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**Community formation and  
protectionism in Auckland's  
intensification process:**

**Exploring opportunities and complexities of  
high(er)-density planning in a low-density city**

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

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# ABSTRACT

A rapid population increase due to increasing migration, escalating house prices and supply issues have led to a 'housing crisis' in Auckland. These challenges, in addition to efforts to curb suburban sprawl and improve community outcomes, have made intensification a priority for Auckland Council. However, intensification creates tension between stakeholders, not only in relation to the end-product which some consider unsatisfactory or discordant in existing low-density neighbourhoods, but because of perceived shortcomings in the process as well. As this process gains momentum, traditional ideas about community are being challenged, reimagined and protected.

This thesis reports on a longitudinal interview and focus-group based study, and examines how intensification and community formation processes are experienced and interpreted by a range of stakeholders including new and existing residents, developers, Auckland Council and community interest groups. It also examines challenges in the intensification process, especially related to place-attachment and place-protectionism amongst existing communities in response to proposed or planned change. This research interprets phenomena through social, spatial and temporal lenses, of which each is given equal weighting, and is consistent with social constructionism which recognises multiple 'knowledges' and 'truths'.

Findings reveal a diversity of views regarding community, both at a conceptual level and as an outcome which is derived from specific processes and influences. Representing either a group of people bound by commonality, a personal feeling of belonging, or a resource providing members with benefits, notions of community and community outcomes are increasingly important to stakeholders in Auckland's intensification process. However, institutional distrust in the planning process poses a threat to achieving successful community outcomes, with schisms and tensions evident between stakeholders. While a degree of conflict is inevitable in a democratic system, findings suggest that intensification will be more successful, both in terms of outputs and public acceptance, if institutional distrust (where it exists) is replaced by forms of critical trust in the planning system as well as in the stakeholders operating within it.



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# CHAPTER ONE: Introduction

This thesis examines the interrelationship between residential intensification and community processes / outcomes in Auckland, New Zealand. Like many cities, Auckland is experiencing a range of challenges caused largely by low-density and car-oriented planning, coupled with high population growth. These challenges include a lack of housing choice and availability both in terms of price, type and size, an under-supply of housing, and rapidly increasing unaffordability. The sub-optimal performance of the Auckland housing market is well-recognised, with most politicians, researchers, planners and commentators calling the situation a 'housing crisis'. There have been many approaches proposed to manage this crisis, one of which is the intensification of housing at greenfield, brownfield and greyfield sites. As well as providing better housing choice and more affordable housing, higher-density housing has been identified as a way to strengthen and improve community outcomes, both within and in the vicinity of new developments. This approach to development has been inspired by New Urbanist, compact and transit-oriented development overseas, as well as perceived benefits related to population agglomeration. Auckland Council, in particular, has embraced this approach and introduced policy accordingly.

When the Council's spatial plan, the *Auckland Plan*, was developed in 2010, there was significant public support 'in principle' for intensification. However, low-density suburban housing has characterised New Zealand living for a long time, and is highly valued by much of the population. Therefore, as ideas of intensification gained traction, and the legitimacy of detached housing in the future has been questioned, push-back has begun to occur from some parts of society. This pushback is predominantly from homeowners who fear for the character of their neighbourhoods and how increased density might affect local communities. Opposition to intensification strengthened during the development of the Council's *Unitary Plan*, a more detailed document than the *Auckland Plan*, that identifies areas

proposed for future intensification. The development of this plan revealed, if not exacerbated, schisms amongst Auckland residents, most noticeably between renters and homeowners and those who do and do not see the merits of higher-density living. Aucklanders are awakening to the challenges facing their city and recognising that the housing market needs recalibrating to ensure supply can cater better to demand and changing preferences.

## **1.1 Research Questions and Approach**

The overall direction of the research was guided by a central research question:

- 1. How is 'community' understood, valued, formed and protected by stakeholders in Auckland's intensification process?**

Alongside this, three further research questions were developed:

- 2. *How has community formation taken place in relation to selected medium / high-density developments?***
- 3. *What is, can and should be the developer's role in community formation?***
- 4. *What drives community-led resistance to intensification in Auckland?***

The first question provides a broad thematic direction to the research that puts 'community' at the centre of inquiry. The following questions focus on more specific aspects related to community in the development process. Because housing policy has real-life implications, I wanted this research to produce results that not only contributed to academic knowledge but also provided useful information for New Zealand stakeholders in the development process.

While this research contains strong planning elements with consideration given to urban design, my core interest is the people (stakeholders) participating in the intensification process, especially their experiences, perceptions and expectations. Because of this focus, I adopted a qualitative research approach which consisted of semi-structured interviews and focus groups spanning a three-year period from 2014 to 2016. To provide a diversity of perspectives, I interviewed planners and politicians from Auckland Council, developers, lobby groups, people who bought off the plan in

new developments, and residents living adjacent to new developments. Because of the timescales afforded to doctoral research, I was able to conduct longitudinal research with people moving into new developments and those living in adjacent or close to them. This allowed a critical examination of the degree to which expectations and fears were realised post-construction and occupation.

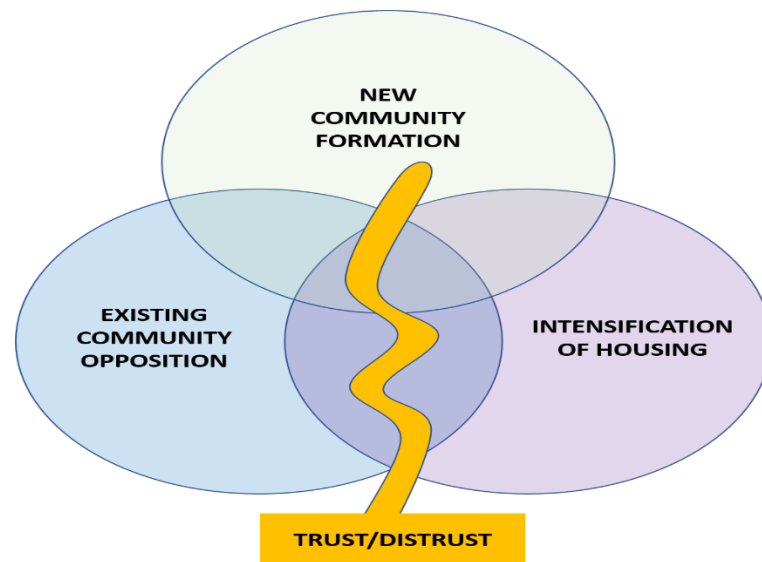
While some of the research examined Auckland-wide processes and issues, especially in relation to the development of the Unitary Plan, my focus was primarily the interplay between community and the intensification process in relation to three casestudy developments. The first of these was Hobsonville Point, a large medium-density greenfield development located at Auckland's north-western outskirts. The second was a small infill townhouse development on Powell Street, a quiet neighbourhood in the central suburb of Avondale. The third was the Turing Building, an apartment building located on the city-centre fringe and abuts existing low-density housing in the central suburb of Grey Lynn.

To guide this thesis and answer the research questions in a meaningful way, I adopted a social constructionist approach, a decision which reflected my desire to examine pluralistic subject areas characterised by a diversity of perspectives and multiple assumed truths. Inspired by Soja's (1996) 'Trialectics of Being', I chose to interpret the data through social, spatial and temporal lenses. This decision was based on the premise that people's lives take place at various locations, with other people, at certain points in time. I believe this ontological model allowed me to better understand the interrelating factors, complexities and tensions inherent to community, both conceptually and in its creation.

## **1.2 The Importance of 'Community' and 'Trust' in the Intensification Process**

Although this research explored a number of concepts, 'community' and 'trust' were identified as the most influential in Auckland's intensification process. Both concepts are complex and interpreted, as well as manifested in a variety of ways. In this thesis, the interrelationship between community and intensification is explored in two

ways: how existing communities and the desire for new communities affects residential intensification processes; and how residential intensification affects new and existing communities. This research additionally posits that trust and distrust both strongly influence intensification processes and community relationships.



**Figure 1. The suggested importance of trust in community and intensification processes**

Figure 1 identifies the interrelationships between community and intensification, and suggests a mediating role for trust and distrust. These themes and concepts, and the links between them are explored in detail throughout this thesis.

### **1.3 The Rationale for Topic Selection**

This research sits within the 'Resilient Urban Futures' programme, an initiative administered by the New Zealand Centre for Sustainable Cities and funded by the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment. The intent behind Resilient Urban Futures was plural: that it contributes to academic knowledge and learning, while also providing useful insights and findings of use to practitioners in various fields. Having previously worked in the planning field, and understanding the common disconnect between research and application, this approach appealed to and

underpinned my topic selection. My intention has been to both evaluate current projects and provide insights into how development can be done better.

Jane Jacobs, in her (1961) book 'The Death and Life of Great American Cities', criticised conventional planning that favoured single detached housing and the creation of car-dependent neighbourhoods. While focused on the US, Jacob's criticisms could easily have been made about New Zealand's planning system, which for years promoted urban sprawl as a matter of policy. Since this time, and inspired by European city planning, there has been a movement to build up, not out. Arguing for this transition, Jenks et al. (2000, p. 17) stated that "many hopes for sustainable urban futures rest on the fact that compact cities, produced through a process of urban intensification, can provide benefits in terms of resource efficiency, reduced travel demand, and livable environments." This compact-city approach and the transport policies that go with it have been embraced by Auckland Council through the development of its spatial plan (The Auckland Plan, 2010) and the more detailed Unitary Plan (2016).

Auckland is in a state of transition, and, depending on the decisions of its politicians and planners, the character of the city could change significantly to a more sustainable and resilient form. However, Auckland Council is between a rock and a hard place. On the one hand, there is a need to increase the supply of housing in the city quickly, and allow for greater choice at an affordable price. On the other hand, the Council needs to address public disenfranchisement and discontent by conducting more meaningful consultation and ensuring people have their rights to democratic participation upheld. Unfortunately for Auckland Council, these two needs are not symbiotic, as extra consultation is likely to slow down planning and development processes. This research provides an opportunity to gain a stronger understanding of both community and developer concerns regarding the development process.

Auckland's development industry is also in a state of transition, particularly in the context of community development. While the remit of developers has traditionally been to build houses and neighbourhoods, some appear to have a growing interest in social outcomes as well as material structures. This research also explores

community-centric developments and the degree to which they extend beyond marketing and contribute to or enable valued community outcomes.

There has been a lack of research undertaken to understand the social impacts of higher-density development in New Zealand. This research can help fill a knowledge gap in this area, presenting, due to the longitudinal approach, more than a simple snapshot analysis. It also provides the opportunity to test (in limited cases) the common perception that master-planned communities contribute to poor or exclusionary social and community outcomes. In doing so, it will contribute a better appreciation of people's expectations and fears relating to intensification and, how these could be better met or mitigated in the future.

#### **1.4 Position Statement**

Creswell (1998, p. 74) stated that "qualitative researchers approach their studies with a certain world view that guides their inquiries". There are many facets of my life, personality and personal history that are likely to have influenced the direction and approach I have adopted in this research. Some of my perspectives have been inspired by literature and journalism. For example, while working as a transport planner in London, I read a thought-provoking article by Deyan Sudjic (2008) called "Cities on the edge of chaos". From this article, two quotes helped shape my position regarding urban planning, and cities more generally:

The cities that work best are those that keep their options open, that allow the possibility of change.

Successful cities are the ones that allow people to be what they want to be; unsuccessful ones try to force them to be what others want them to be.

Ten years later, these beliefs still resonate. I believe urban planning must be highly adaptable, responsive to change, and enabling. I am also uncomfortable with overly directive and / or top-down planning, and while I believe local and central

government both have an important role in urban planning, I also believe this should primarily be in a facilitative and enabling capacity (while still maintaining regulatory oversight).

My own housing history is also worth acknowledging briefly. Throughout my lifetime I have lived in a variety of housing types, in numerous cities around the world. In New Zealand, I have always lived in detached suburban housing – the stereotypical ‘kiwi home’ – and life in this type of housing has provided me with fond memories. Much of these positive experiences are related to the garden and private outside spaces rather than the housing itself. I have always enjoyed and valued the backyard, the trees and the grass on which I could play or relax. I also have positive memories of ‘community’ from this time, where in most houses we socially interacted with our neighbours. With this housing history, I understand the attachment many New Zealanders have to detached housing. Therefore, I can empathise with their fears of change and motivations to protect what they value. However, I also spent most of my twenties living in a range of medium- and high-density dwellings in Ireland, the United Kingdom, Vietnam and South Korea. During this period, I was able to experience both the benefits and shortcomings of intensified living. The benefits were largely associated with proximity to urban amenities and services, while the shortcomings related to challenges with neighbours living in close proximity, and the lack of private outdoor space.

Having had positive experiences living in a range of housing densities I have an appreciation of all typologies. However, from working in the planning industry and having an active interest in sustainable development, I strongly believe that intensification is necessary, and not just in the city centre. Concurrently, I appreciate the value of detached housing and the lifestyle opportunities it presents. My approach to housing and urban planning is like my approach to life in general: I am adaptable and open to changing my views if compelling evidence is presented to me. As a researcher, I make efforts not to be judgemental of people’s views and opinions even if they do not correlate with my own, for there is no singular truth and each person’s perspective is shaped by unique sets of influences.

Furthermore, I acknowledge the Treaty of Waitangi<sup>1</sup> and the huge impact of colonisation on this land and its people. Māori concepts of whenua (land / placenta), wairua (spirit) and tūrangawaewae (place where one belongs / has a right to stand), and Whanaungatanga / hapori (connection / community), which in New Zealand sits alongside European-derived concepts of land, home and community, are also acknowledged.

## **1.5 Thesis Structure**

This thesis comprises nine chapters. Chapters Two and Three provide an overview of the literature relevant to this research. Chapter Two focuses on conceptual understandings of community and the social, spatial and temporal factors that contribute to the formation of community outcomes, such as a sense of community and social capital. Discussions about intentionally created community are also introduced, which includes the ability and remit for developers to play a community building role. Chapter Three focuses on the concept of trust and the importance of trust (and distrust) in the planning process. This chapter also discusses perceptions about place attachment, place disruption and place protectionism, which can translate into public opposition to development – often called NIMBYism.

Chapter Four provides a brief contextual overview of Auckland's establishment and growth as a city, with particular attention given to the city's housing challenges over the years, political / governance changes and recent policy directives to allow for greater residential intensification. The chapter concludes with a snapshot analysis of media coverage related to Auckland housing and the Council's development of contentious policy that would allow for greater intensification. This reveals often binary public positions and schisms relating to housing, where a generational divide is sometimes evident.

