Padilla & Eastlick, 2008). Additionally CABE & DETR (2001) identify high rental returns as a direct economic effect of revitalisation. However, this effect on rentals can

cause a displacement or eradication of business which cannot afford town centre prices which the results from the key informant interviews in relation to business units suggest is occurring.

There was limited data available relating to rental costs in Ohakune. Some data was obtained from key informants regarding the observations and beliefs around rental costs in the town centre. The results reveal that town centre revitalisation may have caused high rental costs but more information is required.

Secondary Data

As noted in the research design chapter no data was available for the rental costs, and no town centre businesses chose to be involved in the research.

Content Analysis

Neither the LTP or EDS address the rental costs of commercial buildings in the district. This is not unexpected as this is an area of the market that local authorities do not traditionally get involved in. However, it would be useful for Councils to be aware of rental costs in town centres and the positive and negative effects of revitalisation on rental costs.

Key Informant Interviews

The key informants selected to represent town centre businesses chose not to be a part of the research. While no data was available on rental costs, some key informants confirmed that while town centre rents were believed to be high, the rental costs at The Junction were understood to be higher (KI1 and KI3). Some participants expressed a need for rental costs to be lower in order to sustain retail business especially. This is consistent with the suggestions of Lowe (2005) which expects revitalised areas to boast higher rental costs as the Junction has experienced some revitalisation in past years. Additionally, as aforementioned in section 5.4.1 some participants observed a high turnover of business in the town centre. This could be a result of high rental costs and another indicator of the effect of revitalisation on town centre businesses. For local authorities considering town centre revitalisation as a response to decline, further research into the change in rental costs over time would be useful to ascertain the effect revitalisation has had on town centre rental costs.

Discussion

Lowe (2005) suggests that revitalisation can result in a premium placed on the town centre, and correspondingly high rental costs. While the data is limited and inconclusive, the results suggest that the town centre revitalisation may have resulted in increased rental costs in the town centre. The literature suggests that if these rental costs have forced business out of the town centre that this is a negative economic effect of revitalisation. Conversely, if business has remained in the town centre this is a positive economic effect of revitalisation. More research is required in relation to this indicator.

Emerging Guidelines for Local Authorities

When planning for decline:

- Local authorities should collect data in relation to the change in rental costs over time in a town centre, especially before and after town centre revitalisation. This will assist in evaluating the success of revitalisation in relation to rental costs.
- Local authorities should be aware of the positive and negative effects of revitalisation on rental costs. This will assist in avoiding the potential imbalanced distribution of benefits of revitalisation and displacement of existing businesses.

5.4.3 Retail Vacancies

In contrast to the previous section, which notes that the rental costs may force businesses out, revitalisation also has the potential to result in lower retail vacancies due to the creation of increased demand for the town centre. However, it can raise another problem. According to Lowe (2005), revitalisation of the town can cause spatial inequalities between revitalised areas and those untouched. Padilla & Eastlick (2009) and Brodeur (2003) emphasise the importance of a co-ordinated and widespread approach to revitalisation.

Data was obtained from participants on the perceptions of the retail space occupancy in the Ohakune town centre. No data was available on the actual levels of occupancy over time, and the documents did not include specific focus on retail occupancy rates. The results indicate that there is the potential for occupancies to be negatively effected by revitalisation, but no inference can be made due to the lack of available data. Therefore, more research is required. The results are explored in more detail below.

Secondary Data

There is no data publically available for this indicator. Data on the change in town centre building occupation over time would be useful for this research. This data would allow researchers to understand whether revitalisation has influenced change in retail occupation over time.

Content Analysis

Neither the LTP or EDS explicitly address rental occupancy rates of commercial buildings in the district. Again, this is not unexpected as this is an area of the market that local authorities do not traditionally get involved in.

The EDS does include a focus on encouraging investment and supporting existing business. Although not explicitly targeted to reducing retail vacancies this focus somewhat supports improving town centre occupancies. It is recommended Councils to be aware of and plan for the positive and negative effects of revitalisation on rental occupation.

Key Informant Interviews

The key informants selected to represent town centre businesses chose not to be a part of the research. This limits the reliability of rental vacancy data. Observations around retail occupation were still discussed with the other key informants. As previously discussed, the key informants have observed less business units and a high turn over of businesses in the town centre. Turnover is not an indicator explored in the literature but it is accepted that this could be a valid indicator of the effect of revitalisation.

Revitalisation of the town centre can result in rental situations which existing businesses cannot survive in. For example, revitalisation can create high rental costs (as discussed in section 5.4.2) and can result in empty town centre stores. Bromley, Hall and Thomas (2003), Padilla & Eastlick (2009) and Brodeur (2003) emphasise that planning for town centre revitalisation must be done to ensure an even spread through town centres and townships to avoid an imbalance of benefits such as rental occupation. The key informants have confirmed that Ohakune 2000 and Council spread revitalisation projects across the town in an effort to improve the quality of Ohakune as whole; for example the work completed on the town centre, Junction, Carrot Park and Mangawhero River Walkway have all been undertaken. This is consistent with the literature from Bromley, Hall and Thomas (2003), Padilla & Eastlick (2009) and Brodeur (2003) which emphasises the importance of a co-ordinated approach to integrate the entire centre in the revitalisation to ensure, amongst other outcomes, a balanced distribution of benefits including high rental occupation.

Discussion

Reduced retail vacancies in a town centre are an expected positive effect of revitalisation. The literature suggests that revitalisation creates a demand for town centre locations which reduces the vacancies of commercial properties. The participants did not observe high retail vacancies, but instead observed that occupancy turn over. Due to a lack of available data no inference on the effect of revitalisation on retail occupation can be made. The effect of revitalisation on retail occupation is another matter that could be the focus of further research.

Emerging Guidelines for Local Authorities

When planning for decline:

- Local authorities should investigate the change in rental vacancies and occupations over time in a town centre, especially before and after town centre revitalisation. This will assist in evaluating the success of revitalisation in relation to rental vacancies.
- Local authorities need to be aware and plan for evenly applied revitalisation to avoid the potential displacement of existing businesses from the town centre.

5.4.4 Electronic Spending

Electronic spending is an indicator of the strength of the economic function of the public realm. Troy (2007) and Padilla & Eastlick (2008) argue that profitable consumer behaviours are experienced in high quality urban spaces as consumers favour places to which they are attracted to and identify with. Environmental quality increases consumers' willingness to spend and value of purchases (Whitehead, Simmons & Preston, 2006). Spending is also a part of Ravenscroft's (2002) vitality-viability theory that maintains that the better the space the more people are attracted to it and the more they will spend or invest. Electronic spending is an indicator of the overall spending trends in a place over time.

Data was obtained from the EDS and Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment on electronic spending in the district, as this data was only available at the district level. Data was also obtained from participants on the perceptions of spending it the town centre. Additionally, data was obtained on the planning for improving electronic spending currently undertaken by the Ruapehu District Council by analysing the content of Council planning documents. This section indicates that town centre revitalisation has had a positive effect on electronic spending in the town centre. The results are explored in more detail below.

Secondary Data

Electronic spending data is only available at the district level and only between 2008 and 2016. Data is also not available in relation to the individual or average value of purchases (see figures 10 and 11). This level of data shows an increase of electronic spending across the district.
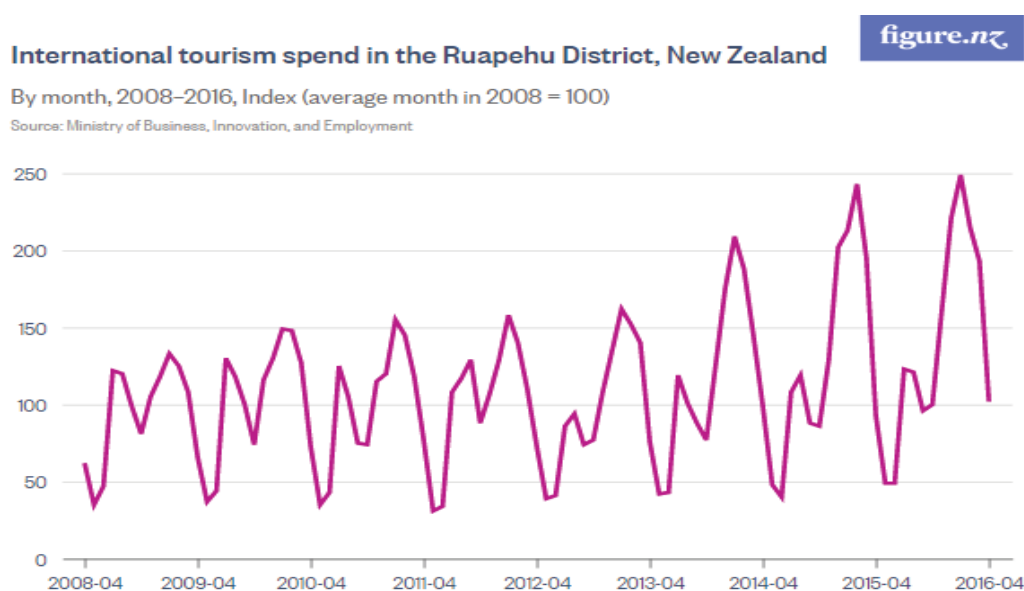
Figure 10: International tourism spend in the Ruapehu (2008-2016) (Source: Ministry for Business Innovation and Employment, 2016)

Domestic tourism spend in the Ruapehu District, New Zealand

By month, 2008–2016, Index (average month in 2008 = 100)

Source: Ministry of Business, Innovation, and Employment
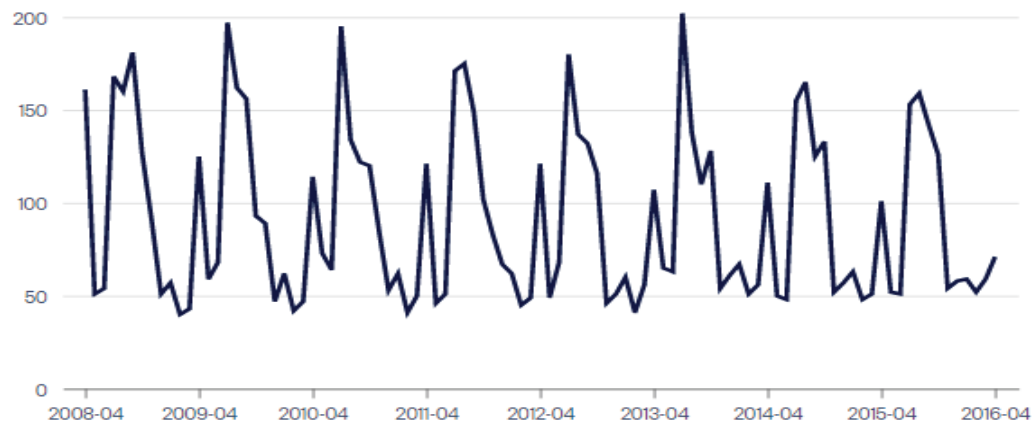
Figure 11: Domestic tourism spend in the Ruapehu (2008-2016). (Source: Ministry for Business Innovation and Employment, 2016)

The tables indicate an upwards trend of electronic spending in the district. However, as data is only available at district level and from 2008 it cannot be reliably confirmed that Ohakune 2000 revitalisation project has had a positive effect on the town centre of Ohakune. Despite these limitations, a reasonable assumption could be made that a significant proportion of the district spending is based in Ohakune due to the highest visitor numbers throughout the year and highest proportion of business units. Additionally, the highest spending has occurred in sectors such as hospitality and accommodation, of which there are large number of businesses in these sectors in the town centre of Ohakune (*Growing Ruapehu Economic Development Strategy 2015-2025*, 2015). This data suggests a consistency with the literature which expects revitalisation to result in improved spending within the town centre. Thomas, Bromley & Hall (2003, p. 145), maintain "a better environment attracts more people, improves trade and helps to stimulate investment". The town centre quality also increases consumers' willingness to spend and value of purchases (Whitehead, Simmons & Preston, 2006). Further research is needed into the electronic spending levels and patterns in Ohakune.

Content Analysis

Improving electronic spending is not an outcome explicitly provided for in the LTP or EDS. However, helping the revenue gained by business in the Ruapehu grow is implicit in the EDS. The EDS emphasises that "fostering economic and business development is a core objective of Council" (*Growing Ruapehu Economic Development Strategy 2015-2025*, 2015, p. 9). The general intent of the EDS is to grow business of which a central part is improving business profits. This includes improving profits of town centre businesses. This in combination with the recognition of the effect of the quality of the town

centre in the EDS supports the assertion of Whitehead, Simmons & Preston (2006) of a positive relationship between town centre quality and spending. Ravenscroft (2002) argues that spending is part of the vitality-viability relationship. This further highlights the importance of Council planning for the improvement of spending in town centres. However, as the EDS does not explicitly address improving spending in town centres this could be considered for any amendments or similar documents in the future.