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<sup>1</sup> The Treaty of Waitangi is the founding document of New Zealand, an agreement between by representatives of the Crown and of Māori iwi (tribes) and hapū (sub-tribes). It has been contested since its signing with reparations still being made to Māori.

Chapter Five presents the social construction epistemological approach adopted and the three lenses used to interpret and understand my findings. The three case-study developments are introduced, and research methods (including data collection and analysis techniques) are explained.

Chapters Six, Seven and Eight provide results from the research. Chapter Six examines general interviewee perceptions about community and factors that contribute to it. Chapter Seven explores community outcomes in each of the case-study developments. Drawing from longitudinal elements of the research, people's motivations and expectations are then analysed with regard to their experiences at a later date. Chapter Eight focuses on tensions in the development process, including stakeholder and institutional distrust within the planning process and opposition to development. The chapter concludes with a discussion about how these tensions and distrust may be addressed.

In Chapter Nine, key findings from earlier chapters are brought together and discussed, with conclusions drawn about the different interpretations people have regarding community and how community outcomes have manifested across the three case-study sites. It also reflects on opposition to intensification in Auckland, providing insights into why this is occurring and what could be done to address it in the future. This chapter also includes a brief outline of key contributions made by this research, limitations to it, and future opportunities.



# CHAPTER TWO: Understanding 'Community' and Community Formation

## 2.1 Introduction

The concept of 'community' is highly ambiguous (Bulmer, 1987; Lyon, 1999) and to some is "largely without specific meaning" (Day, 2006, p. 1). Many theorists and researchers have tried to define it. In 1955 George Hillery identified more than 90 definitions in the social sciences. Since this time, the number has increased, to the point that the results are so varied that some believe it conceptually indefinable (Cohen, 1985). However, debates about what community means continue, and have diversified with the introduction of the internet and social media. In our increasingly pluralistic world, instead of considering the ambiguity around community as problematic, this conceptual diversity should be embraced, as it provides a range of ways to interpret social interactions in different contexts. As claimed by Lyon (1999), the most interesting concepts in the social sciences are those that are hardest to define. Reflecting Lyon's position, this chapter makes no attempt to define community outright but rather presents a selection of interpretations that I feel apply to the social interactions observed and recorded in this study. The core purpose of this chapter is to provide a conceptual understanding of community outcomes and processes within which the primary research is discussed (Chapters Six–Nine).

Before discussing different interpretations of community, early community-related research conducted by European sociologists Tönnies, Durkheim, Weber and Schmalenbach is presented. Particular attention is given to Tönnies' dual concepts of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, as well Schmalenbach's 'third' categorisation known as 'the Bund'. The difference between spatial and (comparatively) non-spatial community outcomes are presented and discussed. Following this, I explain three

categories of community, which, while distinct, often overlap. The first is 'community as an observable group' of people bound by a form of commonality. The second is 'community as a feeling' experienced by individuals in relation to others around them. The third is 'community as a resource' that can be utilised by members for specific benefits. Alongside these interpretations, tensions between the individual and the collective are explored, with particular attention given to challenging the normative assumption that individualism is detrimental to community formation processes. Drawing on the works of Bourdieu, Loury, Putman and Portes, attention then turns to social capital and the idea of habitus, where different perspectives are examined and compared in the community development context. Next, I discuss perspectives on the effects of population diversity and homogeneity on community, in particular, whether or not diversity is as beneficial to community as politicians and planners commonly characterise it as being (Grant & Perrott, 2009; Howarth & Andreouli, 2015). Temporal factors relating to community formation are then discussed, with regard to the influence of both shared futures / objectives and history / heritage protection as instigators for social relations. Spatial and physical determinants on community are then explored, where the importance of 'place' and density of dwellings provide the key focus. The final section discusses the physical determinist approach of planners and developers, with special attention given to New Urbanist-inspired development, where an often commodified version of community is marketed to consumers.

## **2.2 Origins of 'Community' – Gemeinschaft, Gesellschaft and 'The Bund'**

Although communities have existed for millennia, direct attempts to define and study them were not undertaken until 1887 when German sociologist, Ferdinand Tönnies introduced his concepts of Gemeinschaft (community) and Gesellschaft (society). Gemeinschaft was identified as a traditional, holistic, warm and emotional construct (Berggren & Trägårdh, 2009) where common bonds, values, social relationships, trust, and sympathy are defining attributes (Lyon, 1999; Aigner et al., 2002; Tayebi, 2013). Essentially, Gemeinschaft was identified as representing positive outcomes derived from social relationships, including mutual support,

concern, familiarity, safety, and loyalty (Brint, 2001). In contrast, *Gesellschaft* was identified as representing cold, mass society (Berggren & Trägårdh, 2009), indicative of rational will, calculated relationships, individualism, and emotional detachment (Vandello & Cohen, 1999; Asplund, 1991). Tönnies is argued to have presented *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* as two extreme constructs (Lyon, 1999; Tayebi, 2013), which according to Asplund (1991) never actually existed but rather provide two points of contrast by which comparisons could be made. Through a temporal lens, *Gesellschaft* was considered an evolutionary transition illustrative of the perceived dominance of individualised society over traditional communities in contemporary western society (Sandstedt & Westin, 2015). While Tönnies' concepts have been influential in social science research, they have also been criticised for their inability to yield valuable scientific outcomes or generalisations. This is attributed to the connotative and sentimental nature of the two constructs, which invite confusion and encourage writers to romanticise or debunk community rather than approach it with analytical intent (Calhoun, 1980; Brint, 2001). They have also been considered limiting due to their inability to adequately grasp the complexities of community and society in the 21st century (Mjöberg, 2011).

Tönnies was not the only sociologist to outline dichotomous and idealised concepts when attempting to explain societal change. Durkheim (1893) argued that society was traditionally held together by a form of 'mechanical' solidarity resulting in groups of people bound by commonalities (comparable to *Gemeinschaft*); however, due to industrial and political revolutions (Lyon, 1999) in Europe, such solidarity was said to be lost. In its place, a form of 'organic' society (comparable to *Gesellschaft*) which was characterised by excessive individualism and an inability to cooperate for a common purpose (Day, 2006) materialised. Although different terminologies were used, the conceptual similarities between Tönnies and Durkheim's work are evident. Max Weber also took inspiration from these theories in his work on 'rationalisation'. Although Weber again used different language from Tönnies and Durkheim, his findings were similar, as he also identified Europe as having shifted from a communal (*Gemeinschaft*-like) society towards a more individualistic (*Gesellschaft*-like) society (Lyon, 2011). Like his peers, Weber identified the shift towards individualism

negatively, concluding that this and processes of modernisation and rationalisation inevitably lead to disenchantment (Knox, 2005). In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the ideas of Tönnies, Durkheim and Weber continued to hold resonance, yet researchers had become critical of their simplicity. In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Bell and Newby (1971) found that communities were undoubtedly less locality-bound than they were in the past. At the same time, they rejected the binary and ‘vulgar Tönniesm’, instead believing the shift to a more individualised and less locality-bound society to be more complex with significant variations across different social groups.

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, another German sociologist called Herman Schmalenbach in 1922 produced an obscure and largely forgotten theory which both incorporated and challenged Tönnies’ *Gemeinschaft* / *Gesellschaft* dichotomy. This conceptual evolution was named the *Bund*, translated from the Indo-Germanic word *bhend* meaning ‘to bind’. The *Bund* simultaneously represented a critique of and a supplement to Tönnies’ work and offered a “less rigid and more cyclical view of social change” (Hetherington, 1998, p. 89). Drawing from *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, the *Bund* recognised and incorporated affective and rational behaviours (Schmalenbach, 1977), while simultaneously promoting and denying individuality (Hetherington, 1994) through an individual’s ability to choose their community. Hetherington (1994, p. 2), who attempted to revive academic discussion of Schmalenbach’s concept, also defined the *Bund*:

A *Bund* can be defined as an elective form of sociation, in which the main characteristics are that it is small-scale, spatially proximate and maintained through the affectual solidarity its members have for one another in pursuit of a particular set of shared beliefs.

The idea of ‘elective’ sociation is key to differentiating the *Bund* from *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* for it incorporates the ideas of community and individuality together. It also serves to reframe *Gesellschaft* away from pejorative interpretations. Whereas theorists such as Simmel (1971) believed individuals in modern society were ultimately defined by being alone and isolated, Schmalenbach contended that people

promote and reproduce their individuality through the formation of a Bund (Hetherington, 1994, p. 14). This thinking held that individualism is not necessarily an opposing outcome to community, as suggested by Tönnies' dichotomy, but rather that it is a fundamental component of an evolved community concept. Most of all, the Bund differentiates itself from other theories because it contends that individuality can be a collective. This study posits that community outcomes reflective of the Bund may be increasingly prominent in new (medium and high-density) developments in Auckland.

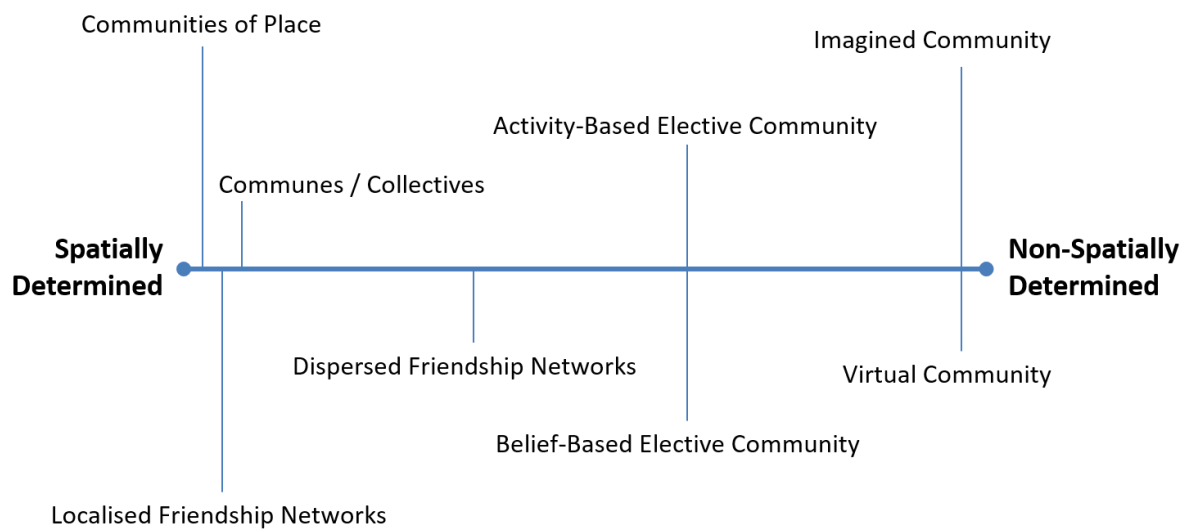
### **2.3 The Socio-Spatial Diversity of Community**

An ongoing debate amongst community-oriented researchers is the influence of 'place' on social outcomes. Traditionally, community has been understood as strongly influenced by the physical environment, as "clearly discernible, spatially delimited entities with well-defined boundaries" (Kayahara, 2006, p. 134) in contrast to delocalised 'communities of interest' where social, not physical influences are dominant. This debate will continue throughout the thesis, and so it is useful to clarify the terminology used. When discussing how propinquity and the physical environment influence community outcomes, three terms are used to describe this: spatial determinism, environmental determinism and physical determinism. While minor differences may exist, the similarities are such that to avoid confusion, 'physical determinism' alone will be used to describe this set of ideas.

A key argument against physical determinism is that a de-localisation of social life is taking place (Wellman, 1979), an outcome which is driven by processes including industrialisation, globalisation, individualism, changing lifestyles and the rise of the internet. For proponents of the delocalised perspective, community now exists as a post-propinquity construct, often (and sometimes confusingly) referred to as a 'community of interest' which consists of a network of people who interact due to shared interests, hobbies, backgrounds or affiliations (Black & Hughes, 2001; Moss & Grunkemeyer, 2010). Examples of 'communities of interest' include online groups, political parties, sports teams and religious groups (Schrader, 2005). Drawing from

the work of Crump (1977), Talen (2000, p. 176) argues that “social research has consistently revealed the existence of placeless communities and the notion that community can be, and has been ‘liberated’ from any specific physical context”. Significantly, Talen’s position does not reject the existence of place-based communities; rather she suggests that localised communities have largely been supplanted by communities of interest. Talen’s conciliatory position was reinforced by Tayebi (2013), who claimed that few theorists hold binary perspectives in this debate, that most acknowledge community is rooted in place to a degree, and that it is the ‘degree’ itself that is contested.

Providing a useful outline of the diversity of socio-spatial community outcomes, Brint (2001) describes eight community subtypes ranging from most to least spatially determined.



**Figure 2. Spatialised Community Continuum**

According to Brint, the subtypes most influenced by locality are ‘communities of place’, ‘communes and collectives’ and ‘localised friendship networks’, all of which exist within a specific location. ‘Dispersed friendship networks’, while still influenced by locality, are formed and maintained outside a single location. The ‘activity-based elective community’ and ‘belief-based elective community’ are choice-oriented and

provide members with stimuli unavailable to members of communities defined by a geographic location alone (Brint, 2001). One such example is a church community where people unite due to a specific set of beliefs, yet meetings regularly occur at a specific geographic meeting point. In church communities, a shared belief is the binding element; however, membership is often localised. The final two types are 'imagined communities' and 'virtual communities'. While the term imagined community is often associated with ideas such as nationalism (Anderson, 1983), over time it has also come to represent a smaller-scale concept – the 'community of interest' where face-to-face interaction is not considered a prerequisite as it is in place-based communities. The final sub-group is the 'virtual community', which describes people interacting and communicating via the internet. While the virtual world is not spatial in the traditional sense,<sup>2</sup> the virtual world as non-spatial is also contested. According to Shields (1991, p. 7), spatial concepts have an "epistemic and ontological importance", that they are "part and parcel of our notions of reality, truth and causality". This thinking was applied by Gotved (2002, p. 412) who claimed that "the creation and consolidation of an online community require spatial interpretations and imaginations on many levels". Like physical spaces, *cyberspace* is also a location for social interaction by group members and, as will be discussed later in this thesis, can be an important factor in the formation of localised community outcomes.

While this continuum provides a useful mechanism to understand the variety of interpretations associated with spatial and non-spatial community groups, the categories given are limited by their specificity. As will be discussed throughout this thesis, there is significant overlap between the community types outlined in the literature.

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<sup>2</sup> This is a murky debate, and one which differs depending on the ontological and epistemological positions held. It also depends on how the concepts of place and space are interpreted.

## **2.4 Different Ways to Categorise Community**

While many interpretations of 'community' are presented in academic literature, this study focuses on three epistemologically different, yet often overlapping, interpretations: that community is an observable and tangible group of people bound by commonality; that it is a feeling experienced by individuals; and that it is a commodity which can be utilised for the benefit of members. Evidence suggests that conceptually community is underpinned to varying degrees by physical, social and temporal factors. Community is also a concept that has evolved due to societal changes and shifting priorities of individuals.

### **2.4.1 A group of people bound by commonalities (the collective interpretation)**

This first interpretation is a community as an observable and tangible group of people bound together by specific commonalities. This means for community outcomes to materialise, collectivism due to commonality must occur (Howarth & Andreouli, 2015; Stein & Harper, 2012; Syme et al., 2005; Gans, 1961; Panzetta, 1971; Talen, 2002)<sup>3</sup>. Put differently, people must have something in common (Schrader, 2005; Day, 2003), something shared (Aigner et al., 2002), or mutual understandings and familiarity (Brint, 2001; Sandel, 2010). Expanding on this interpretation Brint (2001, p. 8) describes community as not only "aggregates of people who share common activities and / or beliefs", but also as people "who are bound together principally by relations of affect, loyalty, common values, and / or personal concern". Similar perspectives are provided by Etzioni (1996), who claims that community formation requires shared values, norms, meanings and identity; and Young (1990, p. 234), who claims that people only consider themselves members of a community if their community has "common self-identification, a common culture and set of norms". Frequently, these are the factors that researchers attribute to 'strong' forms of community, characterised by high levels of social capital and collective efficacy (Western et al., 2005; Woolcock, 1998; Putman; 2000). Shared norms and values are

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<sup>3</sup> Importantly, commonality is also an important factor in the other two interpretations of community; it is just more explicitly outlined in this case.

also related to more personal and affective interpretations of community, as discussed in the next section about one's 'sense of community'.

Such value or belief-oriented communities have been identified by some theorists to challenge physical determinist thinking, that in modern society 'place' is less influential to community outcomes (Giddens, 1991; Talen, 2002). An early example was Webber (1963) coining the term 'communities without propinquity' in an attempt to gain better recognition of delocalised communities. This reflected a shift in thinking towards understanding community as a concept where relationships and social interaction are influenced more by mutual interests than geographic proximity (Tayebi, 2013; Talen, 2002). These debates are interesting and provide a range of compelling arguments.

#### **2.4.2 A feeling experienced by an individual (the affective interpretation)**

This second interpretation is focused on the *feelings* and *experiences* of individuals in relation to their local environment and those around them, rather than the group of people itself. Important to this interpretation is the idea of 'self' (James, 1890), a concept which links one's mental life to the world outside (Mannarini et al., 2006) and includes the connection between one's self and society as a dynamic process (Mead, 1934) where social interaction represents a bond between the 'self' and the 'other' (Wilkinson, 1991). Subsequently, community is both a feeling experienced by individuals and a construct tied to one's own feelings of self. Another significant component of 'self' is that it refers to past, present, and future, as well as actual, possible and ideal selves (Higgins, 1987; Markus & Wurf, 1987). Importantly, in the field of emotional geography, people's connections to the physical environment (place attachment), can also contribute to a sense of belonging (Collins & Kearns, 2013). I contend that all of these are influential factors in the development of one's 'sense of community'.

The 'sense of ...' prefix is important to this interpretation as it reflects the subjective and personal thinking underpinning it. Individual and perception-oriented concepts gained recognition with Sarason's (1974, p. 1) work on community psychology where

'sense of community' was defined as "the sense that one was part of a readily available mutually supportive network of relationships", which suggests that membership, support and inclusion are all important to an individual's experience of community. Research into the individual experiences of community was progressed by McMillan and Chavis (1986), whose seminal work still provides a theoretical base for much recent community-focused research. Their model outlined 'sense of community' as a concept comprising four identifiable components. The first was the idea of *membership*, which closely draws on feelings of belonging, identification, emotional (not physical) safety and shared symbolism. The second was the *influence* residents hold within their community and simultaneously the *influence* the community has on them. Central to this are community norms and values which can either be influenced by individuals or influence how individuals interact with others in their community. The third component was *integration and fulfilment of needs*, which represents the idea of a successful community where people meet their own needs and the needs of others, thus creating positive impressions between members. The final component was a *shared emotional connection* between community members and is centred on positive social interactions, shared histories and even deep or spiritual bonds. Drawing on the work of earlier research, and focused on the localised sense of community, Rosenblatt et al. (2009) identify community as the extent to which residents express a sense of belonging and strong affective ties to their local place of residence. Rosenblatt et al.'s (2009) definition is particularly useful because, in addition to outlining the influence of other people, they also acknowledge the importance of place attachment to one's sense of community. Alongside McMillan and Charvis' (1986) model, these ideas provide a strong representation of how community, either as an individual feeling or experience can be analysed.

Central to 'sense of belonging' are the processes and outcomes of inclusion and exclusion. This is most evident with respect to 'membership', which as a key part of community simultaneously includes some while excluding others. According to Aigner et al. (2002, p. 86), "what is familiar, what seems safe, and what is shared" is also important to one's 'sense of belonging'. This suggests that community is an

outcome where risks and social discomforts are minimised through perceptions of familiarity, which in turn can lead to the avoidance (or exclusion) of unfamiliar or unwelcome factors (people). Identified as a negative outcome by some, the desire for familiarity, as well as an aversion to exclusion can lead to pressures to conform – an outcome that itself can result in somewhat homogenous populations (Gleeson, 2003; Dowling & McGuirk, 2005). Bringing this back to individual perceptions of community, Gotved (2002, p. 405) argues that “community is about inclusion and exclusion and thereby is defined differently by insiders and outsiders”. This suggests that individual perceptions of community differ depending on whether a person is included or excluded from a community group – essentially reinforcing the idea that sense of community is an outcome experienced by each person differently, and importantly, not always positively.

A useful way to interpret community inclusion and exclusion is through the identification of borders and boundaries, which both geographically and socially mark the beginning and end of a community (Satterthwaite, Watts & Piper, 2008). As stated by Cohen (1985, p. 12), “the boundary encapsulates the identity of the community and, like the identity of the individual ... The consciousness of a community is encapsulated in the perception of its boundaries”. Cohen also suggests this to be a major factor in the development of one’s sense of community. In communities of propinquity, a defined boundary such as a fence, a greenbelt, a street, a coastline or a line on a map can help establish a feeling of membership or belonging to an area (McMillan, 1996; Rogers & Sukolratanameteer, 2009). However, within such physical boundaries, social boundaries also often exist which in turn can result in further feelings of inclusion or exclusion. At the same time, largely despatialised communities also have boundaries determining membership, although these are social in nature.

While physical boundaries are easy to identify, social boundaries are often not. Sometimes hidden below the surface, examples can be related to commonalities in age, gender, life-stage and ethnicity, as well as more personal characteristics such as norms, values and beliefs. An interesting example of a social boundary was identified by Blokland (2003) who discovered that community members in one neighbourhood

used feelings of nostalgia and shared history to differentiate themselves from new arrivals in the neighbourhood. According to Savage et al. (2010), this created divisions between 'insiders' and 'outsiders' by adopting an 'us and them' categorisation, which again followed the patterns of membership through inclusion and exclusion. Socioeconomic differences are another form of social boundary that affects one's sense of community. One such example is income inequality, which has been found to create stratified communities where interaction between people from different strata is limited (Clark, 2015). Also utilising socio-economic status as a point of difference, Gwyther (2005) found that residents in one housing development sought to differentiate their development from others by describing it as 'prestigious', 'a better-classed area' and 'bringing in the right kind of people'. While the establishment of social boundaries and the subsequent exclusion of 'not the right type of' people can be contentious, it is nonetheless significant to an individual's experience of community, whether it is negative or positive.

Focusing briefly on the built environment, some studies have found that when people hold positive perceptions of their local environment (house and neighbourhood), this contributes to their sense of belonging. At the dwelling scale, Westaway (2006) found that house maintenance and upkeep was a strong predictor of a person's sense of belonging to a neighbourhood. Similarly, at the neighbourhood scale, Mannarini et al. (2006) found that residents who held positive images of their neighbourhood felt a stronger sense of belonging than those whose associations were negative. However, other studies questioned the link between affective ties to place and a sense of belonging; for example, Dowling et al. (2010, p. 408) found that "aesthetic uniformity" and "built form homogeneity", rather than affective connections to the built environment underpinned the sense of social distinction in master-planned estates. These ideas will be discussed in greater detail in relation to community outcomes within the case-study developments in later chapters.

### **2.4.3 A resource that provides benefits to members (the commodity interpretation)**

This third interpretation identifies community as a resource (commodity) that can be utilised (consumed) by community members. Like, the Bund's relationship to *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, this interpretation incorporates elements of the previous two, while also proposing something quite different. Central to this interpretation is the act of intentionality amongst those who seek membership in a community. In the context of neighbourhood community formation, as is the focus of this study, this interpretation links to the Bund, which as outlined by Hetherington (1994, p. 2) represents a spatially proximate form of elective socialisation where people are bound by affective influences and common pursuits.

Etzioni (1996) identifies three influential types of relationship: utility, normative and coercive. While recognising the importance of relationships based on utility, he also believes that any form of community dominated by a single type of relationship could be problematic. Much earlier, Durkheim (1893) also claimed that a high presence of utilitarian relationships could be unstable if other factors are not present. Such thinking suggests that communities based on utility value alone may be weaker than communities formed around commonalities such as shared values and norms. This forms the basis for an interesting line of research and is one that is touched upon in this thesis.

Suggesting a lifestyle shift, Rosenblatt et al. (2009, p. 132) argue that "our placement and positioning in society is now said to be shaped by individual desires for aesthetically appropriate forms of consumption, rather than by normative considerations of collective needs". In other words, individual consumption is replacing the collective values commonly associated with traditional forms of community. Taking a more critical view of this consumerist shift, Bell and Lyall (2000, p. 756) state that in modern society "community commitment is not high; indeed, the idea of community is a contradiction in capitalist societies of individual self-interest". Such perspectives associate individualism with self-interest, competition, and materialism while associating community with outcomes including solidarity, common consciousness, shared values and mutual understandings (Sandel, 2010;

Day, 2003). Such binary perspectives echo Tönnies' shift from *Gemeinschaft* to *Gesellschaft*, portraying individualism and community as either incompatible or mutually exclusive. However, just as the dichotomy of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* has been criticised for its simplicity, I too contend these positions related to individualism and community are limited. Young (1990) presents an alternative perspective, suggesting that community and individualism are not mutually exclusive, but are instead mutually inclusive outcomes, that they influence each other, and that neither should be interpreted in isolation from the other. This idea is taken even further by Rose (2000) who, incorporating political ideology, suggests that modern forms of community are representative of a 'third way', situated between strong control (socialism) and individualism (libertarianism). This perspective considers community as a concept that simultaneously incorporates collective responsibility and individual freedom. Taking this approach, this study proposes that because many people in modern society have less time to devote to community-building, the availability of more accessible and consumable community outcomes represents an evolution rather than dilution of the concept.

## **2.5 Social Capital and Habitus**

Social capital is an important part of community, particularly from the resource / commodity perspective. First introduced by de Tocqueville in the late 19th century, social capital was only a fringe concept until the 1960s and 70s when writers like Jane Jacobs applied components of it to their research. However, it was not until the 1980s and 90s that theorists including Bourdieu, Loury, Putman and Portes defined it more precisely and applied it to real-life contexts. From a sociological perspective, Bourdieu (1986) believed that social capital represents the sum of resources associated with an individual or group of people – a network of relationships based on acquaintance and recognition. As an economist, Loury (1992, p. 100) describes social capital as “naturally occurring social relationships among persons which promote or assist the acquisition of skills and traits valued in the marketplace”. While coming from different backgrounds, both articulated the core essence of social capital, that benefits can be derived from social relationships and social networks.

Putnam et al. (1993) and Putman (2000) also identifies social relationships as integral to social capital, but he emphasises the importance of reciprocation and trust as factors which are essential for coordinated action and collective efficacy. Drawing from the work of his peers, Portes (1998) reinforces the belief that people gain better access to benefits by belonging to a group. Portes' description is especially important to the third (commodity) interpretation of community.

While key facets of social capital are largely agreed, the benefits and disbenefits associated with social capital are more contested. A strong proponent of social capital, Putman claims that it is the result of increased connection and mutual trust between individuals (1996, 2000). He also argues that social capital leads to people being happier, living longer, children growing up safer, and living in a better functioning democracy. These claims are significant and not shared by everyone. For example, Putnam's "rosy and benign picture of social capital" is considered risky by Aguilar and Sen (2009, p. 427) due to its perceived disregard of potential negative and repressive consequences. These include social control, burdens on members, and the suppression of individuality. It is also claimed that social capital can lead to exclusion for those who sit outside particular membership groups in a community (Aguilar & Sen, 2009; Waldinger, 1995). Bourdieu (1986) even argued that social capital is used by people of privilege or power as a means of ensuring their position by retaining and reinforcing inequalities in society. Such divergent perceptions highlight the contestable nature of social capital and illustrate why it is so difficult to study it empirically (Alesina & La Ferrara, 2000).

As social capital has developed conceptually, three variations have emerged. The first is 'bonding' social capital, which represents the ties that people have with others who are similar to them in some way. The second is 'bridging' social capital, which represents the ties people have with others who are dissimilar to them in some way. The third is 'linking' social capital, which represents relationships and interactions between people from different strata in a hierarchy. In many respects, this is an extension of bridging social capital. Drawing on Allport's (1954) contact theory, bonding social capital represents the relationships between 'in-group' members while bridging and linking social capital represent relationships between people who

do not know each other well or do not belong to the same social groups, in other words, relationships between 'in-group' and 'out-group' members. According to Putman (2007), bonding social capital leads to stronger forms of community than bridging social capital, as it is the result of commonality and familiarity. Underlining this position, Putnam finds social capital to be weaker in diverse populations where similarities and pre-existing bonds between people were harder to identify. Aguilar and Sen (2009) identify one problem with bonding social capital: that due to its basis in commonality it could lead to greater social exclusion for those who are perceived to be different. Similar to the idea of membership, such outcomes can be either positive or negative depending on the situation of the individual involved. More holistically, Flora and Flora (1996) claim that, ideally, both bridging and bonding forms of social capital should exist within communities, for both offer different benefits to community members. Aguilar and Sen (2009, p. 438) similarly argue that community practice guided by social capital "is about finding a balance between bridging and bonding at multi-levels". So far there is little consensus in the literature regarding social capital. This suggests attempts should not be made to classify social capital as positive or negative per se, but rather understand it as a process that simultaneously provides and denies people opportunities within a community setting, based on the characteristics of the individual compared to those around them.