Key Informant Interviews

Consistent with the literature, the key informants believed that the quality of the town centre influences the likelihood of spending and positive spending behaviours. Each participant likened this to their own behaviour in Ohakune and other towns. For example, KI2 suggested that "when a place is more attractive spending is more likely". KI1 has also observed a positive change in spending behaviours over time in the town centre, especially in cafes and restaurants. These observations support the findings of CABE & DETR (2001) who found that good quality design increases the attractiveness, competitiveness, vibrancy and viability of a place. The literature also suggested that "a better environment attracts more people, improves trade and helps to stimulate investment" (see Thomas, Bromley & Hall, 2003, p. 145). The quality of the town centre is thought to have had a positive influence on spending in the Ohakune town centre.

Discussion

An indicator of successful town centre revitalisation and the economic function is increased spending. The data and literature indicate that town centre revitalisation has had a positive effect on electronic spending in Ohakune. The data is consistent with the literature in that spending is suggested to be higher in Ohakune post revitalisation. This positive effect in spending further indicates a positive economic effect of revitalisation for Ohakune. Further research into the electronic spending in the Ohakune town centre is recommended.

Emerging Guidelines for Local Authorities

When planning for decline:

- Local authorities should consistently obtain data into the electronic spending of each town, especially before and after revitalisation. This will assist in evaluating the success of revitalisation in relation to spending in the town centre.

5.4.5 Employment

Job losses are considered by Sousa & Pinho (2015) as the most significant consequence of decline and a common issue to be considered by local authorities when addressing decline. Korobar, Siljanoksa and Stefanovska (2012) argue that the causes of decline, and particularly relevant to Ohakune deindustrialisation, contribute to high levels of unemployment and cause migration of populations

from small towns in search of work. Revitalisation is a common response to decline and a means of addressing decline. Whitehead et al. (2006) expect employment to rise in revitalised town centres due to the attraction of new and improved businesses, and subsequently increased revenue, entering the town centre. Revitalisation is expected to reverse the consequences of decline, particularly unemployment.

Data was obtained from Statistics New Zealand on changes in employment in Ohakune over time. Additionally, data was obtained on the planning for employment currently undertaken by the Ruapehu District Council by analysing the content of Council planning documents. Employment was also discussed with key informants. This section explores the secondary data, key informant interviews and Council planning documents to discover the changes in employment and planning for employment in the town or district.

The results indicate that there has been significant decreases in employment in Ohakune. The results are explored in more detail below.

Secondary Data

As noted above, revitalisation is expected to increase employment opportunities due to new businesses and improved economic activity. This expectation did not appear to occur in Ohakune, as employment dropped between 1996 and 2013 (see figure 12) which encompassed the Ohakune 2000 revitalisation project. Between 1996 and 2013, 138 jobs were lost in Ohakune. The fall in employment in Ohakune follows the same overall downwards trend as population during this same period. Further Whitehead et al., (2006) links employment to the creation of new businesses. However, despite the rise in business units, Ohakune did not experience an increase in employment in this period. Although these figures include jobs outside of the town centre, they are indicative of the changes in Ohakune in general. Despite the expected increase in employment resulting from revitalisation, this has not occurred. This also highlights that the reduction in employment opportunities cannot be directly associated with the revitalisation project due to other factors such as the Global Financial Crisis, mountain eruptions and farm amalgamations.

Further research into the causes of decreased employment in Ohakune is required. Specifically research into town centre employment would be beneficial. This will assist in fully understanding the true effect of revitalisation in the Ohakune town centre.
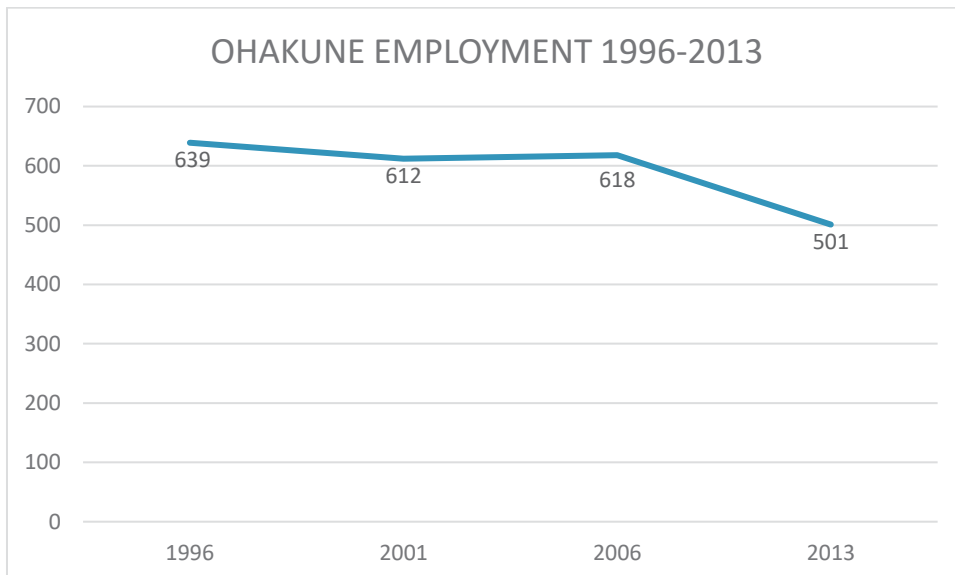
Figure 12: Employment in Ohakune from 1996 to 2013

Content Analysis

Both the EDS and LTP have been analysed to understand how Council addresses and plans for employment opportunities in the district and Ohakune. While the LTP does not reference or attempt to address declining employment statistics in the district, the EDS includes a specific focus on employment.

The EDS states that the Ruapehu community has identified employment as a key priority. The EDS specifically states "the mission is to create jobs and facilitate economic activity". This is consistent with Sousa & Pinho (2015) who consider unemployment to be the most significant effect of decline. The EDS therefore identifies reversing unemployment trends in the district as a 'tangible outcome' and propositions a connection to town centre revitalisation. Of particular relevance to this research the EDS suggests that a good quality environment, both urban and natural, attracts those who will invest in the district and in effect provide employment. This is consistent with Ravenscroft (2002) notion vitality-viability relationship.

Key Informant Interviews

As already noted, the key informants selected to represent town centre businesses chose not to be a part of the research. This limits the reliability of employment data. Observations of employment over time were discussed with the remaining participants.

None of the participants observed an increase in employment in the town centre since 2000. KI4 also deliberated the ongoing amalgamation of farms and market gardens, and the closure of local vegetable packing facilities. This has reportedly resulted in less workers required for the operation of farms, and job losses in packing factories (KI1 and KI4). It must be noted that town centre revitalisation may not necessarily improve in this regard.

Participants KI1 and KI2 have also observed seasonal variations in employment. These participants observe high numbers of young people entering the town for the ski season work or supporting sectors such as accommodation and hospitality and then a steep departure when the season ends. While data has not been collected on this particular point, this researcher has observed an increase in weekday activities such as dance parties and gigs, which only occur in the winter that could reflect the temporary population of the traditional young ski season workers. Research into employment throughout the year as well as over time is recommended to fully understand the nature of Ohakune at different times.

These observations of falling employment in Ohakune following the Ohakune 2000 revitalisation project is inconsistent with the literature, as employment is expected to increase as a result of revitalisation (Whitehead et al, 2003). However, a cause of decline reported by the participants is consistent with the literature. Farm amalgamation and loss of vegetable packing is an example of deindustrialisation. This is consistent with the literature as according to Korobar, Siljanoksa and Stefanovska (2012) the causes of decline such as deindustrialisation, contribute to high levels of unemployment and cause migration of populations from small towns in search of work.

Discussion

The data suggests that town centre revitalisation has not positively affected employment in Ohakune which is contrary to the expectations in the literature. Employment also appears to have a seasonal variance with a peak occurring in winter. Nonetheless, there is no evidence to suggest that the town centre quality has reduced employment either. It can be proposed that the quality of the town centre supports the popularity of Ohakune and contributes to employment in the town overall. Nonetheless, the results are considered inconclusive of the effect revitalisation has had on Ohakune employment. Further research into the causes of unemployment in Ohakune is required.

Emerging Guidelines for Local Authorities

When planning for decline:

- Local authorities should consistently obtain data into the employment levels of each town and especially in town centre based positions. This should be obtained before and after revitalisation to assist in evaluating the success of revitalisation in relation to employment in the town centre.

5.4.6 Economic Diversity

The attractiveness of the town centre can increase business investment and economic diversity of the town centre (Padilla & Eastlick, 2008; Whitehead et al., 2006). Padilla & Eastlick (2008) and Whitehead et al. (2006) identify that high quality environment often result in a high business diversity as investors have a willingness to locate the town centre.

Data was obtained from participants on the perceptions of town centre diversity. Additionally, data was obtained on the planning for economic diversity by the Ruapehu District Council by analysing the content of Council planning documents. This section explores the stocktake, key informant interviews and Council planning documents to discover the level of economic diversity and planning provisions for diversity.

The results indicate that the Ohakune town centre is not as diverse as the literature expects following a revitalisation project. There is the potential and a desire for more economic diversity in Ohakune. The results are explored in more detail below.

Secondary Data

No secondary data was obtained on economic diversity in the Ohakune town centre. High and low levels of economic diversity are not defined by the literature. It can be assumed that levels are defined by the individual town centre and community context.

This researcher has observed that Ohakune is home to some general retail stores, multiple ski and bike hire stores, an indoor climbing wall, some professional services such as real estate, a hairdresser and a surveyor, banking, a supermarket and petrol station, and the Council office and I-site. There is no doctor's surgery, dentist or optometrist in Ohakune. Hospitality is the dominant trade in Ohakune with approximately 10 eateries operating just within the town centre, this is not including the temporary container/food trucks and those at 'the Junction' which holds approximately another 10 establishments. These observations indicate that while some basic requirements of locals and visitors are met, there is little diversity or options. For example, there is just one supermarket, one chemist and one general retail/clothing store. This level diversity is inconsistent with the literature. Padilla & Eastlick (2008) and Whitehead et al. (2006) expect a high level of business diversity in a high quality town centre.

Document Analysis

The LTP and EDS were both analysed to understand the planning undertaken for economic diversity in Ohakune and Ruapehu. The LTP does not explicitly address improving the economic diversity of the district. This is not unexpected as this is not an area of the market that Council is traditionally involved.

The EDS explicitly aims to improve economic diversity with town centre revitalisation with Target Three being focussed on 'Growing Economic Diversity' (*Growing Ruapehu Economic Development Strategy 2015-2025*, 2015, p. 15). The EDS connects the quality of the business environment as a factor in achieving growth, and as such includes town centre revitalisation as a tangible outcome of the strategy. Increasing economic diversity through revitalisation is again an example of a traditional response when reflecting upon the literature. Further, encouraging economic diversity through revitalisation is supported by Ravenscroft's (2002) vitality- viability relationship, as the author suggests

that investment and diversity is influenced by the quality of the urban environment. Improving economic diversity through town centre revitalisation is a traditional anti-decline response.

Key Informant Interviews

Most participants observe little economic diversity in the Ohakune town centre. Participants KI1 and KI2 identified that the Ohakune town centre provides "the basics" but little more. Specifically, these same participants felt that while the town centre businesses supports local basic needs, there is proportionally more businesses which favour the tourist market such as cafes and ski hire stores. These observations corroborate the researcher observations regarding the lack of economic diversity in the town centre. The diversity of the town centre is considered to be perceived as low.

This is inconsistent with the literature, which suggests that economic diversity is likely to increase as a result of revitalisation. Padilla & Eastlick (2006) suggest a connection between attractiveness of the town centre and an increase in business investment and economic diversity of the town centre. The Ohakune town centre does not reflect the high level of diversity that the literature suggests there to be in high quality town centres

Discussion

There is limited economic diversity in the Ohakune town centre. A heavy hospitality presence over services that serve locals such as professional services indicates that the Ohakune town centre is orientated towards providing for a transient population rather than full time residents. Overall, the town centre is not experiencing high levels of economic diversity despite revitalisation. This is inconsistent with the literature and when considered with the data indicates that the town centre revitalisation is not having a positive economic effect.

Emerging Guidelines for Local Authorities

When planning for decline:

- Local authorities should undertake regular town centre stocktakes to understand the economic diversity of the town centre. Especially, this data should be obtained before and after revitalisation to assist in evaluating the success of revitalisation in relation to economic diversity.

5.4.7 Visitor Numbers

Visitor numbers are expected to be higher town centres that are revitalised as high quality areas attract more people that those of poorer quality. Thomas, Hall & Bromley (2003, p. 145) maintain that although improvements into declining town centres cannot alone change its economic performance, "a better environment attracts more people, improves trade and helps to stimulate new investment". This relationship is theorised by Ravenscroft (2002) as the vitality-viability relationship.

The 'Value of Urban Design' reports by CABE & DETR (2001) support this in claiming that good urban design increases the attractiveness, competitiveness, vibrancy and ultimately viability of a place. Visitor numbers are an expected outcome of revitalisation.