Alongside Putman, Bourdieu, with his concepts of 'field' and 'habitus' has arguably contributed most to the study of social capital. Conceptually, 'field' refers to a multidimensional social space which incorporates many forms of capital of which individuals experience different amounts. The core assumption here is that all human actions take place within social fields, which according to Everett (2002) can be understood as the place where struggles over resources take place. According to Aguilar and Sen (2009, p. 431) 'habitus' on the other hand, refers to "one's encoded beliefs or dispositions that guide how one behaves or acts in the world". It is also:

Primarily unconscious and can include how one speaks, how one presents oneself, and also how one thinks. Habitus is formed through one's experiences, one's position and movement in the social world and is embodied through history and memory. One's social practices and experiences reinforce or modify habitus. Although habitus is an integral part of an individual, it is fashioned by the structures of the social world she, or he exists in (Aguilar & Sen, 2009, p. 431).

This concept of habitus is important to helping understand community, especially regarding people's motivations for seeking, creating and / or joining communities. Understanding the influence and importance of habitus helps to explain why and how people perceive community differently and in turn how individuals are perceived differently by the group. This, in particular, can apply to the interpretation of community as a feeling experienced by an individual, often referred to as 'sense of community' or 'sense of belonging'.

## **2.6 Community Formation and Population Diversity**

Significant attention has been devoted to understanding the relationship between population diversity (often ethnic or socioeconomic) and community outcomes. A common perception is that diversity is a positive influence on a community. This is a normative position that is adopted by many planners, politicians and members of the public (Grant & Perrott, 2009; Howarth & Andreouli, 2015). An alternative view favours homogeneity, arguing that diversity can result in weakened forms of community (Putnam, 2007; Collier, 2013; Gundelach & Freitag, 2013; Twigg et al., 2010), which can erode or prevent the formation of trust, social cohesion and social capital (Alesina & La Ferrara, 2000; Costa & Kahn, 2003; Putnam, 2007; Goodhart, 2004). A third view contends that the effects of diverse or homogeneous populations vary depending on other influences (Talen, 2002).

Reflecting these positive associations between diversity and community, considerable government attention and public policy have encouraged diversity "based on the premise that mixing majority and minority groups bring many

benefits” (Gijsberts et al., 2012, p. 528). Benefits are said to include a reduction in tension and conflict between community members (Moran, 2011; Stolle et al., 2008), better tolerance of social ‘others’ (Marschall & Stolle, 2004), and increased equality, participation and creativity (Joppke, 2009). While not always a proponent of diversity himself, Gans (1961) outlined four ways in which diversity was argued to benefit society. First, that it adds variety and balance, compared to homogeneity, which can be stultifying; second, that it promotes better tolerance of difference and encourages democracy; third, that it is a broadening educational experience for children to interact with a diverse range of people; and fourth, that it encourages exposure to alternative ways of life. While this list is over 50 years old, it reflects many modern arguments favouring diversity. However, some of these benefits have been questioned, with critics considering them unattainable, overstated, incorrect or too vague (Kearns, 2002; Musterd et al., 2003, 2009; Lees, 2008). Cheshire (2007, p. ix) identifies empirical shortcomings behind these claims, arguing that policies promoting mixed communities are based on progressive beliefs and that there is “scant clear-cut evidence” that diverse communities are beneficial, especially to poor residents. These researchers do not claim that diversity necessarily leads to poor community outcomes but rather that the benefits of diversity are still largely unproven.

One aspect of diversity identified as particularly beneficial is that it can encourage cooperation, collaboration and relationship building between populations (Swanson, 2001; Aigner et al., 2002). Emphasising the importance of this outcome, Howarth and Andreouli (2015, p. 12) argue that society must “examine how to engage with diversity as a process of negotiating difference and commonality” because “community does not emerge and does not survive without the recognition of diversity”. Like many others, this position is clearly influenced by Allport’s (1954) ‘contact theory’, which purports that contact and communication between individuals from different groups can (under the right circumstances) result in numerous benefits. Examples include the fostering of positive attitudes (Hewstone, 2015); enhanced social trust (Uslaner, 2002; Stolle et al., 2008); reduced group

derogation (Schlueter & Wagner, 2008; Schlueter & Scheepers, 2010); and reduced prejudice and conflict between members (Pettigrew, 1998; Everett, 2013).

In Allport's contact theory, 'in-group' and 'out-group' are the key terminologies used to describe an individual's position / membership within a particular community. Here 'in-group' refers to the social group that individuals identify themselves as belonging to, while 'out-group' refers to the social groups that individuals do not identify with or do not belong to. Subsequently, the central premise of contact theory is that diversity "erodes the in-group / out-group distinction" (Putman, 2007, p. 144) and "reduces ethnocentric attitudes and fosters outgroup trust and solidarity" (Putman, 2007, p. 147). Pettigrew (1998) outlines four interrelated processes used to mediate attitude change through inter-group contact. The first is *learning about the out-group* to correct negative views and challenge existing group stereotypes. The second is *behaviour change*, which helps people adapt to new expectations and situations and better accept out-group members. The third is in-group members *generating affective ties* with out-group members. The fourth is *in-group reappraisal*, which requires in-group members to consider new perspectives on norms, customs and ways in which the social world is manifested. For these to be realised, equal group status, common goals, intergroup cooperation, and support from authorities and the law were all identified as essential (Allport, 1954), whereby should these conditions not be met, intergroup contact was argued to worsen inter-group relations and produce weakened forms of community. One example given was that inter-group contact could enhance prejudice between people in situations where participants feel threatened or have not actively sought contact (Pettigrew et al., 2011). In fact, the necessity of Allport's four conditions is also challenged by Pettigrew et al., (2011) for whom these are enhancing rather than essential factors. One noticeable trend is that studies often reveal both positive and negative findings. One example is evident from Talen's (2002) study which found that diversity and tolerance for diversity resulted in higher levels of resident satisfaction. However, she also found that this did not translate to collective efficacy, civic participation or neighbourliness and actually created more concern about privacy. In an attempt at empirical clarification, Pettigrew and Tropp (2006) conducted a meta-analysis of 515

studies in 38 countries. While their study suggests that significant inter-group contact reduces prejudice, intergroup anxiety and feelings of threat and uncertainty, others still consider research in favour of community diversity to be inconclusive and overly optimistic.

The desire to better understand the relationship between diversity and community has seen the emergence of alternative theories, including 'conflict theory' and 'constrict theory'. As the name suggests, conflict theory takes a contrary stance to contact theory, identifying diversity as an outcome which fosters competition between (often ethnic) majority or minority groups (Scheepers et al., 2002; Putman, 2007), which can then lead to perceptions of threat amongst in-group members (Savelkoul et al., 2011). This theory also argues that diversity strengthens in-group and out-group distinctions (Putman, 2007), reduces the propensity to participate in social activities (Alesina & La Ferrara, 2000) and increases the likelihood of intergroup tension (Gorny & Torunczyk-Ruis, 2014). In a challenge to contact theory proponents, Putman (2007) claims that most empirical studies support conflict theory due to findings of diversity fostering out-group distrust and in-group solidarity.

Turning attention to the effects of population homogeneity on community outcomes, as with research about diversity, there is a range of perspectives. A common argument provided by advocates of homogeneity is its inevitability, and reflecting the influence of commonality, that people are drawn to live amongst others who are like-minded, culturally similar or at the same life stage (Levy & Lee, 2011; Karsten, 2006; de Chenatony, 2001)<sup>4</sup>. In reference to localised community, Gans (1961, p. 176) claimed that homogeneity is essential for the development of meaningful relationships, while heterogeneity (diversity) "can lead to coolness between neighbours, regardless of their propinquity". Another purported benefit of community homogeneity is that it facilitates the workings of the democratic process by positively influencing rates of individual and civic participation within a community (Gans, 1961; Oliver & Mendelberg, 2000; Engbers, 2015). However,

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<sup>4</sup> This thinking is central to the interpretation of community as representing a group of individuals bonded by commonality.

homogeneity also receives significant criticism in the literature, for example, Howarth and Andreouli (2015, p. 11) argue that expectations of similarity “may, in fact, lead to tension, fear of difference, and hostile politics”. They also suggest that homogeneity “may diminish our dialogical capacities and possibilities for intercultural exchange” and in doing so “strengthen representations of difference”.

Two key critiques of community homogeneity are social exclusion and pressures to conform. The former is outlined by Levy and Lee (2011), who suggest that communities simultaneously attract people with similar value sets and repel those who do not share these values. While this is portrayed in this study as a negative outcome, it is essentially the same process that was identified as integral to commonality-based community formation, only described pejoratively instead. Criticisms are frequently made in relation to master-planned communities, which, inspired by New Urbanism, are criticised for being both socially and physically devoid of diversity (Dear, 1992; Dixon & Dupuis, 2003; Ford, 1999; Gleeson, 2002) due to the way they promote homogeneity and exclude ‘undesirables’. Stated with scorn by Gleeson (2002, p. 231), master-planned communities are “showpieces of new urbanism that rejoice in their privileged homogeneity”. Whether or not the description is accurate, the tone is indicative of the pro-diversity position held by many researchers, particularly in relation to New Urbanist-inspired developments, where benefits associated with homogeneity are often overlooked. However, bucking this trend, Gwynther (2005) acknowledges that in relation to master-planned developments, homogeneous lifestyles, aspirations, values, as well as immediate familiarity, provide a discernible basis for trust and reciprocity among residents.

As with discussions pertaining to population diversity, there is no consensus amongst researchers discussing homogeneity. If any conclusion can be made, it is that diversity and homogeneity can each contribute to beneficial or detrimental outcomes depending on the position of the person in question.

## 2.7 Temporal Influences on Community

Temporal factors also influence community formation process. While numerous temporal influences could be discussed, I focus on three that are particularly relevant to community outcomes in intensified housing development. First, the historical influences which are evident in perceptions of heritage, nostalgia and character. Second, the influence of future planning and joint community objectives. Third, the length of time people live in a particular locality.

The first temporal influence is heritage, a concept defined as “valued objects and qualities such as historic buildings and cultural traditions that have been passed down from previous generations” (Oxford Dictionary, 2016). This definition suggests that heritage can refer to both tangible / physical factors (e.g. the built environment) and intangible / social factors (e.g. individual and group histories) (Kim & Kaplan, 2004), both of which are stated to contribute to a person’s sense of belonging in a particular neighbourhood (Flora & Flora, 1996). The importance of heritage is explained well by Harvey (1990) who argues that in a localised context, acts of ‘retention’ represent people incorporating both the physical and social heritage of their community into their identity. Harvey’s act of retention also bears a striking resemblance to Bourdieu’s (1986) concept of habitus, which suggests that, like habitus, the retention of heritage can be highly influential to the development of one’s sense of community. Of significance, even though heritage is a concept based on the past, it is not static but instead “constantly revised, enriched and sometimes replaced as new people move in and socio-cultural identities evolve” (Filep et al., 2014, p. 11). Given the transient nature of populations in modern society, this infers that community outcomes centred on social heritage may be less stable than those underpinned by physical heritage.

In Auckland’s urban planning context, the concept of heritage is frequently used in the protection of pre-1945, and especially older (Edwardian and Victorian era) villas (Ghosh & Vale, 2009) or land with socio-historical value to local iwi. In Europe, Lewicka (2008) similarly found place attachment to be stronger in neighbourhoods characterised by pre-World War Two architecture. Alongside architectural heritage is social heritage, a concept more closely related to community (rather than

neighbourhood) where people are nostalgic for how life 'used to be'. This feeling can instil in people a sense of yearning, which, when filtered through rose-tinted glasses, can lead to comparisons unfavourable to the present. Nostalgia and heritage are also concepts favoured by some (often New Urbanist) developers to entice prospective buyers by catering to desires for traditional close-knit community experiences (Opit, 2012). Heritage and nostalgia are also major components of 'character' (Searle, 2010; Woodcock et al., 2012). As will be discussed, opposition to development based on heritage and character protection is an obstacle for Auckland planners and developers alike.

At the other end of the temporal scale, future planning is also a bonding influence. Barber (1984, p. 224, quoted in Young, 1990) said there is a necessity for communities to have a "shared vision of the future in which all can share", thus instilling a sense of unity or common direction. This can establish forms of bridging (or linking) social capital, where people who are not close to or belong to different social groups can come together for a joint cause. As put by Bauer and Gaskell (2008, p. 343), communities consist of "diverse identities coming together around a common concern or interest to debate and create a 'future for us'". This idea will be covered more in later chapters when community formation amongst residents in new developments is analysed. In such cases, shared future goals are likely to be influenced by historical or present factors. Although the group may not have a shared history, the individuals comprising the group have their own histories, which may influence the future objectives uniting the group, such as bad experiences with higher-density housing previously.

The third temporal influence on community is one's length of residence in a neighbourhood. Many studies have identified a correlation between lengths of residence and enhanced social relations (Baum & Palmer 2002; Carson et al. 2010; Williams & Kitchen 2012). Studies suggest that longer-term residence leads to familiarity and predictability, which in turn results in benefits such as a sense of belonging, a sense of identity (Kearns & Parkinson, 2001) and a sense of safety (Bailey et al., 2012). By this thinking, it is not just one's own length of residence that is considered important, but that of others in the neighbourhood as well. This means

that when resident turnover ('churn') is high, the familiarity and predictability associated with the community can be lost, which in turn can lead to reduced social relations (Dempsey et al. 2011; Howley 2009). However, other studies found the length of residence to be less influential than sometimes believed. For example, Carson et al. (2010) and Prezza et al. (2009) did find that length of residence influences community membership but that it had little influence on community participation and other social interactions. Length of residence is also often linked to a person's housing tenure, with a commonly held belief that prevalence of homeowners, due to their stability, are more likely to be socially active than renters (Ansell & Thompson-Fawcett, 2008; Carson et al. 2010). Winstanley et al. (2003) similarly argue that increased social interaction within a neighbourhood could be attributed to homeowners having a greater interest in safety and security.

## **2.8 Spatial and Physical Determinants**

Jane Jacobs (1961) firmly believed that neighbourhood design has a profound effect on social relations, especially factors such as high-density / compact housing, mixed land use and a pedestrian-friendly environment. As a strong believer that the built environment influences social relations, Jacobs has inspired numerous academics, researchers and planners to consider the built environment more closely in relation to community.

At the same time, there is academic uncertainty about the influence of the physical environment on community. The tone of the debate around physical determinism is summed up well by Talen (2000, p. 177): "that physical environments have an effect on human behaviour is not in dispute. What is questionable is the degree to which this effect comes close to any particular dimension of community." I do not expect this research to provide definitive answers, but I hope it will contribute to our understanding of how community outcomes are shaped in relation to new medium-high-density developments.