Data was obtained from the Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment on the total number of visitors in the Ruapehu from 1996-2013. Data was also obtained from participants on the perceptions of the visitor trends in Ohakune. Additionally, data was obtained on the planning for visitor numbers currently undertaken by the Ruapehu District Council by analysing the content of Council planning documents. This section explores the secondary data, key informant interviews and Council planning documents to discover the effect of revitalisation on visitor numbers. The results indicate that there has been a positive effect of visitor numbers.

Secondary Data

Secondary data has been obtained to reveal the changes in visitor numbers over time. Total visitor numbers are not available at the local level but are recorded based on bed nights (number of visitors staying overnight) at district level. Visitor numbers have increased by 159,954 people since between 1996 and 2013 (see figure 13). This upwards trend of visitor numbers includes seasonal variations as seen in figure 14. The ski season between June and September is traditionally the busiest time of the year for visitors. However, as seen in figure 14 visitor numbers have not been as low as the previous years outside of the ski season, this indicates a rise in summer tourism. It is not possible to conclude if this is attributable to the revitalisation of the town centre.

Another indicator of visitor numbers is holiday home ownership and occupation. It is known that there are more beds available in the southern areas of the district, namely National Park and Ohakune, than the northern and rural areas (*Future Ruapehu: Long Term Plan 2015-2025*, 2015) . In 2013, Ohakune contained 828 holiday homes with approximately 6,655 people visiting these in that year. This is just under half of the visitors in holiday homes alone in 2013 and the highest in the district, with more than the next two town figures combined (*Future Ruapehu: Long Term Plan 2015-2025*, 2015). It is projected that these figures will rise to 4,228 holiday home visitors in 2025 (*Future Ruapehu: Long Term Plan 2015-2025*, 2015). Holiday home ownership and occupation is continuing to increase in Ohakune. Again, it is not possible to conclude that this trend is attributed to the revitalisation of the town centre.

There is no data available that confirms that tourist numbers are highest in Ohakune. However, it can be inferred that the ski-field and other recreation opportunities are the most significant attraction to Ohakune, and as there are more accommodation facilities available, Ohakune accommodates the highest proportion of visitors. There is also no data which indicates the quality of the Ohakune town centre directly affects visitor numbers. However, the literature has revealed that the quality of the town centre contributes to the popularity of a town centre, of which Ohakune is no different.

Specifically, as Thomas, Hall & Bromley (2003) connects a high quality town centre environment with improved local and visitor patronage to the town centre. The visitor numbers indicate that Ohakune is consistent with the literature. Further, Simmons, Whitehead & Preston (2006) argue that high quality town centres experience high visitor numbers as people favour places they are attracted to and identify with. It can be argued that a contributing factor to the visitor numbers in Ohakune is the mountain theme of the town centre. This contributes to the attraction and identification of visitors who are users of the ski field. The data reveals that Ohakune visitor numbers are consistent with the expectation of the literature. Further research into the visitor numbers and bed nights in Ohakune specifically is required. Additionally, research into the reasons people visit, or contribute to their decision to visit Ohakune is required. This will assist in understanding the visitor experience and requirements of the town centre.
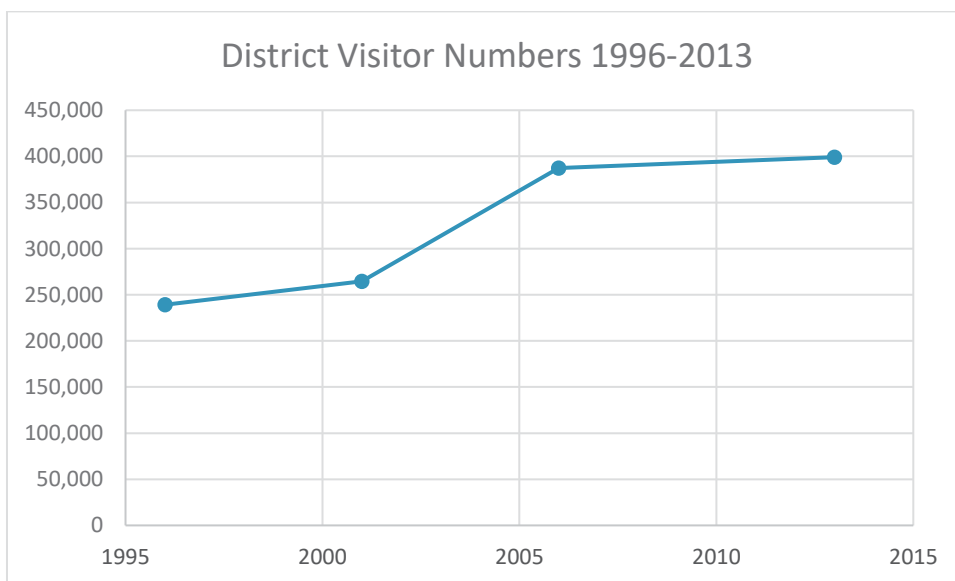
Figure 13: District Visitor Numbers from 1996 to 2013
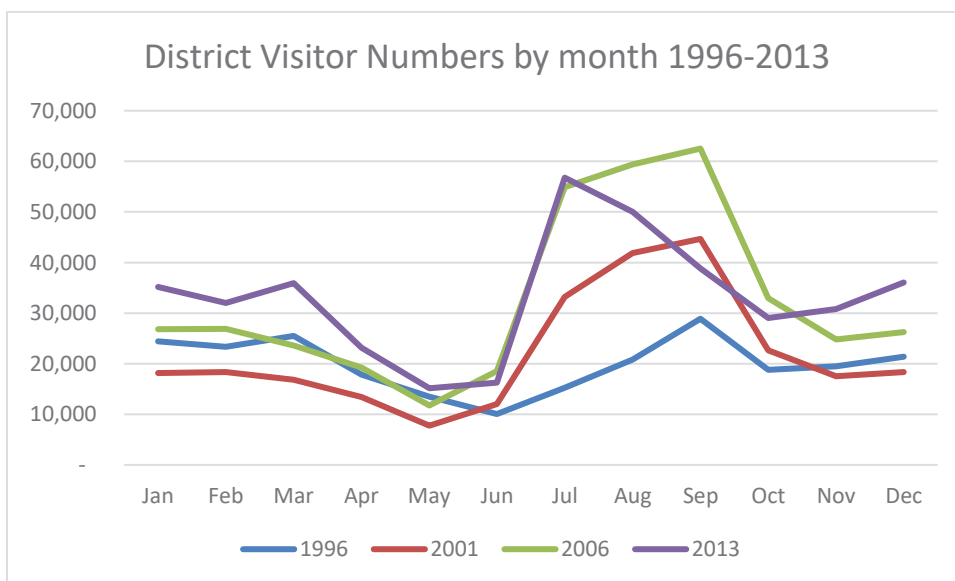
Chart 14: Monthly District Visitor Numbers from 1996 to 2013

Content Analysis

The LTP and EDS were analysed to understand the planning undertaken for visitor numbers in relation to town centre revitalisation in Ohakune and the district. The EDS is particularly focussed on visitor numbers and the tourist market as a means of addressing decline. Growing Visitors is Target Two of the EDS (*Growing Ruapehu Economic Development Strategy 2015-2025*, 2015, p. 13). Additionally, the EDS includes 'visitors' as one of the six key themes of the strategy. In relation to the focus on visitors theme the EDS states that "the qualities that attract people to visit here are also the qualities that will bring them back and encourage them to live, work and do business here" (*Growing Ruapehu Economic Development Strategy 2015-2025*, 2015). The EDS also includes the development of Destination Management Plans as an outcome of the strategy. As the meaning and application of these plans are not defined or elaborated the connection of these plans to town centre revitalisation is unknown. However, the town centre quality or revitalisation is explicitly not connected to the visitor theme in the strategy. This is inconsistent with the literature which promotes addressing visitor numbers through revitalisation. Thomas, Hall & Bromley (2003) argue that revitalisation is a means of improving visitor patronage as people are enticed to places they identify with and are attracted to. Planning to improve visitor numbers through revitalisation is a common response in declining contexts.

The literature supports planning for improving visitor number through town centre revitalisation. The LTP recognises that a high quality urban environment is important to the visitor experience. The LTP includes "Urban streetscapes, parks, playgrounds and public toilets are clean and residents and visitors feel that they are safe places to be in" as a strategic goal of the LTP (*Future Ruapehu: Long Term Plan 2015-2025*, 2015, p. 8) . This goal is then supported by a range of budget provisions including public toilet upgrades and funds for town centre plan commissioning. The recognition and planning for the relationship between town centre revitalisation and tourism in both the EDS and LTP is consistent with the literature which advocates for a high quality town centre environment to improve visitor patronage to the town centre (Thomas, Hall & Bromley, 2003). Councils response to improving visitor numbers through, at least in part, revitalisation is consistent with the literature but is not consistently approached.

Key Informant Interviews

Observations of visitor number trends were discussed with the key informants. All participants have observed an increase visitor numbers over time, especially in the heights of winter and summer. The participants believed that the quality of the town centre contributes to a positive perception and attraction of visitors to Ohakune, and especially encourages return visitors. Two participants in particular (KI1 and KI2) have a high level of contact with visitors and observe the visitor satisfaction with the town centre. KI1 has observed that visitor like the "vibe" of Ohakune and commonly comment on the mountain theming of the town. Additionally, KI4 has observed improved consumption

behaviours of visitors, especially in cafes and restaurants in the town centre. Participant observations have confirmed an increase in visitors and visitor spending over time.

The positive perception of visitors reported by key informants is consistent with the literature, which indicates that environmental quality of the town centre directly affects place perception of Ohakune, as theorised by Thomas, Hall & Bromley (2003). The observations are consistent with Bromley, Hall & Thomas (2003) and Whitehead, Simmons & Preston (2006) who suggest that environmental quality improvements are appreciated by the public and result in high levels of town centre patronage. This further indicates that Ravenscroft's (2002) vitality-viability relationship is in effect Ohakune. In the case of Ohakune it can be reasonable assumed that the quality of the town centre is a supporting factor in Ohakune's overall popularity.

Discussion

The literature suggests that a high quality town centre has a positive effect on visitor numbers. The secondary data has revealed that the visitor numbers to the district have increased over time. It is presumed that a high number of these district visitors are based in Ohakune due to the highest proportion of visitor accommodation facilities and its proximity significant tourist attractions. The participants have all observed that Ohakune town centre is well perceived by visitors to Ohakune. However, it must be noted there is no data to suggest visitor numbers are high in Ohakune directly as a result of the town centre, but it can be inferred that the town centre at least contributes to the rising visitor numbers. This indicates that the revitalisation of the Ohakune town centre has a positive effect on the visitors experience, but it cannot be confidently concluded it has had a positive economic effect on the town. Further research into the perceptions of the town centre by visitors is required.

Emerging Guidelines for Local Authorities

When planning for decline:

-Local authorities need to understand the reasons visitors choose to visit a place.

- Local authorities need to collect visitor number data for each town, understand the reasons visitors choose to visit a place and understand visitor place perceptions when planning for town centre revitalisation. This will assist in producing a town centre that is positively perceived, often visited and influence positive consumption behaviours.

5.4.8 Business Investment Confidence

The attractiveness of the town centre can result in increased business investment as high quality town centres results a premium on revitalised areas (Padilla & Eastlick, 2008; Whitehead et al., 2006). Thomas, Bromley & Hall (2003) argue that revitalisation helps to stimulate new investment. Ravenscroft (2002) argues that as high quality town centres attract people and influence their

willingness to spend, potential business owners are encouraged to invest in the town centre. High levels of investment confidence demonstrate the presence of the vitality-viability relationship (Ravenscroft, 2002).

Data was obtained from participants on the perceptions of investment confidence in the Ohakune town centre. Additionally, data was obtained on the planning for business investment confidence currently undertaken by the Ruapehu District Council by analysing the content of Council planning documents. This section explores the key informant interviews and Council planning documents to discover the level of investment confidence existing and being planned for.

The results from secondary data and key informant interviews are inconclusive due to a lack of data. Content analysis indicates that there is some planning for improving business confidence in the Ruapehu but this is not connected to revitalisation.

Secondary Data

There is no secondary data relating to business investment confidence in Ohakune. It would be useful to obtain data on the confidence of the current business investors in Ohakune, and potential investors in relation to the existing and potential revitalisation of the Ohakune town centre. This would help to understand the effect revitalisation of the Ohakune town centre has had on business investment, and would assist in planning decisions.

Content Analysis

Both the EDS and LTP were analysed to understand the planning provisions for business investment confidence in relation to town centre revitalisation. Neither the EDS nor LTP address business investment confidence explicitly.

Target one of the EDS is 'Growing Business Development', and includes to "encourage more investment" as a part of the target. This target aims to "make it easier for businesses to set up' (*Growing Ruapehu Economic Development Strategy 2015-2025*, 2015, p. 11). However, the encouragement of business is not connected to town centre revitalisation in the strategy.

The EDS aims to improve and highlight business opportunities and is implicitly one of improving the business investment confidence in the Ruapehu. The connection of town centre revitalisation and investment confidence is not explicitly made in the EDS. This is inconsistent with the literature from Padilla & Eastlick (2008) and Whitehead et al., (2006) which suggests the attractiveness of the town centre can also result in increased business investment in the town centre. Particularly, investment confidence in retail is expected by Troy (2007) as retail is the basis of vitality and viability of the town centre.

Key Informant Interviews

Data on business investment confidence was not obtained as business participants were not willing to participate in the research. This data would have contributed the conclusions of this section. Business investment confidence in the town centre was discussed with the remaining key informants. None of the participants could provide insight into business investment confidence in Ohakune. This has resulted in no direct observations or knowledge relating to business investment confidence.

Further key informant interviews with current and potential investors regarding town centre revitalisation is recommended. This data would assist in understanding perceptions of business investors of town centre revitalisation.

Discussion

Business investment confidence is expected to improve in a town centre as a result of revitalisation, which could then arguable result in the economic development the EDS aims for. There is no data available to conclude if revitalisation has resulted in positive business investment confidence outcomes for Ohakune. This is matter that more research should be undertaken on.

Emerging Guidelines for Local Authorities

When planning for decline:

- Local authorities should undertake research with current and potential investors regarding town centre revitalisation. This is in order to understand perceptions of business investors of town centre revitalisation and provide conditions to encourage investment in the town centre and later create and evaluate success.

5.5 Social Effects of Revitalisation

There are many social outcomes of revitalisation. Kemp (2011) and Haas & Olsson (2013) maintain that ultimately the success of revitalisation is based in the improvements that support social exchanges. The town centre is expected to be a socially equitable and inclusive space as the public realm is "a quintessential social territory" (Loftland, 1998, p4). However, while town centres are undoubtedly social spaces they are not necessarily equitable. Urban design interventions can often 'design out' particular users in favour of others who are deemed more desirable; these users may be residents, the homeless, and particular groups who congregate in the subject area (Linton et al., 2013). The literature in summary indicates that attractive, inclusive, safe and equal public places often become the social focus of the community and provide for the social function of the public realm. Both positive and negative outcomes of revitalisation are expected. The RMA and LGA provided a mandate for local authorities to consider and plan for social well-being which can be achieved through town centre revitalisation.

The literature review has identified a number of indicators of social effects of revitalisation through urban design which include improved equality, inclusion, interaction, quality of life and safety in the town centre. The literature also identified that the local population can be under provided for in favour of tourist markets in town centre revitalisation. Physical alterations to space that encourage and support youth, elderly, disabled, homeless and minority populations produce a more socially equitable town centre and a quality of life for all users (Balsas, 2007; Thompson et al., 2015). This section discusses the results of key informant interviews and content analysis of relating to the social effects of revitalisation.

5.5.1 Equality and Inclusion

A successful town centre enables people to interact, socialise and connect with others (Gehl, 1987). As noted above, revitalisation often causes the displacement and exclusion of existing users through physical interventions by intentionally or unintentionally 'designing out' particular users in favour of others. Revitalisation efforts which result in an equitable town centres are considered to have a positive social effect.

Data was obtained from participants on the perceptions of the equality and inclusiveness of the Ohakune town centre. Additionally, data was obtained on the planning for equitable and inclusive town centres currently undertaken by the Ruapehu District Council by analysing the content of Council planning documents. This section explores the key informant interviews and Council planning documents to discover the extent of and planning for equality and inclusion in in the town or district. The results indicate that the Ohakune town centre is equitable and inclusive. However, more explicit planning for equitable and inclusive town centres is required.

Secondary Data

No secondary data is available in relation to equality and inclusion of the town centre at the time of this research. Data in relation to the numbers of users in the town centre would be useful. This data would give an insight into volume of people using the town centre. Further to this, participant observation of the way the town centre is used and by whom would also provide an understanding of the social role the town centre, its inclusiveness and equality. To understand the perceptions of equality and inclusion by users, a survey of users perceptions would be particularly beneficial.

Content Analysis

Both the EDS and LTP include references to social outcomes. For example, an outcome of the LTP is "safe, healthy communities and people" and "caring for our people and providing safe living" (*Future Ruapehu: Long Term Plan 2015-2025*, 2015, p. 9). The EDS also talks about "enabling changes that effect economic and community outcomes" (*Growing Ruapehu Economic Development Strategy 2015-2025*, 2015, p. 9) . However, these statements are not related to revitalisation or town, rather are

district wide outcomes for all Council activities. The literature supports explicit planning for inclusive, accessible and equitable town centres (Carmona et al., 2008; CABE 2001; Gehl, 1987). Balsas (2007) and Thompson et al., (2015) argue that consideration for youth, elderly, disabled, homeless and minority populations produce a more socially equitable and inclusive public places. For town centres to be successful, Council planning needs to explicitly consider the social equity and inclusion of the space for all users. Further, Council should plan specifically for avoiding the displacement of users as Linton et al., (2013) and Jacobs (1961) argue that the designing out of users results in a fundamentally inequitable and exclusive town centres.

Tourist populations are often disproportionately provided for in town centres. As previously discussed in section 5.4.7 the LTP connects visitor numbers and experiences with town centres and their revitalisation. This approach is supported by the literature. However, this connection must be carefully considered. Johnson, Glover and Stewart (2014) argue that existing communities are often under provided for in revitalisation strategies in favour of tourist populations. This, according to Johnson, Glover and Stewart (2014), results in a town centre that does not cater for the needs and desires of the community and ultimately is an inequitable and exclusive place for locals. Council needs to consider the balance of community and visitor needs and desires in town centres in order for revitalisation to be successful.

Key Informant Interviews

The inclusiveness and equality of the town centre was discussed with the key informants. All the participants felt the Ohakune town centre was inclusive to the extent that it was not explicitly exclusive of any member of society. It was believed that no groups were explicitly "designed out" or obviously not welcome. Rather, it was suggested by one participant in particular that the town centre was not "spectacular for one or for all" rather is was adequate for everyone (KI3). Another participant firmly believed that is more inclusive than before the revitalisation work (KI2). KI2 believed that the town centre was "more inclusive in the 2000's since the [19]80's and is even more inclusive since then [2000) (KI2). KI2 believes that this is due largely to the revitalisation project in the early 2000's. This is supported by KI4 who informed that encouraging all people to feel welcome in the town centre was a key consideration of Ohakune 2000 in planning the town centre. This is explicit consideration by Ohakune 2000 is consistent with the literature. Balsas (2007) encourages revitalisation to create a town centre in which all people have opportunity to access. Thompson, et al. (2015) maintains that a socially equal and inclusive town centre is a key factor in a successful town centre.

Discussion

The design of a town centre can effect the social inclusion and equality of the space. Ultimately, the success of revitalisation is based in the improvements that support social interaction and exchanges

(Kemp, 2011; Haas & Olsson, 2013). A socially equitable and inclusive town centre enables all users to interact, socialise, and connect with others. Overall, it is perceived by key informants that although there are potential improvements, the town centre is more inclusive than it was before revitalisation. This is consistent with the literature which expects equitable spaces as positive social outcome of revitalisation. Analysis of Council planning documents has revealed that although social outcomes are considered and seen as important, the statements are not related to revitalisation or town, rather are district wide outcomes for all Council activities. There is a need for explicit planning for social inclusiveness and equality of the town centre. Additionally, further research into the volume and uses of the Ohakune town centre is required and recommended.

Emerging Guidelines for Local Authorities

When planning for decline:

- Local authorities need to research the current provisions for equality and inclusion, and respond to shortfalls by explicitly planning for the social equity and inclusion of the town centre for all users in order to strengthen the social function of the town centre and provide a socially equal and inclusive space. This specifically includes but is not limited to youth, elderly, homeless, disabled, locals and visitor users.

5.5.2 Interaction

The physical characteristics of the urban environment have a significant influence on the social interactions in a space, or in this case, a town centre. A successful town centre enables people to interact, socialise and connect with others, which is "critical for prosperous and vibrant cities" (Gehl, 1987; Troy, 2007, p. 6). Particularly, Balsas (2007) and Thompson et al., 2015) encourage spaces which invite youth, elderly, disabled, homeless, and minority populations to interact and exchange socially. Urban design can be a great influence on the rich variety of interactions that occur in the town centre (Jacobs, 1961; Stone, 1954). Gehl (1987) theorises interaction on a scale, from low or passive interaction to high or intimate interaction. All of these occur in the public realm and a successful town centre accommodates all of these (Gehl, 1987). Interaction is encouraged through design interventions such as seating, pathing, lighting and other amenities (Haque, 2001; Gehl, 1987). The physical nature of the town centre is central to the nature of interactions and success of the town centre.

Data was obtained from participants on the perceptions and experiences of social interaction in the Ohakune town centre. Additionally, data was obtained on the planning for social interaction currently undertaken by the Ruapehu District Council by analysing the content of Council planning documents. This section explores the key informant interviews and Council planning documents to discover the interaction and planning for interaction in the Ohakune town centre. The results indicate that there

is varying levels of interaction in the Ohakune town centre. There is also little explicit planning for social interaction in town centres.

Secondary Data

No secondary data is available in relation to interaction in the town centre. As discussed in section 5.5.1 further data is required in relation to the way the town centre is used. Data in relation to the level of interaction would be useful for future town centre planning considerations. This data would give an insight into the ways people use the town centre, and what kind of social interaction occurs. Participant observation of social interaction in the town centre would provide an understanding of the social role the town centre. It is recommended that further research into the interaction in the town centre is undertaken.

Content Analysis

Planning for social interaction is an important part of the success of a town centre. The LTP and EDS do not include any reference to improving the social interaction opportunities in any town centre. This is inconsistent with the literature. The literature supports explicit planning for town centres that encourage and enable interaction (Carmona et al., 2008). Planning for social interaction is required in order to support the social function of the public realm; a key factor of this is social interaction. Troy (2007) and Gehl (1987) maintains that social interaction is an important factor for prosperous and vibrant cities. A successful town centre supports and encourages social interaction at all levels. It is recommended that Council and others making town centre planning decisions, such as Ohakune 2000, explicitly focus on supporting social interaction within town centres in order to encourage a successful town centre.

Key Informant Interviews

A successful town centre accommodates social interaction. The perceptions of social interaction within the town centre were discussed with the key informants. Participants KI1, KI2 and KI3 felt there was little to encourage people to interact for long periods of time in the town centre. Participant KI4 indicated that encouraging people to interact and spend social time in the town centre was a key driver of the 2000 renewal process. However, it was unanimous amongst the participants that more work is needed to facilitate and invite people to use the town centre as a social space, for example through the pedestrianisation of Goldfinch Street or more attractive seating areas. This is consistent with the literature which advocates strategic decisions to improve social interaction such as seating or physical reconfiguration (Gehl, 1987; Haque, 2001).

The key informants generally felt that although there are some facilities for people to interact and socialise within the town centre, the participants had observed that members of the public do not generally spend extended periods outside in the town centre (KI1, KI2 and KI3). For example, rather

than using the public areas in the town centre people will meet at a local café (KI1 and KI2). KI1 and KI2 believe this is trend occurs as, aside from visiting for food, these places are easily accessible, sheltered from weather and provide comfortable seating. This is consistent with Gehl (1987) and Haque (2001) who suggest that the level of social interaction that occurs in the town centre is influenced by the quality of the town centre and measures to encourage interaction such as seating and shelter.

The key informants observe a seasonal variation in interaction intensity. During the winter, participants KI and Ki3 identified low and passive interaction due to the large number of visitors who do not know other visitors or locals. Locals also tend to avoid the town centre in winter as much as possible due to the high levels of visitors (KI2). In summer, there is an observed higher intensity of interaction as locals are more likely to visit the town centre due to the good weather and the departure of the winter population spike (KI1 and KI3). The observations of seasonal variation is somewhat consistent with Gehl (1978) who argues that different intensities of interaction are experienced in town centres. Although Gehl (1978) does not refer to interactions being directly influenced by climate it is reasonable to assume that factors such as weather and temporal changes in population can affect the intensity of interactions within the town centre. Further research into the effect of climate on public realm interaction is recommended. This will assist in making decisions when planning for revitalisation to encourage social interaction in the town centre.

The trends in Ohakune of avoiding the town centre during winter or using cafes rather than public places for interaction could be considered an example of Tiesdell (2008) and Carmona et al.,'s (2008) suggestion that the role of the public realm and town centre is declining due to the increasing preference for individualised activities. This decline is suggested by Tiesdel (2008) and Loftland (1998) to be avoided through revitalisation of the town centre which focusses on providing for social interaction.

Discussion

The ability for the public to interact in the town centre is suggested in the literature to be affected by the design and quality of the town centre. The data suggests that the Ohakune town centre does not go far enough to encourage social interaction in the town centre. It is concluded that the revitalisation of the town centre is not having a positive social effect.

Emerging Guidelines for Local Authorities

When planning for decline:

- Local authorities should explicitly focus on supporting social interactions within town centres in order to support the social function and vitality of the town centre.