There are many terminologies used to describe the relationship people have with aspects of the physical environment. Defined as a positive emotional connection or

bond with familiar locations such as one's home or neighbourhood (Shumaker & Taylor, 1983; Manzo, 2005), 'place attachment' is identified as a contributing factor to people's experiences of community. A similar concept is place identity, which like place attachment, identifies place as important in the creation of community outcomes. However, place identity is sometimes considered more encompassing than place attachment, for example, the belief that attachment is just a component (Lalli, 1992) or predicator (Pretty et al., 2003) of identity. The physical attractiveness of a neighbourhood has also been found to strengthen community outcomes such as social cohesion and sense of community (Buckner, 1988). In New Zealand, Māori often experience ancestral and cultural senses of place, with the sense of place passed down from parent to child (Hay, 1998), and place attachment strongly associated with social relationships past and present (Teddy et al., 2008).

Like the concept of heritage, place identity also consists of two aspects: perceived distinctiveness of the neighbourhood compared with other places, and its role in the individual and collective memory (Mannarini et al., 2006). Incorporating social, physical and temporal factors, place identity, along with heritage, contributes to the broader concept of character. Drawing on James' (1890) concept of 'self', Pretty et al. (2003, p. 274) describe how place-identity is created:

Place identity develops from acts of locating oneself within environmental contexts throughout daily routines as well as during exceptional circumstances. One's residential community can have personal meanings that are constructed such that the experiences and images of the place constitute a symbolic extension of the self.

A couple of key considerations can be taken from this description. First, the act of locating oneself through daily routines indicates that the development of place identity is a gradual process. This correlates to the position that the longer one lives in a place, the stronger one's sense of community will be (Hidalgo & Hernandez, 2001; Wiles et al., 2009; Williams & Kitchen, 2012). Second, personal meanings and symbolic extensions of the self suggest that community identity is deeply embedded in the personality of residents. Due to this bond, threats or proposed changes to

one's community would likely be met with resistance or even opposition, as contended by Manzo and Perkins (2006, p. 347) "... because people are motivated to seek, stay in, protect, and improve places that are meaningful to them". The strongly personal nature of this concept ties in closely to the community interpretation that identifies community as being a feeling experienced by individuals; however, in this case, this feeling is focused more on a person's local environment than it is to other people.

Considerable research has been undertaken into the influence of density and walkability on community outcomes, such as a sense of community and social capital. Regarding density, research has identified a range of findings, many of which highlight a negative relationship between density and social relations, or provide contradictory or inconclusive results (Syme et al., 2005; Kearns et al., 2012). Furthermore, causation is seldom discernible in studies of this type with social relations and sense of community not able to be attributed clearly to density.

Briefly focusing on the negative relationship, a common finding has been that low-density neighbourhoods result in social stratification (St. Antoine, 2007), and isolation (Kunstler, 1998). Negative social outcomes associated with medium-density housing include a poor sense of community (Williams, 2000; Kim, 2007), sense of place (Williams & Kitchen, 2012), and limited social interaction (Kim, 2007; Wood et al., 2008). High-density housing has been associated with perhaps the worst social outcomes, particularly with regard to people's overall sense of community (Wilson & Baldassare, 1996) and social interaction with neighbours (Kearns et al., 2012).

Across research in this area, a common finding is that while density does often increase social interaction between neighbours, this does not often translate to a greater sense of community that is found in lower-density neighbourhoods. However, research has found more conclusively that the walkability of a neighbourhood and a pedestrian-friendly environment does contribute to one's sense of community (Lund, 2003; Leyden 2003; du Toit et al., 2007; Dempsey et al., 2012). Studies such as Leydon (2003) have found that people living in walkable neighbourhoods experience higher levels of social capital than people living in less pedestrian-friendly, car-oriented neighbourhoods, and so are more likely to be

socially engaged and trusting of their neighbours. Walkability links closely to another aspect of community: neighbourliness. According to Randolph (2006), neighbourly relations largely revolve around children; however, findings show that higher-density developments typically have fewer children, which in turn results in a weaker sense of community (Howley, 2009; Kim, 2007). This is explained in more detail by Randolph (2005, p. 21) who states anecdotally that high-density housing has “lots of DINKS (dual income, no kids) and SINKS (single income, no kids) whose main interests are work, recreation and socialising outside the house”. Similarly, but focused on medium-density housing, Ancell and Thompson-Fawcett (2008) found that such neighbourhoods in New Zealand are largely inhabited by childless occupants. Relating to the length of residence, Dempsey et al. (2012) also found that residents in higher-density neighbourhoods on average do not stay as long as those in low-density areas. For this reason, it is suggested that high-density residents are less likely to be community-minded and seek to form relationships with residents. This is a conclusion that will be tested and explained in Chapter Seven.

## **2.9 Planned Community Formation – A ‘New Urban’ Future**

Planners and developers increasingly understand the ‘value’ of community. For developers, community is a marketable attribute which they acknowledge is attractive to many potential buyers. For planners, community provides an opportunity for strategic and ideological goals based on diversity and inclusivity to (hopefully) be realised:

... human settlements, planners say, should be socially and economically diverse – mixed in income, mixed in use and actively supportive of places that commingle people of different races, ethnicities, genders, ages, occupations and households (Talen, 2006, p. 233).

However, while diversity may be a goal for many planners and developers, criticism exists that particular master-planned developments lack diversity, especially in a socio-economic sense.

Other criticisms are that community outcomes in planned developments are that they are more ideas rather than realities, largely implanted by pointed marketing efforts (Walters & Rosenblatt, 2008); can be exclusionary as spatial expressions of socio-political privatism (Gleeson, 2006); and are representations of people seeking conformity and distance away from social and cultural diversity (Kenna, 2007; Gwynther, 2005).

While developer and planner motivations with regard to community are both criticised and championed, an underlying question remains: to what degree should community formation be a strategic objective? In addition to debates about whether they 'should' have community formation goals, their ability to actually realise such goals is also questioned: "The problem, for planners, is that the notion of community is easily misinterpreted and misapplied, and planners have not exhibited any particular sign that their use of the term is well thought out" (Talen, 2002, p. 172). This concern again reflects the conceptual ambiguity of community, where the interpretation adopted by planners may be either inconsistent with their peers or different to perceptions held by other stakeholders, such as residents. Subsequently, it is suggested that the multiple meanings of 'sense of community' render the planner's involvement in its procurement problematic and in doing so undermine their ability to be effective (Talen, 2002). Perhaps due to such challenges and criticisms, developers and planners have often shied away from actively 'creating' or 'building' communities and instead focus their attention on designs that 'allow' for or 'enable' community formation to take place. In this sense, they identify themselves as providers of tools, which residents can then utilise for community building purposes (Chamberlain et al., 2010). However, in application, the difference between 'creating' and 'enabling' may be largely down to interpretation, a discussion of semantics that needs to take place in the New Zealand policy and planning context where the line between creating and enabling is increasingly blurred. As will be discussed in the following chapters, the language used in community planning is very important.

### **2.9.1 New Urbanism and physical determinist thinking**

The New Urbanist movement has been particularly influential in the development industry, with its emphasis on community development through specific design principles. By identifying problems associated with socially detached, low-density and automobile-dependent neighbourhoods, the New Urbanist movement has actively sought to realign residential planning practices (Duany & Plater-Zyberk, 1991; Katz, 1994; Langdon, 1994; Calthorpe & Fulton 2001) to “improve social life and enhance a sense of community” in new developments (Garde, 2004, p. 154). A central characteristic of New Urbanism is its advocacy for compact design, which is a deliberate and calculated rejection of low-density suburban sprawl. Specifically, New Urbanism seeks to differentiate itself from other design approaches through its self-proclaimed grounding in neo-traditionalism and subsequent rejection of modernist planning (Winstanley et al., 2001, 2003; Bond & Thompson-Fawcett, 2007; Ford, 1999; Till, 2001; Talen, 1999; Youngentob & Hostetler, 2005). However, this identification with neo-traditionalism is contested, with New Urbanism considered by some to be more representative of a contradictory form of post-modernism: “New Urbanism is an excellent example of the postmodern contradiction of imposing postmodern values (and premodern looks) by using the modern means ...” (Hirt, 2009, p. 252).

Reflecting their rootedness in physical determinism, and echoing Mumford (1940, p. 215) who said that suburbs represent “a collective attempt to lead a private life”, New Urbanists contend that both modernist architecture and suburban planning are responsible for a loss of community (Katz, 1994; CNU, 1996). Subsequently, central to New Urbanism is its charter of principles which were created to guide the design and planning of new developments<sup>5</sup> in a way that encourage social interaction and community formation. Highlighting the Congress for the New Urbanism’s (1996) community aspirations, two principles are particularly relevant to community processes:

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<sup>5</sup> In addition to housing, New Urbanist principles have been incorporated into wider fields such as sustainable development, environmental protection, historic preservation and smart growth management (Bohl, 2010).

Within neighbourhoods, a broad range of housing types and price levels can bring people of diverse ages, races, and incomes into daily interaction, strengthening the personal and civic bonds essential to an authentic community (Principle 13).

Streets and squares should be safe, comfortable, and interesting to the pedestrian. Properly configured, they encourage walking and enable neighbours to know each other and protect their communities (Principle 23).

Such approaches are reflective of a more general perception held by planners that favourable 'traditional' community outcomes require deliberate planning. For example, Duany et al. (2010) theorise that both neighbourhood walkability and social diversity contribute to enhanced social relations. Importantly, New Urbanists also emphasise that community outcomes cannot be left to chance and that *laissez-faire* development is unable to lead the way in achieving an integrative urban design foundation (Sternberg, 2000).

According to Talen (2006), the influence of CNU's (1996) principles is evident in the priorities of many planners to whom the promotion of diversity and inclusivity through physical design is now a normative goal in residential planning. However, critics of New Urbanism suggest that whether or not socioeconomic diversity is promoted through design, the end result is often upper-middle-class resident homogeneity (Harvey, 1997; Landecker, 1996; Leher & Milgrom, 1996; Silver, 2004). Such criticism is reflective of wider academic discontent related to the perceived inability of New Urban-inspired developers to achieve their aspirational social objectives. Other researchers have been less critical of New Urbanism, for example, Trudeau (2013), who believes that it is not the principles of New Urbanism that are problematic, but rather the ways in which developers selectively and at times incompletely implement them.

### **2.9.2 Marketing and promotion**

In the context of intentionally planned community, marketing is used to attract people to live in a development, which means promotional activities must encourage the 'right' kind of socially-minded people. A common message espoused by

marketers is that the purchaser will not only be buying a house but will also be joining a community (Chamberlain et al., 2010; Arvanitakis, 2009; Opit & Kearns, 2014; Costley, 2006). Such messages are often associated with New Urban-inspired developments where people can experience a return to traditional community-oriented lifestyles. As stated by Shaw and Shaw (1999, p. 318):

Frequently we have lost the sense of the tight-knit neighbourhood, of the village, of the place where everybody knows each other's name, and where people are often working with their neighbours on projects to improve their community. Many people are yearning for that world to return.

This 'yearning' is well understood by developers who often promote a nostalgic vision of community by populating their promotional materials with signifiers to generate reactions and, in doing so, create positive, socially constructed interpretations of the development (Perkins et al., 2008; Chamberlain et al., 2010). In such cases, developments are frequently marketed as 'havens', and a place where one can belong away from the problems of the outside world (Wood, 2002). Linking back to Tönnies, this 'outside world' is comparable to a form of *Gesellschaft* to which people are seeking to escape while at the same time rediscovering something closer to a *Gemeinschaft* outcome. As put by Chamberlain et al. (2010, p. 12):

the use of the term community makes nostalgic references to experiences of safety, wholesome values and togetherness that are perceived to have been lost to varying degrees ... community reconciles the wider and perhaps more threatening elements of 'the city' with the connectedness and protection of the 'village.'

An important part of this is the way the development is perceived as a counter to processes of rapid urbanisation, where, according to Cova (1997), people are sold the idea of being able to connect with others and thus fulfil their previously lost or threatened community aspirations. This also links to an important facet of the community commodification process: the relationship between a person's

environment (social and physical) and their identity. According to McCann (1995), since the 1970s the middle classes have increasingly bought houses as a way to define their identity (and habitus). It has been contended that this was encouraged by developers who simultaneously identified and created consumer preferences (McCann, 1995; Harvey, 1997) in ways that commodifying community has made it seem more easily attainable. Chamberlain et al.'s (2010) study of new residential developments found that community commodification was undertaken through a combination of 'promotion', 'design' and 'price' mechanisms, which itself is not dissimilar to the well-established four Ps of marketing: 'product, placement, promotion and price'. Also identifying community as a product, Knox (2005) suggests that the approach now taken by developers is a response to consumer disenchantment with socially disconnected suburban lifestyles. Focused on Auckland's master-planned Hobsonville Point development (also a case study in this thesis), Opit and Kearns (2014) found community building to be a core part of the developer's sales strategy and describe the process here as 'imagineered' community.

Because these forms of community are localised, the idea of 'place' is particularly important in marketing and promotional efforts; therefore, marketers attempt to establish a distinctive place identity to differentiate their development from others in their industry (Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2009). This sees marketers promoting the physical environment, whether built or natural, to promote a sense of place. As well as commodifying nostalgia, nature is also a popular resource used for promotional purposes (Castree & Braun, 1998). This is evident in New Zealand, where nature is used to promote community (Opit & Kearns, 2014; Collins & Kearns, 2008), with developers combining images of community and 'rural idylls' to create conflated messages that appear attractive to potential buyers (Perkins, 1989). Through such perspectives, nature is seen to have transitioned from existing, to become a backdrop for private consumption.

While the commodification of community appears to be an increasingly popular and effective method employed by developers, it is also criticised as risky, shallow and representative of emotional manipulation. One such criticism comes from Knox

(2008, p. 173) who cynically claims that “the classic idea of community exists only in developers’ advertising” and in “the rhetoric of new urbanists”. Less critical, but more cautionary, Rosenblatt et al. (2009, p. 124) are concerned that “it is entirely possible that by attempting to contrive or manipulate community as interaction, developers may end up undermining the very idea of community that attracts residents to the estate in the first place”. In other words, an over-commodification of community elements poses the risks of diluting the community that currently exists there. These concerns will be discussed in later chapters, where community commodification and formation at the three case-study developments are analysed.