- Local authorities should collect data from users on the ways and intensity of interaction within the town centre both before revitalisation, intially to make strategic decisions on what provisions are needed and then after revitalisation to evaluate the success of the town centre in relation to social interaction

5.5.3 Safety and Quality of Life

Improvements to the physical environment also develop the actual and perceived quality of life the town offers (Haque, 2001). Weiss (2005) claims quality of life is the key to attracting and retaining consumers, workers, employers and investors. Specifically, CABE & DETR (2001) include enhancing a sense of safety at all times and security as a positive effect of revitalisation.

Data was obtained from participants on the perceived and actual level of safety in and quality of life provided by the Ohakune town centre. Additionally, data was obtained on the planning for safety and quality of life currently undertaken by the Ruapehu District Council by analysing the content of Council planning documents. This section explores the key informant interviews and Council planning documents to discover the perceptions of safety and quality of life, and planning provisions for these both.

The results indicate that there is a high level of perceived safety and quality of life according to the key informants. Council planning documents also explicitly plan for safety and quality of life improvements. The results are explored in more detail below.

Secondary Data

No secondary data is available in relation to the safety and quality of life resulting from the town centre. Data relating to the actual safety of the Ohakune town centre in the form of statistics relating to crime in the town centre would be helpful. This data would help to understand the real threats to safety in the town centre in order to address issues through urban design interventions. It is recommended this data be collected.

Content Analysis

Both the LTP and EDS were analysed to understand the current planning provisions for safety and quality of life relating to the town centre. Analysis has revealed that the EDS does not include any reference to improving or addressing the safety of any town centre. The EDS refers to improving the quality of life available in the district but does not connect this to the quality of the town centre or Ohakune.

The LTP does address safety and quality of life. Safety is referred to multiple times strategic goals, for example one goal is to deliver 'urban streetscapes, parks, playgrounds and public toilets which are clean and residents and visitors feel that they are safe places to be in". Another is simply "Provide a safe environment for residents and visitors". Although, not explicitly referred to as 'quality of life', the

goals and outcomes of LTP are focussed towards delivering better living and economic conditions to the district. The LTP addresses safety and quality of life without connecting these factors to town centre quality or revitalisation. The literature recommends explicit planning for town centre safety. Specifically, CABE & DETR (2001) include enhancing a sense of safety at all times and security as one of the key positive effects of revitalisation. Improving safety in town centres should be prioritised in in LTP and EDS considerations going in the future.

The literature supports explicit planning for town centres which are safe and improve the quality of life of residents. Haque (2001) argues that revitalisation of the physical environment results in improvements to the actual and perceived quality of life the township itself offers. Quality of life does not simply have social benefits. Weiss (2005) suggests that high quality town centres assist in providing residents with a high quality of life, which is also considered to be a key contributor to attracting business and workers. Safe environments are also of social benefit and require planning attention. Carmona et al. (2008) argues that as society and space are intrinsically linked, the design of town centres dictate human behaviours. High quality town centres with specific safety interventions are expected to result in safe urban environments and high usage. Planning to improve the quality of life and safety a town centre offers results in social and flow on economic benefits.

Key Informant Interviews

The perceptions of safety and quality of life provided in the Ohakune town centre was discussed with the participants. The town centre of Ohakune was perceived by all participants as a safe place in the town. None of the participants felt unsafe at night or alone. Each participant quoted factors such as lots of lighting, slow traffic, wide paths, wide sight distances that contribute to the feeling of safety at all times in the centre. Additionally, three of the participants felt that the quality of the physical environment in the town centre in some way contributed to their quality of life (KI2, KI3 and KI4). Despite this, one participant in particular felt that a lack of socialising opportunities in the town centre was a limiting factor to the extent of which it contributed to their quality of life (KI1). Further, all participants felt that the town centre contributed to their quality of life to some extent but struggled to identify in what ways and for what reasons.

This is consistent with CABE & DETR (2001), Kemp (2011) and Haas & Olsson (2013) who promote the positive social effect of high levels of safety and quality of life has in a town centre. In particular, Haque (2001) and CABE & DETR (2001) maintain improvements the town centre environment increases the perceived and actual quality of life and safety the town offers which in turn improves patronage and spending. The key informant data suggests that the town centre is delivering a positive social effect of revitalisation for most participants.

Discussion

Improved quality of life and safety of the town centre is a positive social effect of revitalisation. From the above findings, it can be suggested that the town centre contributes intangibly to the quality of life of residents and is perceived as a safe place at all times. It can therefore be concluded that the town centre revitalisation has had a positive social effect in Ohakune.

Emerging Guidelines for Local Authorities

When planning for decline:

- Local authorities should explicitly plan for improving the safety and quality of life offered by town centre and collect data on actual levels of crime in town centres. This will assist in targeted decisions in response to crime to improve the actual and perceived safety and quality of life of the town centre.

5.5.4 Locals vs Tourists

Both local residents and tourists are considered in revitalisation strategies. However, existing communities are often under-provided for. Johnson, Glover & Stewart (2014) have identified that the local resident community is sometimes over looked in attempts to attract and provide for visitors and the tourism industry. For example, Florida (2002) maintains that large developments such as casinos, conference centres, mega hotels, resorts and arenas are socially exclusive, are usually located outside the town centre and do not produce long-term economic benefits nor do profits stay in the community. Rather, local town centre revitalisation provides for the community while producing local economic profits (Florida, 2002). Revitalisation through urban design must primarily provide for the resident population to be successful.

Data was obtained from participants on the perceptions of planning and provisions for local and tourists in the town centre. Additionally, data was obtained on the planning for locals and tourist needs and desires in relation to town centres undertaken by the Ruapehu District Council by analysing the content of Council planning documents. This section explores the key informant interviews and Council planning documents to discover the provisions for both local populations and tourists in the Ohakune town centre. The results indicate that tourist are targeted more than locals in the Ruapehu and in Ohakune.

Secondary Data

No secondary data is available or required in relation to the balance of provision for tourists and locals in the town centre. Data in relation to the existing provisions targeted to locals and tourists in the town centre would be helpful to make future town centre revitalisation decisions.

Content Analysis

Both the LTP and EDS were analysed to understand the current planning provisions for locals and tourists in the Ohakune town centre. The LTP and EDS both explicitly aim to improve the catering of tourists in the district. Analysis of the documents reveals that tourism is a market that the Ruapehu is focussing a large proportion of resources.

The LTP and EDS do not appear to commit to providing for locals or tourists more in the town centre. Both documents take a similar approach to balancing the needs of tourist and locals. The LTP includes the following strategic goal which demonstrates providing for both locals and tourist; "urban streetscapes, parks, playgrounds and public toilets are clean and residents and visitors feel that they are safe places to be in" (*Future Ruapehu: Long Term Plan 2015-2025*, 2015, p. 9). Correspondingly, funds allocated to town centre revitalisation related projects are not exclusively tourist benefiting developments. The EDS also includes 'towns are considered as liveable places' as a tangible outcome of revitalisation (*Growing Ruapehu Economic Development Strategy 2015-2025*, 2015). However, both the LTP and EDS includes 'town centre destination management planning' as a key actions (*Future Ruapehu: Long Term Plan 2015-2025*, 2015; *Growing Ruapehu Economic Development Strategy 2015-2025*, 2015) . Although there is no definition or elaboration on the contents of such a plan, the inclusion of 'destination' implies that planning would be orientated to providing the needs and desires of tourists. This is partially consistent with the theory of Johnson, Glover & Stewart (2014) who have identified that the resident community is commonly over looked in attempts to attract and provide for visitors and the tourism industry. Thompson, Benson & McDonagh (2015) warn against such an approach and advocate that revitalisation must be designed and delivered to local priorities to be sustainable and meaningful. It is recommended that any town centre plan or strategy plans for the desires and needs of local communities as a matter of priority over those of tourists. The LTP and EDS does not appear to be entirely orientated towards tourist based revitalisation projects, however there is some evidence to suggest this could occur through the LTP with supporting planning provisions in the EDS.

Key Informant Interviews

Perceptions of planning and provisions for local and tourists in the town centre were discussed with the key informants. Each participant recognised that the tourist market is an important part of Ohakune's economy and supported some provisions for tourists in the town centre. KI1 and KI4 believe tourist needs and desires are targeted in the town centre more prominently than locals are. However, the opinions on the effect of this favouritism are divergent. KI1 is not supportive of the heavy tourist focus in the town centre. This opposition is based around the perception that the basic needs of locals are only met, while the town centre does not provide areas for locals to socialise, or

enjoy their town centre. Conversely, participant KI4 adamantly believes that while the tourism industry is not strong enough for tourism to be the sole purpose of the town centre, tourism is the key to the future of the town and should be reflected in the town centre. Specifically, KI4 believes that "Ohakune is a host town and part of this role is to cater to visitor needs" (KI4).

Revitalisation which caters for tourists more than residents is inconsistent with the literature. Research by CABE and DETR (2001) include development that is sensitive to context as direct social benefit of revitalisation. An orientation towards tourists rather than locals is identified by Johnson, Glover and Stewart (2014) to be a negative effect of revitalisation as the town fails to meet the permanent needs, desires and quality of life of resident communities. Planning for town centres should prioritise the needs and desires of local communities over those of the transient tourist population in order for town centres to be successful and sustainable.

Discussion

Revitalisation can often be designed to cater for visitors rather than prioritising the needs and desires of the community who live in the town and use the town centre (Johnson, Glover & Stewart, 2014). The data collected suggested this is the case in Ohakune. The town centre is heavily orientated to mountain-based tourism, to the potential detriment of the needs, desires and quality of life opportunities for residents. This imbalance could indicate that revitalisation has not had a positive social effect on locals to the extent that the community deems acceptable. It is recommended that further revitalisation project explicitly plan for the needs and desires of the local community, as well as visitors.

Emerging Guidelines for Local Authorities

When planning for decline:

- Local authorities should prioritise the needs and desires of local communities over those of the transient tourist population when planning for town centres. This will avoid a town centre which provides more for visitors than for the local community.

- Local authorities need to collect data on and understand the reasons visitors choose to visit a place and understand visitor place perceptions when planning for town centre revitalisation. This will assist in producing a town centre that is positively perceived, often visited and influence positive consumption behaviours. See guidelines in section 5.4.7.

5.6 Cultural Effects of Revitalisation

Urban design can have an effect on cultural and identity outcomes for town centre. The characteristics of the urban environment effects, reflects and supports the culture and identity of a community (Green-Leigh & Blakely, 2013; Johnson et al., 2014). Johnson, Glover & Stewart (2014) maintain that

planning processes, such as the revitalisation of town centres through urban design, have the potential to develop places that align with the values, beliefs and perceptions residents have about their town.

The literature review has identified a number of indicators of cultural benefits from revitalisation through urban design. These include an expression of the towns identity and a strong sense of place. Overall the results suggest there is more needed to provide for the social function of the Ohakune town centre.

5.6.1 Town Identity

Urban design is a mechanism for physically expressing the identity, culture and history of a place and community (Green-Leigh & Blakely, 2013; Johnson et al., 2014). However, Haque (2001) contends small communities often struggle to identify where their strengths and uniqueness lie resulting in a community without a unified identity to promote. Johnson, Glover & Stewart (2014) maintain that planning processes, such as the revitalisation of town centres through urban design, have the potential to make places that align with the values, beliefs and perceptions residents have about their town. Further, Balsas (2007) highlights that in diverse communities especially the dominant culture is most commonly represented in revitalisation at the exclusion of other users. The design of the urban environment should reflect the identity of the community but often does not achieve this.

Data was obtained from participants on the perceptions of the Ohakune identity. Additionally, data was obtained on the planning for identity in the town centre currently undertaken by the Ruapehu District Council by analysing the content of Council planning documents. This section explores the key informant interviews and Council planning documents to discover if the Ohakune identity is expressed in the town centre and the planning to provide for identity in the Ohakune town centre. The results indicate that the identity currently expressed in the town centre is not accurate. Additionally, there is the potential for the further planning for the Ohakune identity.

Secondary Data

No secondary data is available or required in relation to town identity.

Content Analysis

Both the LTP and EDS were analysed to understand the planning undertaken for town identity. Neither document address the identity of Ohakune and do not reference incorporating the identity of the community into the town centre. Rather revitalisation is connected with improving economic function of the town centre and district. The results of this research indicate that Council planning is consistent with Balsas (2007) who argues local authorities often prioritise investments in physical revitalisation that promote economic development goals than reflecting the culture or identity of communities. It is suggested this approach is taken as it produces tangible outcomes and are deemed easier to plan for than the intangible and unquantifiable culture or identity of communities (Balsas, 2007). This

approach is warned against in the literature as an accurately promoted identity is argued to be a key determinant of a successful town centre (Balsas, 2007; Haque, 2001; Hart et al., 2013). Further, a town centre that expresses a clear and accurate identity is expected to be more attractive and economically viable than those that do not (Ravenscroft, 2007). The refection of the identity of a community should be planned for in the town centre. It is recommended that further research into and planning for the identity of the town centre be undertaken by Council when planning for town centre revitalisation.

Key Informant Interviews

The identity of the town centre was discussed with the key informants. The participants all identified that Ohakune has two main sources of identity; a mountain town, and the carrot town. Ohakune is well known as a mountain town as it is the access point for the Turoa Ski Field on Mount Ruapehu. The mountain town identity is reflected throughout the town centre with mountain themed lampposts, rubbish bins and seating and mountain style brick work. The town is also famous as the 'Carrot Town' of New Zealand. The carrot identity is supported by the public park around the Big Carrot at the town's southern entrance. These two strong sources of identity were developed in a time when Ohakune lacked an identity at all. KI 4 believes the promotion of Ohakune as a mountain town, and the association with the carrot has saved Ohakune from complete decline.

Some participants question the accuracy of the mountain town and carrot town identity for the local population (KI1 & KI2). These participants discussed that the identity primarily serves commercial interests such as the mountain operator and market gardeners, rather than the community itself. These participants felt that sources of identity such as a strong Maori culture and population are not currently accepted as part of the identity of the town and nor is it reflected in the town centre. This is corroborated, as in this researchers local knowledge, there are no obvious references to Maori culture or Maori history in the town centre. This could suggest that the other cultures, are more celebrated and valued than Maori. This exemplifies Balsas's (2007) argument that dominant cultures are often expressed most strongly in a town centre and at the expense of other cultures present in a community. This is an area that would merit further research. The revitalisation of Ohakune appears to have provided more for visitors and market forces than locals.

The data also indicates that the identity of Ohakune is unknown. Haque (2001) contends that small communities often struggle to accurately identify strengths and weaknesses and in turn their identity. Balsas (2007) also suggests that a lack of leadership is often the catalyst of a poorly represented culture. While Ohakune 2000 provides leadership, this data suggests that the leadership is not strong in relation to expressing an accurate identity. It is recommended research is undertaken into the perceptions and opinions of the Ohakune identity of the community in order to incorporate the accurate identity into the town centre.

Discussion

Urban design is a mechanism for physically expressing the identity, culture and history of a place (Green-Leigh & Blakely, 2013; Johnson et al., 2014). Ohakune has two main sources of identity; a mountain town, and the carrot town which is expressed in the town centre. However, some participants identified that this may not be the true identity of Ohakune and that some elements are failing to be expressed. The identity of Ohakune is therefore not being expressed in the design of the town centre, and as such revitalisation is not having a positive cultural effect on Ohakune.

Emerging Guidelines for Local Authorities

When planning for decline:

- Local authorities should undertake research into the identity communities and physically express this appropriately in the town centre. This is in order to reflect the accurate identity of the community into the town centre.
- Local authorities must be aware of all cultures that exist in the community. This is to avoid dominant cultures from taking precedence over others, especially indigenous, in the town centre.

5.6.2 Placelessness & Perceptions

Image and place perception directly affects patronage of town centres. Attractive places are perceived positively by local and non-local consumers and investors (Green-Leigh & Blakely, 2013). Town centre revitalisation through urban design can physically alter the environment to provide for positive perceptions (Hart, Statchow & Cadogan, 2013). Placelessness is conceptualised by Relph (1978, Preface) as "the casual eradication of distinctive places and the making of standardized landscapes that results from an insensitivity to the significance of place". Schilling & Logan (2008), suggests that an expression of strong and positive identity disestablishes or avoids the identity of 'placelessness' declined towns often experience. Eliminating placelessness and improving the identity and culture of a place contributes to long term revitalisation success.

Data was obtained from participants on the perceptions of Ohakune and placelessness. Additionally, data was obtained on the planning for placelessness and place perception currently undertaken by the Ruapehu District Council by analysing the content of Council planning documents. This section explores the key informant interviews and Council planning documents to discover the perceptions of Ohakune and if the town suffers placelessness. The results indicate that the key informants believe Ohakune is well perceived and does not suffer from placelessness. However further planning for improving place perceptions and avoiding placelessness is required.

Secondary Data

No secondary data is available or required in relation to placelessness and perceptions.

Content Analysis

Both the EDS and LTP were analysed to understand the planning provisions for both place perceptions and avoiding placelessness. The EDS and LTP do not address 'placelessness' specifically. The EDS only aims to improve the quality of town centre and includes 'building a positive image' of the district as a whole as a key priority. The building of a positive district image is not explicitly connected to town centre revitalisation. This lack of connection between place perception and revitalisation is inconsistent with the literature. Hart, Satchow and Cadogan (2013) advocate explicitly planning for a positive relationship between town centre quality and place perception. Town centres that are well perceived are expected to improve the economic performance and social interaction in a space (Balsas, 2007; Johnson, et al., 2014; Ravenscroft, 2000). Based on the literature it is recommended that both Council and Ohakune 2000 should have an explicit focus on the effect of town centre revitalisation on the perceptions of Ohakune.

Key Informant Interviews

The perception of Ohakune was discussed, and particularly observations of placelessness. The participants all believed that visitors to Ohakune perceive the town positively. As previously discussed, participants KI1 and KI2 commonly receive positive feedback from visitors about the vibe and aesthetic of Ohakune. Locals also seem to perceive the town positively, and appreciate the town centre quality according to KI2, KI3 and KI4. The participants also all believed that the positive place perceptions, especially of visitors, encourages people to spend in stores and return to Ohakune. Each participant believes that Ohakune has a unique sense of place and rejected the notion that Ohakune suffers from placelessness. Participant KI4 explained that an intent of revitalisation was to provide sense of place predominantly through the mountain theming of the town centre. The remaining participants corroborate that features such as the mountain themed light pole fixtures, seating and rubbish bins as contributors to Ohakunes sense of place. These observations support the literature which maintains that providing a strong and positive identity is expressed, a place avoids placelessness (Schilling & Logan, 2008; Relph, 1976). It is recognised that the town does express a strong and unique identity, and although this may not be entirely reflective of the community, the identity expressed does address the threat of placelessness from Ohakune. The perceptions of Ohakune are overall positive and the key informants do not believe Ohakune suffers from placelessness.

Discussion

Urban design is a mechanism for physically expressing the identity, culture and history of a place (Green-Leigh & Blakely, 2013; Johnson et al., 2014). Image and place perception directly affects

patronage of town centres. Attractive places are perceived positively by local and non-local consumers and investors (Green-Leigh & Blakely, 2013). Promoting the uniqueness of a town is considered by Balsas (2007) to be a key indicator of successful town centre. The data suggests that Ohakune does not suffer from placelessness and is positively perceived by locals and visitors. Revitalisation has had a positive cultural effect on Ohakune.

Emerging Guidelines for Local Authorities

When planning for decline:

- Local authorities should explicitly address avoiding placelessness in the town centre by expressing the identity of the community which also addresses place perceptions. This ensures that the town centre has a strong sense of place which results in positive place perceptions and avoids placelessness. See guidelines from section 5.4.7 and 5.6.1.

5.7 Environmental Effects of Revitalisation

As the world steadily urbanises there is a need for the retention of natural elements in urban environments (Allen & You, 2002; Zhao et al., 2010). Urban design is a tool to reduce the negative environmental impact urban places inherently produce through revitalisation (Ameen et al., 2015). Revitalising a town centre presents an opportunity for designers, planners and communities to incorporate new and 'green' technologies in storm water recycling, renewable energy use, landscaping with native vegetation and public transport are features that can be retrofitted into urban environments to mitigate the negative environmental impacts of urban places. One method of environmentally friendly urban design is the concept of Low Impact Urban Design and Development (LIUDD). This concept is focussed on development that avoids the adverse effects of conventional urban development in order to protect the ecological values (van Roon & Knight, 2004; van Roon & van Roon, 2005).

The literature review has identified a number of indicators of environmental benefits from revitalisation through urban design. These include the retention of nature and the inclusion of environments improvement systems. Overall the results suggest that more explicit planning for the environmental function in the Ohakune town centre is required.

5.7.1 Environmental Improvement Systems and Retention of Nature

Urban design alters the physical environment and is a tool to address the negative effects of revitalisation. However, the natural environment in which the town centre is situated in, and depends on, is subject to negative effects. As the world steadily urbanises there is a need for the retention of natural elements in urban environments (Allen & You, 2002; Zhao et al., 2010). Adverse effects such as inefficient land and water use, water pollution and air quality degradation are attributed to urban

areas and which poor urban design can cause and contribute to. Revitalising a town centre presents an opportunity for designers, planners and communities to incorporate new and 'green' technologies, and retain nature in the town centre.

Data was obtained from participants on the perceptions of environmental planning provisions in the Ohakune town centre. Additionally, data was obtained on the planning for the environment in revitalisation currently undertaken by the Ruapehu District Council by analysing the content of Council planning documents. This section explores the key informant interviews and Council planning documents to discover the planning for the environment in the town centre. The results indicate that there is the potential for further provisions for the environment such as implementing Low Impact Urban Design and Development (LIUDD) and for retaining nature in the town centre.

Secondary Data

There is no secondary data available, as there have been no environmental improvement installations in the Ohakune town centre. Data such as bird counts or water quality in the Ohakune town centre before and after revitalisation does not exist to the researcher's knowledge but would be helpful. Further statistical research into these indicators is recommended.

Content Analysis

The LTP and EDS were both analysed and both reference and acknowledge the value of the natural environment in the Ruapehu but not in relation into the town centre. The EDS specifically recognises the natural environment as a growth factor for economic diversity and a strength of the district. Specifically, the strategy states "we want to achieve the potential that the Ruapehu District has to offer to achieve a prosperous rural community that capitalises on the agricultural, business and tourism sectors, while maintaining our outstanding rural and alpine environment" (*Growing Ruapehu Economic Development Strategy 2015-2025*, 2015, p. 9). This appreciation and acknowledged importance of the role of the environment has not been connected with town centre revitalisation. The literature supports the inclusion and retention of nature in the town centre (Allen & You, 2002; Zhao, Dongbao, Lin and Tang ,2010). The acknowledgement of the importance of the environment could result in the planning for the development and retention of nature in the town centre.

The LTP also recognises the importance of the environment and connect this to the town centre. Specifically, to "ensure that our environment is accessible, clean and safe" and "that the promotion of our District includes our natural rivers, bush and mountains" are included as outcomes of the plan (*Future Ruapehu: Long Term Plan 2015-2025*, 2015, p. 9). The LTP correspondingly provides for the upgrading of stormwater systems, but none of these works is in relation to improving the environmental effects of the town centre. Specifically, the LTP Includes "that the impact of waste on our environment is minimised" (*Future Ruapehu: Long Term Plan 2015-2025*, 2015, p. 9). Although yet

to be implemented, LIUDD is a system which could be applied in the Ohakune town centre through the LTP to achieve this strategic goal. As LIUDD is not simply a system of collecting and processing stormwater other elements of the system can be incorporated into the town centre. The planting of native vegetation and installing permeable footpath paving during pavement renewal periods can also be undertaken as part of LIUDD in the LTP process. Roon (2007) advocates for the implementation of LIUDD in town centres as it presents an opportunity to introduce functioning elements of ecosystems into the urban environment. The data indicates that Council and Ohakune 2000 are in a position to consider what environmental technologies can be installed to improve the town centre environment. Specifically, LIUDD should be further investigated.

Key Informant Interviews

The planning for improving and including environmental elements in the town centre was discussed with the key informants. The literature maintains that there is a need for the retention of natural elements in urban environments (Allen & You, 2002; Zhao et al., 2010). Participant KI4 and KI3 confirmed that a central part of the town centre revitalisation project was to provide improved access to a significant stand of trees and the Mangawhero Stream passing through the town centre. Additionally, subtler references to nature were noted by KI3 and KI4 such as scoria rock, alpine plants and the representation of mountains in street furniture. These efforts, and in particular, the retention of nature such as with trees and planting within the town centre especially is consistent with Ignatieva, Stewart & Muerk (2008) who discussed the need to incorporate nature into town centre designs. Planning for the inclusion of nature is perceived as well provided for by participants.

Discussion

Urban design alters the physical environment. However, the natural environment in which the town centre is situated in, and depends on, is subject to negative effects. The literature suggests that revitalisation should have a positive environmental impact, especially when implementing concepts such as LIUDD. The document analysis and key informant interview data suggests that there is little evidence that revitalisation has truly had a positive effect in Ohakune. Implementing LIUDD through the LTP process is an option that Council is recommended to investigate further.

Emerging Guidelines for Local Authorities

When planning for decline:

- Local authorities should research existing environmental provisions in the town centre and collect environmental quality data before and after revitalisation to understand current conditions and evaluate the success of revitalisation in relation to the environmental function.

- Local authorities should plan to provide natural elements in town centres through means such as retaining and incorporating nature. This assists in mitigating the negative effects of town centres and supports wildlife and flora species.

- Local authorities should consider the implementation of environmental improvement technologies into the town centre. This assists in reducing the negative environmental impacts that urban environments have, such as water contamination and poor air quality.