## **2.10 Conclusion – Reflecting on a Diverse Social Construct**

This chapter outlines a range of contrasting and often contradictory concepts related to community and community formation. In particular, it reveals three distinct, yet sometimes overlapping, ways that the concept of community can be interpreted. The simplest is that community represents a group of people bound by commonality. The next one is more personal as it identifies community as a feeling experienced by an individual in relation to others and / or their local environment. The third is inspired strongly by ideas of social capital and utility where community is interpreted as a resource that can benefit the lives of members. This tied in with ideas of the commodification of community used in the marketing of residential developments. Discussions about community reveal many normative perspectives favoured by academics. At the same time, perspectives are also offered that challenge these views by accepting difference and moving beyond (often) dichotomous interpretations – for example the Bund. The ambiguity surrounding community means that it can be understood as both a measurable and tangible outcome and as an abstract and imagined construct. In many cases, the lines between the two are blurred. The different ways people interpret, value, seek and protect community in Auckland’s intensification process is the centrepiece of this research.



# CHAPTER THREE: Challenges in a Participatory Planning System

## 3.1 Introduction

While the previous chapter focused on the conceptual elements of community and the process of community formation, this chapter discusses the importance of community in residential planning processes. In detail, four specific components related to community and planning are explored. The first is the concept of trust and its importance in the planning process where there is often a schism between different interests. Following this, attention turns to the challenges and opportunities of participatory planning with trust and power relations between different stakeholders being of note. Next, the development of protectionist attitudes on the part of local communities is discussed, with attention given to shortcomings related to participatory planning, the importance of place attachment and character to opposition actions. Finally, this chapter analyses the oft-used and contentious concept of NIMBYism (not in my backyard). It discusses what NIMBYism is claimed to represent, why and how this label is applied, and problems related to its application. This chapter effectively sets the scene for Chapter Eight, which explores the tensions between existing local communities and stakeholders in favour of residential intensification within existing Auckland neighbourhoods.

## 3.2 The Concept of Trust and Why it is Important in Planning

The idea of trust is integral to this study. In this section, different understandings of trust are defined and critically interpreted. Attention is then given to the common belief in planning and social science literature that due to a perceived lack of trust there is now a 'crisis of trust' in society. The importance of trust (and a lack thereof)

in relation to planning is explored, specifically when negotiating and considering differing stakeholder priorities.

### **3.2.1 Defining trust**

The Oxford Dictionary (2017) defines trust as: “a firm belief in the reliability, truth, or ability of someone or something”. A more detailed definition sees trust as: “a psychological state of mind comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behaviour of another” (Rousseau et al., 1998, p. 395). Another definition is: “a reflectively fallible ex-ante guess based upon an assessment of other ...” (Offe, 1999, p. 47). All represent conscious (positive) assertions by a trustee towards another party, predicated upon expectations being met. Such expectations are important in the planning context, where stakeholders are frequently reliant upon others to behave in certain ways or to deliver certain outcomes.

Highlighting the conceptual complexity of trust, Kumar and Paddison (2010) identify two types of trust. The first is affect-based trust, which is tied closely to emotional bonds and relationships. The second is cognition-based trust, which is centred on competence (the capability to perform a task adequately), responsibility (the ability to act with restraint), reliability (to consistently act as expected) and dependability (a small chance of behavioural deviations). This study hypothesises that both forms of trust are important to community formation – a deviation from common interpretations of community as a highly affect-oriented phenomenon. Regarding planning and intensification processes, cognitive trust, or a lack thereof, is predicted to be dominant. These ideas will be explored further in the results and discussion chapters.

Another way of interpreting and explaining trust was provided by Gambetta (1988), who identified trust as relational between two parties: A (the trustee) and B (the trusted), whereby A trusts B with regard to X (situation). Subsequently, trust exists as A’s assessment of the likelihood that B will act as agreed when B’s actions affect A in a way beyond the control of A. This explanation effectively highlights the idea of

vulnerability and fallibility within the trust process. Furthermore, Gambetta outlines that trust is often reciprocal, for when A trusts B, B wants to act in a way which validates this trust; accordingly, should B's trust be required in the future, A behaves in a way that also maintains B's trust. Essentially, this creates a positive feedback loop, which can encourage trusted stakeholders in the planning process to be trustworthy (Laurian, 2009). This explanation strongly emphasises the importance of reliability and reciprocity in the development and maintenance of trust.

Adding yet another layer of complexity, Swain and Tait (2007) draw from the work of Korczynski (2000) by identifying four levels at which trust can operate: *rational trust*, *interpersonal trust*, *institutional trust*, and *a trust in values and norms*. Rational trust is a utilitarian commodity that people use in a calculated and intentional way to achieve specific positive outcomes. This type of trust links to both *Gesellschaft* (Tönnies & Loomis, 1957 [1887]) and social capital, where individuals trust people and organisations in a strategic way that benefits their objectives and interests.<sup>6</sup> Interpersonal trust is similar to Kumar and Paddison's (2010) affect-based trust, as it is derived from personal contact and social relations with other individuals (similar to *Gemeinschaft*) (Tönnies & Loomis, 1957 [1887]).

Institutional trust differs significantly from interpersonal trust, as it operates at an organisational level and is based on the trust of institutions or abstract expert systems (Giddens, 1990). More specifically, it relies on the expertise of people from specific organisations to conduct affairs following accepted procedures, which in the context of this study could include consent planning, policy development, and procedural justice (Rawls, 1999).

This form of trust is particularly relevant to this study as it would be a factor that affects stakeholder interaction in the intensification process. Trust in values and norms is different again, because it is based more on the ideology of individuals and institutions and their place within social, discursive structures (Tait, 2011, p. 161) than on specific actions. This form of trust is particularly important in processes like

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<sup>6</sup> Related to community, rational trust can be utilised to strengthen bonds and relationships between residents, which in turn can result in a stronger sense of community – which may have benefits to the individual.

planning (Low, 1991), which can be political and aligned with particular ideological beliefs.

Reflective of the differences between institutional and interpersonal trust, Tait (2011) identifies two different ways to understand trust. The first is theoretical and focuses more on high-level abstract ideas and universal, decontextualised 'truths' about the relationships between individuals and institutions. The second is based on empirical work and is highly contextualised, with a focus on specific relationships, processes and settings within particular planning decisions (Tait 2011, p. 158). Both approaches are important to consider in this research, as they help develop a broader understanding of how trust exists in practice with actual actors, as well as at a more conceptual level.

When trust is missing, tension and conflict between stakeholders are more likely to occur. This is referred to as a 'crisis of trust' (Swain & Tait, 2007; O'Neill, 2002; Tait, 2011; Laurian, 2009), a term that describes a decline in interpersonal trust and trust in institutions, organisations, systems and processes within which people operate (Warren, 1999; Offe, 1999; Swain & Tait, 2007; Giddens, 1990). This is believed to be exacerbated by the pluralistic society we now inhabit. According to Swain and Tait (2007), society is now increasingly fragmented, lacking in harmony and comprised of citizens with divergent objectives.

### **3.2.2 Trust in planning and negotiating public / private interests**

Attention now turns to the importance of trust in the planning context. Within much literature, trust is perceived to be crucial for successful planning, yet commonly absent. Senecah (2004, p. 20) believes trust to be "the most commonly identified missing or present element in ineffective or effective processes". However, while the importance of trust is widely acknowledged, there is disagreement about the degree to which achieving trust in planning is possible. Tait (2011, p. 168) suggests that achieving trust in a planning system may, in fact, be impossible, since planning requires making judgements between "irreconcilably different competing interests",

whereby decisions will often favour one side over another. As a result, feelings of distrust towards the decision-making party may manifest:

Planning often produces intensely contested outcomes that are open to critique from diverse groups, and these decisions can polarize opinion to such an extent that groups fundamentally opposed to one another's interests and goals may feel equal amounts of distrust in a planning system that acts as a final arbiter between them (Tait, 2011, p. 158).

Hardin (1999) shares this perspective, believing that given the complexity of council responsibilities and their need to always consider contrasting perspectives, total trust in any government institution is implausible and that neither the public nor government institutions should expect it. While both Hardin and Tait highlight the difficulty in establishing trust in planning, Hardin's perception differs, as it identifies 'total' institutional trust as impossible rather than trust more generally. This distinction opens the door for an alternative and more realistic approach to developing trust in planning, that of 'critical trust' (Petts, 2008) located between the poles of total trust and distrust. To be realised, stakeholders require a constant degree of scepticism combined with a basic level of institutional trust that although the outcome may not always be desirable, the process by which it arrives is fair. The idea of critical trust is particularly pertinent to Auckland's intensification process, where stakeholders interact within a planning system often criticised for being biased or unfair to certain groups.

Laurian (2009) also highlights the importance of perception, arguing that trust is fundamental because it is positioned at the nexus of public and private interests. Thus it is important for the public to perceive planners as working for the public good. The complexity of this challenge is exacerbated by the term 'public good', which is highly interpretive and frequently interchanged with other terms like 'public interest'. One difficulty is that professions acting in the 'public good' may find it difficult to pin down what public good actually is and whose interests they represent (Swain & Tait, 2007). Because of the growing emergence of differing public interests,

there is growing pressure on planners to set agendas that take these into account (Thompson-Fawcett & Freeman, 2006). In the context of planning in New Zealand, the 'public good' or 'national interest' are terms often used regarding proposals for greater residential intensification and more affordable housing, especially in Auckland. However, there is division amongst the public (often portrayed in binary terms between homeowners / the older generation and renters / younger people) about not only the need for higher-density housing but also the manner in which it is undertaken.

The ideas above highlight the difficult position that planners and decision-makers frequently find themselves in when trying to plan in the 'public interest'. Because of this difficulty, the ability to establish trust in the planning process is particularly important (Petts, 2008). Participatory planning is one method employed by planners to achieve this, where the goal is: "to provide the community with a mechanism to shape the future of their physical and social surroundings and to provide planners with a mechanism for defining the public interest" (Scally & Tighe, 2015). As will be discussed in the following section, this is a highly idealised proposition, yet if undertaken with care, one which has the potential to establish critical trust within the planning system.

### **3.3 The Challenging Nature of Public Participation in the Planning Process**

According to Arnstein (1969), public participation is one of the cornerstones of life in a democratic society and highlights the importance of people "know[ing] they can influence the shape of their community" (Bedford et al., 2002, p.312). This reflects the idea that participatory planning came about largely due to public dissatisfaction with technocratic, centralised and out-of-touch planning systems (Swain & Tait, 2007). Planners to varying degrees now understand and embrace participatory planning as a tool rather than a barrier in the planning process. However, participatory planning is a highly contested and complex process marred by

stakeholder tension, poor results, opposing agendas, a lack of representation and power imbalances (Bond & Thompson-Fawcett, 2007; Ellis, 2004; Christensen, 2015).

One benefit of public participation is that it can help re-establish institutional trust in planning, and, by proxy, government (Swain & Tait, 2007; Laurian, 2009). In practice, though, participatory planning is rife with implementation problems:

Tensions are represented on the one hand by the pervasive professional and political idea of maximising citizen involvement in the planning process through discursive practice and on the other by a number of recent studies that indicate that participatory practice often fails to live up to its theoretical ideals (Ellis, 2004, p. 1552).

Ellis (2004) suggests that while participation is good in theory, in practice it is often unsuccessful and does not yield the results proponents of it believe it should. Fainstein (1999) dissects this failure, claiming that while many planners are committed to equity and diversity when conducting participatory planning, it is frequently ineffective due to (often disguised) normative biases in planning processes which preclude public opinions being considered. This can be magnified by an 'us and them' discourse in planning which makes reaching compromises challenging. In addition, benchmarks and criteria for success are lacking (Laurian & Shaw, 2009; Lane, 2005).

### **3.3.1 Issues of representativeness and the community factor**

The concept of community is important to public participation in planning. Azzopardi (2011, p. 189) states that, "a society that is committed to the notions of community development is a community that sustains itself on citizen participation". Similarly, Ajegbo (2007) asserts that a person's motivation to participate is largely based on their sense of belonging to a specific community. However, a significant challenge to successful public participation is community representativeness, with frequent criticism levelled at those participating as not representing the community but a single subset of it (Bedford, 2002; Scalley & Tighe, 2015). This situation is interesting

because it is a reason often put forward by planners to limit or not incorporate public participation in the planning process. However, this reason may be disingenuous, for community representation is the responsibility of the planner when conducting engagement activities. For this reason, Hanssen (2010) attributes blame to those in the planning industry who make public participation difficult by taking a policy-heavy approach full of industry jargon and 'expert' language, which few have the time or ability to decipher. In practice, this is a barrier to meaningful participation and is a manifestation of imbalanced power relations. It also goes some way to explaining why local community members frequently turn to local politicians, not planners to air their concerns (Hanssen, 2010), thus further politicising and complicating the entire process.

Unequal power relationships between different groups are often evident in the planning process. Two dictionary definitions of power are: "the ability to act or produce an effect" (Merriam-Webster, 2016) and "the capacity or ability to direct or influence the behaviour of others or the course of events" (Oxford Dictionary, 2016). With an underpinning of deliberate causality, these definitions reflect Bedford's (2002) perception above that public participation represents a person's ability to help shape their own community. Consequently, for participatory planning to be effective, community members must have equal power with one another and with other stakeholders in the planning process. Bond and Thompson-Fawcett (2007) argue that the type of participatory process employed strongly determines the type of power relations, thus determining who is included and excluded from the process. Again, this reinforces the roles of planners to establish an environment conducive to participation. In the context of Auckland's planning process, particularly at the wider policy / strategy (e.g. Unitary Plan) level, suggestions are commonly made that the process is too complex and time-consuming for most people to contribute constructively, leaving only those with the time and resources available to participate properly.

As a strong proponent of democratic processes, Arnstein (1969, p. 216) believed that: "citizen participation is a categorical term for citizen power", that power is essentially directly linked to one's ability to participate meaningfully. Arnstein (1969) also

highlighted that 'have-nots' perceive the powerful as a 'monolithic system', whereas the powerful perceive the have-nots as a sea of 'those people' whose views are not always worth consideration. One such group of 'have-nots' are young people (including children), as highlighted by research conducted in New Zealand (Freeman et al., 2003) and Australia (Whitzman et al., 2010) where opportunities for meaningful participation were limited.

In response to unbalanced power structures, pluralistic advocacy planning has emerged as a way to improve representational participation in planning (Davidoff, 1965; Scally & Tighe, 2015; Shipley & Utz, 2012). The following assumptions underpin advocacy planning: that there is significant inequality or bargaining power between groups; that access to political structures is unequal; and, finally, that many people are not well-represented by interest groups (Mazziotti, 1982). While advocacy planning has proven effective when implemented with these assumptions in mind, it is still not favoured by planners.