5.8 Planning and Public Participation

A recurring theme throughout all the analysis is the role of the community in town centre revitalisation and planning for decline. Town centres cannot be revitalised without the input of those citizens who use them. Nor can decline be adequately planned for if the needs and desires of the community are not considered. Public participation is a process of democratic decision making that involves the collection and consideration of public views in various ways (Arnstein, 1969; Einseidel, 2008; Laurian & Shaw, 2008; Rydin, 1999). High levels of public participation in the urban design process of revitalisation is widely considered to be crucial to successful revitalisation (Arnstein, 1969; Clifford, 2013; Connelly, 2014). Bailey et al (2011) argues that participation is most successful when the community is highly informed. The core purpose of participation is to involve the public in decision making to achieve an improvement in their lives (Clifford, 2013). This section looks specifically at the public participation in relation to the case study.

Ohakune is an unusual situation that while overall long term planning is undertaken by Council, it has not played the key role in the revitalisation work of the Ohakune town centre. Rather this was undertaken by Ohakune 2000. This high level of public participation indicates that the town centre should be a successful place as suggested by the Arnstein's (1969) Ladder of Participation which theorises that the higher the level of participation, the more successful a place is.

Data was obtained from participants on public participation as part of the revitalisation of the town centre and Council planning processes. Additionally, data was obtained on the public participation provisions currently undertaken by the Ruapehu District Council by analysing the content of Council planning documents. This section explores the key informant interviews and Council planning documents to discover the extent of participation in relation to revitalisation. The results indicate that there is the potential and a desire for further participation in relation to town centre planning. The results are explored in more detail below.

Secondary Data

No secondary data is available in relation to public participation in the planning of the town centre. Data on consultation previously undertaken such as submissions returned and number of public meetings held and volume of attendees would be beneficial for evaluation of the success of the town centre revitalisation project.

Content Analysis

The EDS and LTP were analysed to understand the approach taken to public participation. The current LTP includes provisions for community participation. For example, a strategic goal of the LTP is to 'facilitate effective consultation processes to seek community input into decision making" (*Future Ruapehu: Long Term Plan 2015-2025*, 2015, p. 8). The EDS specifically includes partnering with iwi as a key priority and 'partnerships with our community representative groups working on Township renewal as a targeted action from 2015-2018 (*Growing Ruapehu Economic Development Strategy 2015-2025*, 2015).

Participation in the revitalisation of town centres is a central factor of success. This inclusion of participation in town centre renewal is consistent with the Clifford (2013) and Connelly (2014) who advocate for public participation by decision making authorities in town centre revitalisation. Both documents recognise the significance of participation, but do not address how said participation is to be achieved or what success looks like. The literature suggests that the following benefits of participation which could be used to devise successful participation indicators specifically for the Ruapehu: strengthens democracy; increases the responsive of governments to local values and desires; promotes the consideration of all people; helps to identify acceptable and quality urban design; improves legitimacy and trust of government; promotes individual social development and political engagement; raises public awareness of local issues; increases social inclusiveness and capital; and ultimately assists in delivering public spaces that reflect and serve local communities (Biddulph, 2012; Laurian & Shaw, 2008). When executed well participation contributes to the success of town centre revitalisation.

Key Informant Interviews

The participation as part of the Ohakune 2000 town centre revitalisation was discussed with the key informants. Unlike Council Ohakune 2000 is not obliged to undertake public consultation. Nonetheless, the participants confirmed that consultation was undertaken. An Ohakune 2000 participant described that Ohakune 2000 consulted the community in the early 2000's to create the plan. Since then the group have been implementing the plan and have not undertaken any further public consultation, except for with iwi in relation to river and mountain projects outside the town centre. The group have reportedly received little, if any, negative feedback or pressure for public

consultation according to the same Ohakune 2000 participant. The literature suggests that this could be due to the entirely community nature and leadership of the group.

Biddulph (2012) and Laurian & Shaw (2008) expect spaces with high levels of community participation to be ones that reflect and serve local communities as participation improves the responsiveness of decision makers to local values. However, non Ohakune 2000 participants both expressed their lack of understanding of who Ohakune 2000 were and were unaware of opportunities to be involved in the town centre revitalisation project. Additionally, as previously discussed, the participants do not feel the desires, needs and identity of the community is reflected in the town centre. While these participants may be an anomaly, the lack of participation and the opinions of the participants in relation to identity and culture could suggest that the town centre is not reflective of the community. This outcome is consistent with the literature, which suggests that often the true identity of the community is not reflected in the town centre, especially when there has been a lack of participation (see Balsas, 2007 and Johnson et al., 2014).

This lack of community participation and reflection could be a result of a lack of planners in the revitalisation project. Biddulph (2012) and Healey (1997) advocate the role of planners in revitalisation as the planning discipline places a unique emphasis on public participation and collaboration. However, there is no evidence to suggest that members of the planning profession would have produced a space which was any more successful than the current town centre. Connelly (2010) especially argue that planners and the planning profession are still subject to local government forces, personal ethos and local planning cultures around participation. A culture that rejects the importance of participation, and one which does not undertake participation meaningfully could also be to blame (Bailey, et al. 2012). Biddulph (212) argues that normative thinking in decision making often results in the imposition of what those in power deem to be best, rather than implement decisions informed by the public.

The relationship between Council and Ohakune 2000 to deliver town centre revitalisation and other projects can be, and is by both parties, considered a partnership. This model delegates a high amount of control to the community as theorised by Arnstein (1969). However, as previously discussed this participation may not have been undertaken meaningfully and therefore neglecting the true representation of the wider community.

Discussion

Public participation in the urban design process of revitalisation is widely considered to be crucial to successful revitalisation (Clifford, 2013; Connelly, 2014). The core purpose of participation is to involve the public to achieve an improvement in their lives (Clifford, 2013). Overall, the level of participation between Council and Ohakune 2000 as representatives of the community is considered to strong but this does not seem to have transpired similarly between the community and Ohakune 2000. The

community participants felt that while Ohakune did consult on the project the desires and identity of the community has not been reflected in the town centre. The data therefore suggests that the town centre is not as successful as it could be. It is recommended that future town centre revitalisation efforts invest significant resources into public participation.

Emerging Guidelines for Local Authorities

When planning for decline:

- Local authorities must prioritise and plan for public participation when planning for town centre revitalisation and decline. This is a requirement of the LGA but also contributes to planning for a successful town centre and decline approach.
- Local Authorities need to decide to what extent public participation is to occur when planning for decline and town centre revitalisation. Local authorities need to decide where on the participation spectrum decision making is to occur as the approach to participation dictates the extent and methods of the collecting and considering of public views in relation to revitalisation and decline.
- Local authorities should provide the community with high levels of quality information as part of the participation process. This will assist in engaging the community, the success of the consultation process and the overall success of planning for revitalisation and decline.

5.9 Summary

This research sought to answer the research question 'What should local authorities in declining contexts consider when planning for town centres to enable people and communities to provide for their social, economic, and cultural well-being?'. This chapter discusses the results from secondary data collected, key informant interviews and content analysis in relation to the six themes of the research; decline, the economic function, social function, cultural function and environmental function and public participation. The research specifically explored the effects of town centre revitalisation on decline, the functions of the public realm and the role of public participation, in order to develop a list of emerging guidelines for local authorities to consider when planning for decline and town centre revitalisation. These are brought together in the conclusion of the research in Chapter 6.

The Ruapehu is in a state of economic and population decline. When looking at the results of this research in light of the literature on smart decline, it suggests Ruapehu District Council is responding to decline overall with traditional growth strategies. In exploring an alternative decline response, Smart Decline, it is concluded that the Ruapehu District is in a position to consider the formal implementation of a Smart Decline approach across the district.

Although Ohakune was in a state of decline during the Ohakune 2000 revitalisation project, the town has experienced some growth since then, which is projected to continue. However, it cannot be reliably concluded that the Ohakune 2000 town centre revitalisation project has halted the decline of Ohakune alone. The findings of this research suggest that the quality of the town centre is contributing to the upwards trend of Ohakune, but that revitalisation could also be a part of a Smart Decline planning approach by Council.

This research looked into the effect town centre revitalisation has had on the economic function of the Ohakune town centre. The research found that since 1995 Ohakune has experienced an eventual increase in business units, visitor numbers and electronic spending. Conversely, the town has experienced a reduction in employment and population. Matters such as the effect of revitalisation project(s) on commercial rental costs, commercial rental occupancy and business investment confidence are in need of further research, as this was a particular area where secondary data was lacking or unobtainable. Overall, the findings of this research suggest that the Ohakune 2000 revitalisation project have had some positive economic effects but it is not known if the negative economic outcomes are directly related to the quality of the town centre.

The research also found that the town centre provides well for the social function. The key informants believed that the town centre was inclusive, equal and positively contributed to their quality of life. However, more provisions for supporting social interaction, such as seating, is desired by participants. A further key finding, which was highlighted first in the literature and then backed up by the results, is that local authorities should plan revitalisation projects for both locals and tourists, rather than favouring one group.

This research also explored the effects of revitalisation on the cultural function of the town centre. It found that the true identity and culture of Ohakune appears to not be accurately reflected in the Ohakune town centre, and notes that further research into the identity of the community and implementation of these findings is required. In particular, one of the key emerging guidelines developed as part of this research highlights that local authorities must be aware of all cultures that use the space, and consciously avoid any dominant cultures from taking precedence in the town centre.

The effect town centre revitalisation has had on the environmental function of the town centre was also explored. This research found that while natural elements were retained in the town centre during the Ohakune 2000 revitalisation project, there is the potential and desire by key informants to incorporate more. Further, there is the potential for the installation of technologies such as LIUDD in the town centre.

Finally, the extent of public participation as part of the Ohakune 2000 town centre revitalisation project was examined briefly. The relationship between Ohakune 2000 is considered to be an example

of partnership when considered against Arnsteins Ladder of Participation (1969). The research found that while the Council has devolved significant decision-making power to the community group Ohakune 2000, there does not appear to be high levels of consultation and participation between Ohakune 2000 and the wider community. The research findings suggest there is more room for public participation and a desire by the community to be involved in future projects.

CHAPTER SIX - CONCLUSION

The Ruapehu District is in a state of long term population and economic decline. Despite the decline of the wider district, Ohakune is the only town expected to grow after a long period of decline. In response to decline, the Ruapehu District Council and the community are making efforts towards economic development, including town centre revitalisation, to reverse or avoid decline. This is occurring in the Ruapehu District with the development of the Economic Development Strategy and investments in town centre improvements through the Long Term Plan. Ohakune specifically has experienced significant town centre revitalisation work undertaken with strong community leadership by the community group Ohakune 2000 with some support from the Ruapehu District Council.

Despite a universal definition or conclusive cause being unavailable, decline is commonly viewed negatively as local authorities and communities are generally innately growth orientated. However, there are both positive and negative effects of decline. Decline results in multiple negative effects which include, job losses, vacant buildings, derelict land, reduced investor confidence, smaller rating bases, failing retail and service sectors, loss of government, health and professional services, poor public perception, poor land use decisions and community dissatisfaction (Sousa & Pinho, 2015; Oswalt, 2005; Hall, 2009; Rhodes & Russo, 2013). Positive outcomes of decline include housing affordability, natural amenities, sense of community lack of congestion and pollution, and a slower pace of life are qualities cities plan and spend for, yet are intrinsically a part of shrinking places (Hall, 2009; Leetmaa et al., 2012). This research has found that the negative and positive effects of decline can be equally considered.

This research found that communities and local authorities perceived decline as a negative phenomenon which is to be avoided or reversed. The literature suggests that decline is rejected due to innate growth orientations, and the negative connotations that decline carries. This was found to be consistent in Ohakune and Ruapehu as the content analysis and key informant interviews revealed an overall anti-decline sentiment.

Decline doesn't have to be a death sentence, rather there is the potential to respond to decline by implementing strategic shrinkage approaches such as the 'smart decline' theory (Oswalt, 2005). Smart decline is a planning theory that strategically reduces the provisions of local government in order to provide for who and what remains, and capitalises on existing competitive advantages (D. Popper & F. Popper, 2002; Sousa & Pinho, 2015). Rhodes & Russo (2013) note that smart decline offers the opportunity for renewal, modernisation and environmental quality improvements, including to the town centre.

The town centre is an integral part of the public realm. Guy (1994, p.1) argues that the town centre is "central to the town and forms the most important retail area of the town". It is also the social heart of a community, and main place that the identity of the community is expressed. The quality of the

urban environment positively affects the patronage of a town centre, Ravenscroft (2002) theorises this as the vitality-viability relationship. Focussing on the quality of the town centre through town centre revitalisation is expected to encourage the vitality- viability relationship, and ironically result in growth.

Town centre revitalisation has both positive and negative effects on the four functions of the public realm. The public realm is the collection of spaces and places accessible to and used by the public. It has a social, economic, cultural and political function and quality and is arguably the most important part of the urban environment. The town centre, the focus of this research, is a part of the public realm that is the social, cultural, movement and economic nucleus of small urban areas.

The first of these functions is the economic function. The findings reflect the literature in relation to the strong economic function of the public realm and the effect of revitalisation on the town centres in decline. Production and consumption are a core elements of the public realm (Troy, 2007). The economic success of a town centre is dependent on its physical quality. This is what Ravenscroft (2002) conceptualises as the vitality-viability relationship.   The 'Value of Urban Design' reports by CABE & the DETR (2001) support this. They claim that good urban design increases the attractiveness, competitiveness, vibrancy and ultimately viability of a place. Thomas, Hall & Bromley (2003, p. 145) maintain that although improvements into declining town centres cannot alone change its economic performance, "a better environment attracts more people, improves trade and helps to stimulate new investment". The economic benefits of revitalisation are primarily in improvements in consumption and investment. Providing for a town centre which provides for both business and consumer needs provides for the economic function of the town centre.

This research looked into the effect town centre revitalisation has had on the economic function of the Ohakune town centre. Overall, the findings of this research suggest that the Ohakune 2000 revitalisation project has had some positive economic effects but it is not known if negative economic outcomes of the town are directly related to the quality of the town centre or if revitalisation has positively affected decline. Local authorities must therefore consider both the positive and negative economic outcomes. Specific matters for consideration are addressed in the emerging guidelines below.

The social nature of the public realm is also widely recognised in the literature. Loftland (1998, p4) conceptualises the public realm as "a quintessential social territory" and "a form of social space distinct from private… its existence is what makes the city". The social benefits of revitalisation are primarily based in creating more equitable, inclusive spaces for interaction and improving the quality of life for users. However, in reality some parts of the public realm are both intentionally and unintentionally inequitable for some members of society through urban design, market forces and the social processes of exclusion (Carmona et al., 2008).

The research found that the town centre provides well for the social function. The key informants believed that the town centre was inclusive, equal and positively contributed to their quality of life. However, more provisions for supporting social interaction and planning revitalisation projects for both locals and tourists, rather than favouring one group is required in Ohakune. Local authorities should therefore consider and plan for a town centre that is inclusive and equal for all users. Specific matters for consideration are addressed in the emerging guidelines below.

The characteristics of the urban environment reflects and supports the culture and identity of a community (Green-Leigh & Blakely, 2013; Johnson et al., 2014). Johnson, Glover & Stewart (2014) maintain that planning processes, such as the revitalisation of town centres through urban design, have the potential to make places that align with the values, beliefs and perceptions residents have about their town and celebrate the culture and identity of a place.

This research also explored the effects of revitalisation on the cultural function of the town centre. It found that the true identity and culture of Ohakune appears to not be accurately reflected in the Ohakune town centre, and notes that further research into the identity of the community and implementation of these findings is required. Local authorities must therefore be aware of all cultures that use the space, and consciously avoid any dominant cultures from taking precedence in the town centre. Specific matters for consideration are addressed in the emerging guidelines below.

Urban design alters the physical environment. However, the natural environment in which the town centre is situated in, and depends on, is subject to negative effects. As the world steadily urbanises there is a need for the retention of natural elements in urban environments (Allen & You, 2002; Zhao et al., 2010). Revitalisation can be used as a tool to reduce the negative environmental impact urban places inherently produce (Ameen et al., 2015). As such revitalising a town centre presents an opportunity for designers, planners and communities to incorporate new and 'green' technologies.

The effect town centre revitalisation has had on the environmental function of the town centre was also explored. This research found that while natural elements had been retained in the town centre during the Ohakune 2000 revitalisation project, there is the potential and desire by key informants to incorporate more natural elements and the installation of technologies such as LIUDD in the town centre. Local authorities should therefore consider and plan for the retention and inclusion of nature and systems that improve the town centre environment. Specific matters for consideration are addressed in the emerging guidelines below.

Local authorities and planners have a mandate under the LGA to undertake the planning of town centre revitalisation. In the implementation of these, planners work with and influence the desires of the public and other professionals (Higgins & Forsyth, 2006; Kashef, 2008). Public participation is a process of democratic decision making that involves the collection and consideration of public views in various ways (Arnstein, 1969; Einseidel, 2008; Laurian & Shaw, 2008; Rydin, 1999). Public

participation in the process of revitalisation is widely considered to be crucial to successful revitalisation (Clifford, 2013; Connelly, 2014).

The extent of public participation as part of the Ohakune 2000 town centre revitalisation project was examined. The relationship between Ohakune 2000 is considered to be an example of partnership when considered against Arnsteins Ladder of Participation (1969). The research found that while the Council has devolved significant decision-making power to the community group Ohakune 2000, there does not appear to be high levels of consultation and participation between Ohakune 2000 and the wider community. The research findings suggest there is more room for public participation and a desire by the community to be involved in future projects.

This research explored how the Ruapehu District views its declining population and economy, how town centre revitalisation has attempted to address decline in Ohakune, and the outcomes of this revitalisation. The research has resulted in guidelines for local authorities in declining contexts to consider when undertaking revitalisation to address decline.

As the Ruapehu District Council is including town centre renewal as part of their aspirations for economic development and reversing decline, this research looked at public space revitalisation of town centres in a declining context by asking the question: *What should local authorities in declining contexts consider when planning for town centres to enable people and communities to provide for their social, economic, cultural and environmental well-being?*

Understanding how Local Authorities perceive and plan for decline is important as town centre revitalisation is a means of addressing decline. This research specifically explored the effects of town centre revitalisation on decline, the functions of the public realm and the role of public participation. The research has revealed a range of information and considerations required for local authorities to consider when planning for town centre and decline. This has resulted in the development of a list of emerging guidelines for local authorities to consider when planning for decline and town centre revitalisation. This list, found in appendix 1, will assist in planning and evaluation considerations of local authorities when planning for town centre revitalisation in declining places.

APPENDIX 1

Exploring the Ohakune 2000 town centre revitalisation project and the provisions of the Ruapehu District Council's Long Term Plan and Economic development strategy has enabled the following set of emerging guidelines to be developed. The guidelines for local authorities when planning for decline and revitalisation are as follows:

1. **Public Realm And Town Centre**

- Local authorities need to have a clear understanding of and prioritise the role and functions of the public realm in order to adequately provide equally for each function in order to provide strengthen the public realm and create a successful town centre.

- Local Authorities need to identify and consider the threats to town centres on a case by case basis in order to respond to the unique context of each place rather than uniformly.

- Local authorities need to research the full extent of historical planning and funding allocations in town centre infrastructure. This will help to understand previous levels of investment, evaluate outcomes of the allocation and determine matters or areas in need of attention prior to undertaking revitalisation.

- Local Authorities should research and, with the community, establish the measures of success for individual communities. Understanding what success means to a community will assist in developing a town centre that meets these requirements and in evaluation.

2. **Decline**

   Perceptions of Decline

- Local authorities need to be aware that communities and local authorities themselves generally reject decline so must undertake comprehensive public consultation when considering implementing Smart Decline and to consider and plan for the positive outcomes of decline.

- Local authority planning documents need to take a consistent and coherent approach to decline and be critically aware of any contradictions within the documents whereby they are simultaneously planning for decline but also planning for growth. This will ensure that decline is addressed consistently by a local authority.

   Smart Decline

- When planning for Smart Decline, local authorities should investigate the extent and outcomes of implementing Smart Decline on a case-by- case basis by considering the unique context of the region, district and town. This is necessary as each place is unique and Smart

Decline needs to be implemented in a manner that reflects the local community, planning cultures and local power structures to be successful.

- If a Local Authority were to adopt a Smart Decline approach to plan for decline, while also planning for town centre revitalisation, it would be necessary to strategically re-allocate funds to town centre revitalisation. Smart Decline commonly includes town centre revitalisation when funds are reallocated to the town centre, not simply a reduction of funding provisions across all local authority provisions.

- Local Authorities need to be aware that Smart Decline may result in polarising views in communities, and so comprehensive community consultation is required when considering implementing Smart Decline. This will ensure that the needs and desires of the community are provided for as part of the implementation in order to provide for who and what remains. See further guidelines in section 5.8 relating to this.

3. **Planning For The Economic Function Of The Town Centre**

   Business Units

- Local Authorities should collect data regarding the changes in business units in the town centre over time, especially before and after town centre revitalisation. This will assist in evaluating the success of revitalisation in relation to business units.

   Rental Costs

- Local authorities should collect data in relation to the change in rental costs over time in a town centre, especially before and after town centre revitalisation. This will assist in evaluating the success of revitalisation in relation to rental costs.

- Local authorities should be aware of the positive and negative effects of revitalisation on rental costs. This will assist in avoiding the potential imbalanced distribution of benefits of revitalisation and displacement of existing businesses.

   Rental Vacancies

- Local authorities should investigate the change in rental vacancies and occupations over time in a town centre, especially before and after town centre revitalisation. This will assist in evaluating the success of revitalisation in relation to rental vacancies.

- Local authorities need to be aware and plan for evenly applied revitalisation to avoid the potential displacement of existing businesses from the town centre.

Electronic Spending

- Local authorities should consistently obtain data into the electronic spending of each town, especially before and after revitalisation. This will assist in evaluating the success of revitalisation in relation to spending in the town centre.

Employment

- Local authorities should consistently obtain data into the employment levels of each town and especially in town centre based positions. This should be obtained before and after revitalisation to assist in evaluating the success of revitalisation in relation to employment in the town centre.

Economic Diversity

- Local authorities should undertake regular town centre stocktakes to understand the economic diversity of the town centre. Especially, this data should be obtained before and after revitalisation to assist in evaluating the success of revitalisation in relation to economic diversity.

Visitor Numbers

- Local authorities need to collect visitor number data for each town, understand the reasons visitors choose to visit a place and understand visitor place perceptions when planning for town centre revitalisation. This will assist in producing a town centre that is positively perceived, often visited and influence positive consumption behaviours.

Business Investment Confidence

- Local authorities should undertake research with current and potential investors regarding town centre revitalisation. This is in order to understand perceptions of business investors of town centre revitalisation and provide conditions to encourage investment in the town centre and later create and evaluate success.

4. **Planning For The Social Function Of The Town Centre**
   Equality and Inclusion

- Local authorities need to research the current provisions for equality and inclusion, and respond to shortfalls by explicitly planning for the social equity and inclusion of the town centre for all users in order to strengthen the social function of the town centre and provide

a socially equal and inclusive space. This specifically includes but is not limited to youth, elderly, homeless, disabled, locals and visitor users.

Interaction

- Local authorities should explicitly focus on supporting social interactions within town centres in order to support the social function and vitality of the town centre.

- Local authorities should collect data from users on the ways and intensity of interaction within the town centre both before revitalisation to make strategic decisions on what provisions are needed and after revitalisation to evaluate the success of the town centre in relation to social interaction.

Safety and Quality of Life

- Local authorities should explicitly plan for improving the safety and quality of life offered by town centre and collect data on actual levels of crime in town centres. This will assist in targeted decisions in response to crime to improve the actual and perceived safety and quality of life of the town centre.

Locals vs Tourists

- Local authorities should prioritise the needs and desires of local communities over those of the transient tourist population when planning for town centres. This will avoid a town centre which provides more for visitors than for the local community.

- Local authorities need to collect data on and understand the reasons visitors choose to visit a place and understand visitor place perceptions when planning for town centre revitalisation. This will assist in producing a town centre that is positively perceived, often visited and influence positive consumption behaviours. See guidelines in section 5.4.7.

5. **Planning For The Cultural Function Of The Town Centre**
   Town Identity

- Local authorities should undertake research into the identity communities and physically express this appropriately in the town centre. This is in order to reflect the accurate identity of the community into the town centre.

- Local authorities must be aware of all cultures that exist in the community. This is to avoid dominant cultures from taking precedence over others, especially indigenous, in the town centre.

Placelessness and Perceptions

- Local authorities should explicitly address avoiding placelessness in the town centre by expressing the identity of the community which also addresses place perceptions. This ensures that the town centre has a strong sense of place which results in positive place perceptions and avoids placelessness. See guidelines from section 5.4.7 and 5.6.1.

6. **Planning For The Environmental Function Of The Town Centre**

   Environmental Improvements Systems and Retention of Nature

- Local authorities should research existing environmental provisions in the town centre and collect environmental quality data before and after revitalisation to understand current conditions and evaluate the success of revitalisation in relation to the environmental function.

- Local authorities should plan to provide natural elements in town centres through means such as retaining and incorporating nature. This assists in mitigating the negative effects of town centres and supports wildlife and flora species.

- Local authorities should consider the implementation of environmental improvement technologies into the town centre. This assists in reducing the negative environmental impacts that urban environments have, such as water contamination and poor air quality.

7. **Planning And Public Participation**

- Local authorities must prioritise and plan for public participation when planning for town centre revitalisation and decline. This is a requirement of the LGA but also contributes to planning for a successful town centre and decline approach.

- Local Authorities need to decide to what extent public participation is to occur when planning for decline and town centre revitalisation. Local authorities need to decide where on the participation spectrum decision making is to occur as the approach to participation dictates the extent and methods of the collecting and considering of public views in relation to revitalisation and decline.

- Local authorities should provide the community with high levels of quality information as part of the participation process. This will assist in engaging the community, the success of the consultation process and the overall success of planning for revitalisation and decline

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