A different way to examine the participation / power relationship is to identify power as a factor that influences the effectiveness of one's participation, rather than power being an outcome which results from participation itself (Stein & Harper, 2003). Unbalanced power relations can negatively influence the participation process, as this diminishes a person's belief that they can make a real difference, as well as stoking resentment and distrust towards the planning system and stakeholders perceived to have greater power. This idea presents an interesting framework within which to analyse the challenges and dysfunctionalities of participatory planning in the Auckland intensification context.

Another negative influence is the growing emphasis placed on council performance and efficiency,<sup>7</sup> which has resulted in many planners seeing public participation in the planning process as a time-consuming and costly practice (Kitchen & Whitney, 2004; Inch, 2012). Put concisely: "planners face the dilemma of fostering real

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<sup>7</sup> The drive for efficiency highlights a problematic clash of interests on the part of the public, efficiency and streamlining vs stronger participation and developer / planner accountability. Whether or not these two desires are mutually exclusive or can be implemented simultaneously is a point of some debate.

participation in decision-making and stretching the time horizon or facilitating token resident participation and finishing the project more quickly” (Aigner et al., 2002, p. 89). As a result, changes (or cuts) to local government resources have reversed some of the gains made in enhancing public participation in prior decades (Cheyne, 2015). For public participation to be effective, it needs to be undertaken with conviction and purpose, not as a lip-service or box-ticking exercise. This is not a new challenge, and is one that Arnstein (1969, p. 216) also reflected upon: “there is a critical difference between going through the empty ritual of participation and having the real power needed to affect the outcome of the process”. Subsequently, trust should be promoted through ‘meaningful’ participation that can “promote transparency, mutual respect and learning” (Laurian, 2009, p. 379). Laurian (2009) also states that meaningful participation is important, for it not only improves planner trust, it visibly signifies trust in the public too. The latter point was also identified by Yang (2005, 2006) who believes that administrators who trust citizens are more likely to engage the public proactively and thus promote meaningful participation. This mutual reinforcement is important, for it emphasises that it is not just planners and developers that must prove they are trustworthy; the public also must show they can contribute constructively. This can result in a ‘catch-22’ type scenario whereby the only way the public can prove they are trustworthy is through meaningful participation, yet meaningful participation remains elusive due to negative perceptions about their conduct in the planning process.

### **3.4 The Development of Protectionist Attitudes**

Having discussed key challenges related to public participation and the importance of trust in the planning system, the remainder of this chapter focuses specifically on local community opposition, including the concept of NIMBYism. As in the previous chapter, this section looks at the importance of community; however, the emphasis is on the influence of community as a basis for opposition.

When discussing community protectionism, it is important to consider the role of place. The simplest explanations of place identify it as a geographic location that has

meaning to people (Cresswell, 2004). However, numerous academics have attempted their own explanations of place, and have done so to such a degree that, “understanding place in its true complexity is a multidisciplinary exercise (Stedman, 2003, p. 824). Mooney (2009) suggests that place evolves from space, whereby place is simply space to which meaning, feeling or emotional attachment have been attributed. This perception draws from Tuan’s (1974) work which claimed that what begins as undifferentiated ‘space’ evolves into ‘place’ as we come to know locations better and endow them with value. Tuan (1974, p. 33) himself believed that place acquires increased meaning through the “steady accretion of sentiment”, which could also be identified as emotional attachment. De Wit (2012, p. 122) similarly states that “place meanings are important to understand because they largely determine what people do with those places: how they treat them, whether they protect or neglect, improve or destroy them, and whether they choose to sacrifice them for some perceived benefit”. These perspectives highlight the importance of intangible characteristics of place, how place can be understood as an evolution of space and that place cannot occur without people and the meanings they attach.

### **3.4.1 Place attachment**

Place attachment is a term often attributed to Tuan's (1974) idea of topophilia (love of place), which focuses on how strongly people feel a sense of connection to a specific place; an idea which was not regularly discussed in academia until the 1990s, yet in New Zealand has long been a part of Māori worldviews. There are many definitions of place attachment, yet all are underpinned by the idea that it represents people holding (mostly positive) associations with elements of the physical environment. One example is that place attachment is “an affective relationship between people and the landscape that goes beyond cognition, preference, or judgment” (Riley, 1992, p. 13), in other words, it is emotional rather than rational. Brown and Perkins (1992) similarly believe that place attachment consists of dynamic and positive bonds between people and valued socio-physical locations. Taking a simpler approach, Low and Altman (1992) define place attachment as an affective bond between people and places.

For some writers, it is important to differentiate place meaning from place attachment as the two terms are frequently confused or used interchangeably. Wynveen et al. (2011) claim that place 'meaning' represents the value or bond of a particular place to individual people, whereas place 'attachment' reflects the intensity of the value / bond. In this sense, attachment is a more measurable factor than meaning. Kruger and Shannon (2000) explain this differently, identifying meanings as symbolic statements about the nature of place as derived from human activity while attachment is essentially an evaluation based on how a person feels about a place. This differentiation highlights a perception that meanings are simply descriptive ideas explaining 'what it is' (Stedman, 2008) whereas attachment is focused on the emotional bond one has with a particular locality (Low & Altman, 1992; Manzo, 2005). However, it is stressed that attachment cannot exist without meaning: "place meanings are crucial foundations of place attachment, and that each is necessary to understand the range of place-related behaviors" (Stedman, 2008, cited in Brehm et al. 2013, p. 523). This suggests that to understand place attachment, one must first understand the meanings people associate with specific places. In the context of place protectionism and community opposition, understanding the meaning associated with place is the first step that planners and developers involved in public participation activities must come to terms with.

The common understanding of place attachment is that while places are physical locations, they cease to have meaning or even exist without human connections. Furthermore, there is a common belief that it is not usually physical location itself that people are attached to but the social elements associated with it:

Social relations that a place signifies may be equally or more important to the attachment process than the place qua place ... Places are, therefore, repositories and contexts within which interpersonal, community and cultural relationships occur, and it is to those social relationships, not just the place qua place, to which people are attached (Low & Altman, 1992, p. 7).

In this sense, the value of place is inherently social, and, while not trivialising the importance of the physical location, the value is based on people's experiences of this place. This is an important point to consider, particularly within the wider understanding of community formation, which like place attachment is strongly influenced by social relations within or at a specific locality. This is important in the New Zealand planning context, where Māori connections to land predate European colonisation and continue to today. The depth of these connections is explained:

Through the knowledge of the unique whakapapa<sup>8</sup> connections Māori have with their whānau,<sup>9</sup> land, marae<sup>10</sup> and iwi,<sup>11</sup> a sense of identity that is a basic need for everyone, is created. Finding a place of belonging and identifying the connection you have with the people, the land and the culture provides a spiritual nourishment that contributes to the mental, intellectual and emotional well-being of a whānau ([www.tuhono.net/whakapapa](http://www.tuhono.net/whakapapa)).

Here, the importance of the land to Māori identity is clear, with the history of the people closely linked to the particular locations where generations of histories have played out. Whether in the context of Māori land (or land considered sacred to Māori) as seen with the Ōtuataua stonefields, or for other valued land, place attachment is a key part of place and place protectionism (McCreanor & Hancock, 2016). By appreciating people's connections and attachments to certain places, planners can better understand local opposition to development.

### **3.4.2 Place disruption and protectionism**

The transition from place attachment to place-protectionism and opposition is evident in the process of place disruption. Place disruption incorporates both the physical aspects of place and the social networks that occur within place (Fried, 2000). Devine-Wright (2009, p. 429) states that place disruption is: "characterized by

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<sup>8</sup> Genealogy or ancestral lines of descent.

<sup>9</sup> Extended family or community of families.

<sup>10</sup> Meeting ground for a particular tribe (iwi).

<sup>11</sup> Tribe / social grouping.

extent, rapidity and control, and unfolds over time as individuals make sense of what has happened or is about to happen, and attempt to cope accordingly". By this meaning, the key component of place disruption is 'change' where actual or proposed changes to place elicit responses from those who value it. This suggests that place disruption would be a significant factor in people transitioning from place attachment to place protectionism and opposition to change. As place disruption unfolds over time, a three-stage model consisting of pre-disruption, disruption and post-disruption can be used (Brown & Perkins, 1992; Inalhan & Finch, 2004). The pre-disruption stage consists of a person preparing for change by anticipating possible futures or scenarios, which in the context of this study could be the loss of greenspace to allow for development to occur. Following this is the actual event of place disruption, which often results in emotional responses such as loss, anxiety and anger. The final stage relates to how the person copes with this disruption, for example trying to develop new place attachments to compensate for earlier losses (Devine-Wright, 2009, p. 429). However, Devine-Wright (2009) was also critical of interpretations based on this model because they were perceived not to incorporate instances of psychological disruption before physical changes take place. This suggests that place disruption is just as much about psychological anxiety and a fear of change as it is about actual physical disruption once change occurs, an outcome which is explored throughout this thesis about community opposition to the Auckland Council's Unitary Plan. In the New Zealand context, place disruption and loss of place have been widely experienced by Māori through the processes of land confiscation and colonisation. Reflecting these actions and the impacts such losses have had on Māori, land-use planning now acknowledges relationships between Māori and the land, with the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) also requiring consultation with Māori to be a key part of the planning process. While progress has been, and continues to be made, planners and politicians have still struggled to deliver for indigenous communities.

Latent place attachment is also considered to be an important component of place disruption (Brown & Perkins, 1992; Manzo & Perkins, 2006). This form of attachment refers to bonds between a person and a place that are only realised when a major

change is proposed (Collins & Kearns, 2013) or undertaken (Brown & Perkins, 1992) to a valued place. According to Stedman (2003, p. 567): “place-protective behaviours are especially likely to result when attachment and satisfaction are based on preferred meanings that are threatened by potential changes to the setting”. This suggests that when people perceive their relationship to a place to be threatened, some form of resistance will likely occur regardless of the proposal or the potential value it could bring (Manzo & Perkins, 2006). Representing a fear of change, this form of place protectionism is particularly problematic for planners because it is difficult to predict and mitigate. Understanding latent place attachment can go some way to explaining why threatening the status quo is frequently met with a protectionist response. The studies these conclusions are drawn from highlight how valued places within neighbourhoods can motivate people to act collectively to protect their community through mobilised participation in local planning processes. In principle, this participation is encouraged by planners and local authorities; however, the manner in which participation is undertaken can be contentious when the opposition is perceived to be irrational, based on misinformation, or characterised as NIMBYism.

### **3.4.3 The influence of community character**

In Auckland’s intensification process ‘community character’ is often highlighted as a motivation behind much opposition. Character, like community, is a somewhat nebulous concept which is characterised by numerous interpretations. New Zealand’s Ministry for the Environment (2005) defines character as “the distinctive identity of a particular place that results from the interaction of many factors – built form, landscape, history, people, and their activities”. This definition is useful because it identifies temporal, physical and social factors as factors necessary for the development of character. The definition above is important in the New Zealand context, where Māori attachments to land differ from other ethnic groups, especially in terms of the history of those who have lived on it previously. The deep socio-historical connections Māori have with land, inflected by a history of land confiscation, is a point of tension in many development proposals around New Zealand.

Relating character closely to 'sense of place', Davison and Rowden (2012) describe it as the features which distinguish one place from another. Differently, Pivo (1992) asserts that character is largely determined by the position of the person describing it. From a sociological perspective, character is more about social characteristics, people's ethnicity, age or religion. In a study conducted in Perth, Australia, residents identified character as related more to social elements such as diversity and social capital than physical forms:

It is not suggested that social and experiential meanings of place will necessarily be primary to conceptions of character in all cases, but it does seem unlikely, based on these findings, that the re-creation of a particular physical form will be enough to ensure that a project is deemed 'in character' by local residents (Davison & Rowden, 2012, p. 209).

This perspective suggests that a potential change in population mix rather than physical form concerns many existing community members and leads to place-protectionist behaviour. Understanding the social or physical underpinnings behind character protection is an area of interest in this thesis and will be discussed in later chapters. According to Warren (1972), character can also be representative of the institutions people operate within and the interrelationships between them. Alternatively, others (e.g. urban designers) emphasise natural, visual and cultural characteristics (Pivo, 1992), with a focus on physical features. Regardless of the social, temporal, physical mix, the idea of distinctiveness, differentiation and uniqueness underpin all definitions of character.

The existing character of a neighbourhood was suggested to be an important factor in local authority planning decisions, with the value placed on character influencing the degree of community resistance to change (Vallance et al., 2005). Character protection is one of the important components of NIMBY behaviour.

### **3.5 The Contentious Concept of NIMBYism**

As an acronym for 'Not in My Back Yard', NIMBYism is a geographically-oriented / localised behaviour strongly motivated in place-attachment and place / character-protectionism. It is defined as, "an attitude ascribed to persons who object to the siting of something they regard as detrimental or hazardous in their own neighbourhood, while by implication raising no such objections to similar developments elsewhere" (Oxford Dictionary, 2016). Another description is, "protectionist attitudes and oppositional tactics adopted by community groups facing an unwelcome development in their neighbourhood" (Dear, 1992, p. 288). The latter definition differs in the way it links NIMBY behaviour to localised communities, a factor which is relevant to NIMBY outcomes discussed in this research. The most noticeable difference in how NIMBYism is interpreted is the way that meaning is attributed to actions, with many (academics, planners and politicians) describing it pejoratively, with others perceiving it to be neither negative nor positive, but simply a part of the planning process that planners and developers must consider.

It can be difficult to differentiate between NIMBY and other forms of opposition, due to the imprecise ways in which many authors use the term. This problem was highlighted by Burningham et al. (2006), whose literature review revealed that many authors frequently equate it with opposition by describing any local opposition as NIMBYism regardless of the motivations or arguments underpinning it:

The problem with the use of NIMBY is that rarely is it defined the same way by different researchers. In fact, it is sometimes used as a catchall term to label the opposition – or worse, to imply that citizens have illegitimate or irrational selfish (or narrow) reasons for opposing facilities (Hunter & Leyden, 1995, p. 602).

The major difference between NIMBYism and other forms of local opposition are the negative, dismissive and undermining connotations associated with the term, for example, the assertion that people expressing NIMBY behaviour are hypocritical in the way they "offer lip service to widely shared goals while undermining their

realisation” (Meyer, 2010, p. 327). Whether such accusations are applied accurately or not, they often undermine and delegitimise local opposition to development. Due partly to the tendency to conflate NIMBYism and local opposition, there have been calls for the NIMBY label to be used more carefully (Devine-Wright, 2005; Burningham, 2000) or not at all (Wolsink, 2006). Local resident reactions to being referred to as NIMBYs in Auckland’s development process, particularly in relation to intensification, will be discussed in Chapter Eight.

Numerous reasons have been proposed for why NIMBYism occurs. Freudenberg and Pastor (1992, cited in Burningham, 2000) identify three reasons put forward. The first reason is that it is an *ignorant or irrational* public response which is ‘wrong’, meaning it is the job of planners to educate or overrule it. This position utilises the ‘information deficit’ model of understanding (Owens, 2001) and identifies a clear distinction between real risks and perceived risks. According to this view, if ‘facts’ are separated from ‘myths’ (Devine-Wright, 2006), then opposition should fall. The second reason is that NIMBY behaviour is a *selfish* response, so is regarded by critics as less important than wider social and environmental concerns. The third reason is that NIMBY behaviour is a *prudent* public response which is rational, well-grounded and based on knowledge of the issues at hand. This reason differs from the previous two, as it removes assumed negative connotations and assigns degrees of rationality to it. Such distinctions are important to make and could provide useful insights into better understanding local opposition to (especially brownfield) intensification in Auckland; for example, if community concerns and priorities can be better addressed in the planning stages of development, resistance is likely to reduce (Flora & Flora, 2004). Acknowledging resident values and priorities, whether or not this affects the outcome, could see less conflict between residents and planners (Moss & Grunkemeyer, 2010; Goldberg, 2005). In Auckland’s intensification process, such an acknowledgement by planners and developers could help improve institutional and stakeholder trust.

A question to be asked is why such an antagonising label as NIMBYism is used to describe residents expressing their views as encouraged in a democratic planning system? From the perspective of planners, labelling opposition to development as

NIMBYism can be an effective method to limit or side-line public participation in the planning process, providing “a succinct way of discrediting project opponents” (Burningham, 2000; p. 55). This idea was echoed by Ellis (2004, p. 1553), who believes that the common discourse on NIMBYism portrays “oppositional activism” in planning contexts as “selfish parochialism and thus contrary to the public interest”, therefore weakening their arguments. According to Armstrong (2014, p. 555), this tactic, “atomises local concern into unneighbourly self-interest, reducing residential communities to individuals whose concerns over property prices and safety can be dismissed as alarmist and lacking in evidence”. Community empowerment is thus undermined by depicting citizen voices as irrational and reactionary (Ellis, 2004; Kemp, 1990; Lake, 1993), and thus more easily dismissed (White, 2003). Such an approach further erodes institutional trust in government and the development industry and further disenfranchises public participation (Ellis, 2004). As argued by Meyers (2010), the ability to oppose something perceived as threatening is a citizen right, therefore to belittle or compromise this voice undermines the validity of the democratic system. Frustrated by NIMBYism rhetoric, Gibson (2005, p. 382) has stated:

From the vantage point of state and corporate planners—and their allies in the academic community—it all seems fairly straightforward. It is the civic good versus the special interest, pure and simple. But are the issues at stake in such land-use disputes truly so cut and dried? [Do] ... the much-reviled NIMBY groups—always deserve to be dismissed with such vitriol? ... Who is to say that the arguments of local opponents, however emotionally presented, do not at times represent the civic interest?

Gibson’s perspective is insightful as it highlights the complexity inherent in local planning where there is a diversity of views. Gibson also draws attention to the problem of legitimising one party’s opinions over another based on often ambiguous ideas of the public good. One approach that could be taken is not to attack or dismiss people perceived to be NIMBYs, and to try instead to understand better “the broader system which creates such conflicts in the first place” (Freudenberg & Paster, 1992,

p. 39). Subsequently, this thesis posits that NIMBYism may be stronger due to institutional distrust in Auckland's planning system (and the RMA), which is perceived by some to be (too) pro-development in nature, especially with regards to the intensification of housing.

### **3.6 Conclusion**

The conceptual focus of this chapter builds on ideas of community and is extended to include another important concept, 'trust'. Like community, trust is characterised by numerous definitions and interpretations. Key types of trust discussed are interpersonal trust, based on relationships between individuals and is an important component of community formation processes; and institutional trust, which is based on a trust in systems, processes and organisations. Research finds that trust, and the lack of trust, is important to participatory planning processes, and while trust in the planning system is identified as vital, there are also suggestions that total institutional trust in planning systems is neither possible nor desirable. It is considered impossible due to the competition between different interest groups in most planning decisions, coupled with the pluralistic and fragmented nature of modern society. It is considered undesirable due to the inherent danger that exists in unquestioning trust in government. Instead, a form of critical trust is identified, where a general degree of institutional trust is combined with a degree of scepticism of. Equally, research shows that there is distrust in the public which leads to hesitation amongst some planners to engage with them meaningfully.

This chapter also explores opposition to development, which for reasons such as place attachment and the transition to protectionism, fear of change, and institutional distrust are constant (often interlinked) challenges to planners and developers. As a means to discredit opposition voices, the term NIMBY is frequently used to describe members of the public who oppose local development projects. The use of labels is ironic given the common concern in planning circles about public apathy in planning and local government. Trust / distrust and NIMBYism in Auckland's planning system are a key theme of discussion in Chapters Eight and Nine.

# **CHAPTER FOUR: Auckland's Development History and Current Debates about Future Development**

## **4.1 Introduction**

Proponents of intensification in Auckland argue that it has the potential to address, in part, a growing problem of housing affordability in the city and resolve the city's planning legacy of suburban sprawl. To contextualise current debates around urban intensification, this chapter provides a brief account of the current housing market; a description of how Auckland has developed since its founding in the 1840s, with special attention given to Auckland's residential urban form; and the formation of the 'SuperCity' and Auckland Council in 2010 and development of the Unitary Plan. Conflicts between various stakeholders – politicians, developers, planners, citizens – over the intensification provisions of the Unitary Plan provide the immediate context for the thesis. The final section of this chapter is a snapshot of the common themes and debates as they were represented in the Auckland print and online media between 2013 and 2016.

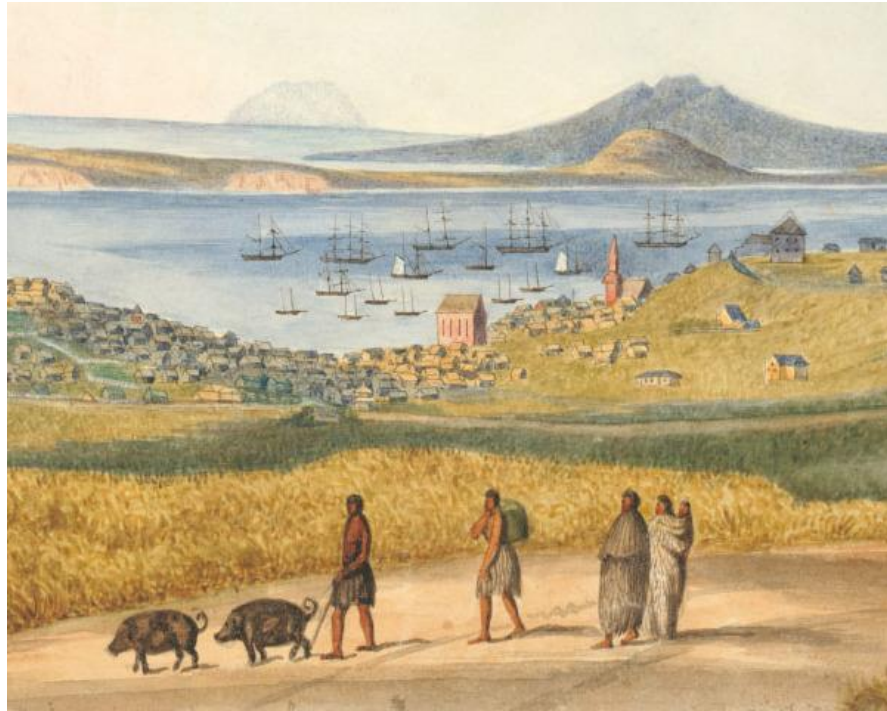
## **4.2 Supply and Affordability Problems**

Auckland is New Zealand's largest and most diverse city with 1.66 million residents (in 2017). Due to high rates of both domestic and international immigration, the population has risen rapidly – between 2000 and 2013 it grew by over 250,000 (Statistics New Zealand, 2015). The construction of new housing has not kept up with increased demand, and, because of the housing shortage, prices have escalated rapidly. Real Estate Institute of New Zealand figures (2015) show the median house price increased from \$640,000 in October 2014 to \$850,000 in June 2018 – over 10 times the city's median annual salary. Demographia's (2016) housing affordability

survey classes Auckland as “severely unaffordable”, behind only Hong Kong, Vancouver and Sydney (equal with Melbourne). Consequently, many Aucklanders (particularly younger people) cannot afford to enter the housing market and are colloquially referred to as “generation rent” (Eaqub & Eaqub, 2015). A key reason cited for this growing unaffordability is a shortage of diverse housing options and land supply to meet increasing demand. There is significant debate about why this is happening and, importantly, what should be done about it. Divisions encapsulate political, socio-economic and generational differences, with some parties favouring opening up more land and others arguing for better choice and more intensification of current (often brownfield) land. The continuing rise in house prices has resulted in what many call a ‘housing crisis’, a label resisted by the National-led central government (until October 2017 when they were voted out), who preferred to call it a ‘challenge’. Before outlining the ways in which this housing challenge / crisis is being addressed, it is important to provide some historical background about Auckland, and its development over the years.

### **4.3 Birth and Infancy (before 1935)**

Named by New Zealand's first Governor William Hobson after George Eden, the Earl of Auckland, the fledgeling settlement of Auckland began on land given to early European settlers by the local Ngāti Whātua iwi (McLauchlan, 2008). Before Europeans drew up their first plans in the 1840s, the area of Auckland's current location was known by local Māori as Tāmaki-makau-rau. Reflecting contemporary population patterns, the region was relatively well populated in pre-European times, with archaeological evidence suggesting extensive and well-planned settlements (Stone, 2001, p. 6). With the influx of migrants came a wave of new ideas, for example, private property, which would forever change the nature of community and life in New Zealand.



**Figure 3. 19th Century Auckland**

<https://discover.stqry.com/v/1.-m%C4%81ori-and-this-site/e/f8b517d9-b18c-474d-bebe-c75e0b867769>

Through the enterprise of entrepreneurs, early British settlers were sold the idea of a utopian lifestyle replete with fertile farmland, a temperate climate and lots of space. These would all have been hugely appealing, given the hardships of life in cramped and polluted industrial British cities. The New Zealand dream at that time was a rural one, with towns like Auckland initially regarded by many as embarkation points rather than destinations or places to settle (Ferguson, 1994). Settlements like Auckland also attracted a mercantile population where trade with local Māori and with settlers held the potential for upward social mobility. However, for those chasing the rural dream, establishing a productive rural life was often difficult and for many untenable. The result was that many people re-evaluated their plans and abandoned life in the countryside for life in a township instead. However, for many, the desire for rural living endured. In conjunction with increasing problems associated with inner-city housing, the rural dream was transformed into a more egalitarian sub-urban dream which would be accessible to affluent and skilled workers alike.



**Figure 4. Early 20th Century suburban growth (Mt. Eden)**

<http://www.epna.org.nz/historypics/07.jpg>

With strong support from the New Zealand government, a new ‘New Zealand dream’ was born, where an individual’s goal and reward was the ability to build a family home on their own piece of land (Ferguson, 1994; Shirley, 1979).<sup>12</sup> Suburbs were thus planned to enable people without family inheritances or titles to achieve homeownership.<sup>13</sup> They were also seen as a way of removing (or protecting) deserving workers from the moral pollution they were subject to in the city centre (Ferguson, 1994; Falconer, 2015). This represented a significant shift in the social status previously associated with similar styles of housing in Europe. This trend was not unique to New Zealand and reflected what was occurring in countries like Australia, the United States and the United Kingdom.<sup>14</sup> The rationale behind these ideas would become ingrained in the psyche of Aucklanders, whereby according to Ferguson (1994, p. 61) “the concepts of the suburban house and the family home came to dominate housing policy” in a way which is still evident today.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Over the years, the Government’s role in promoting home-ownership has alternated between direct intervention and indirect support to varying degrees, depending on the political climate of the day.

<sup>13</sup> This was helped by the advent of improved rail services and electrified tramlines in the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>14</sup> In the UK suburbanisation escalated with the garden-city movement begun by Ebenezer Howard.

<sup>15</sup> In Auckland, early suburban housing typically resembled a scaled-down version of the summer villas commonly occupied by traditional rural landowners back in the United Kingdom.

The first government interventions promoting suburban development came from the Liberal Government elected in 1890, which, led by John Balance, then Richard John Seddon, carried out a series of reforms. One action from this was breaking up large estates to help settlers develop smaller holdings close to town centres (Falconer, 2015). The actions of this Government were not always successful; for example, the Municipal Corporations Act (1900) which encouraged local government provision of affordable housing was not supported by councillors, many of whom were landlords and perceived this as a threat to their livelihood (Ferguson, 1994). Following this failure, Seddon's government passed the Workers Dwellings Bill in 1905, which allowed state-constructed housing. While few state houses were built in this period, it did pave the way for future state-housing programmes and extensive suburban growth.

#### **4.4 The Childhood Growth-spurt (1935–2010)**

It was not until 1935 when the first Labour government was elected that state-house construction on a large scale would begin (Davidson, 1999). This was largely spurred on by the great depression, which resulted in a significant construction downturn leading to a shortfall of housing and exploitative landlord practices (Schrader, 2011). During Labour's first term, approximately 30,000 (primarily detached) state houses were constructed, many of which were in Auckland. It was also during this period that medium- and high-rise flats were first and controversially constructed. The negative reaction to this new housing form would set the scene for how intensification would be perceived and is often still perceived for many years to come.



**Figure 5. Suburban sprawl 1950s / 60s**

<https://teara.govt.nz/en/photograph/30216/suburban-sprawl-auckland-1962>

Many of the houses built under Labour's state-construction programme were to fill a social housing / rental gap in the market (although many of these houses would later become privately owned). When the National Government was re-elected in 1950, there was a shift away from interventionist policy and a focus back to private home ownership. This change meant that people living in state rentals could now purchase their dwellings at a favourable price, and in doing so remove the role of the Government as a landlord (Schrader, 2011). This was aided by the introduction of state-supported loans offered to low-income families. However, successive governments gradually moved away from providing direct support.

Since the 1950s new housing has been rolled out through greenfield subdivisions to create a low-density suburban landscape that still characterises the urban form of contemporary Auckland. The 'dispersed city' approach was embedded further (Mees & Dodson, 2001), and formally endorsed, by the 1955 Master Transportation Plan for Metropolitan Auckland which emphasised the need for a radial motorway system and a shift away from "absolute dependence on tramways and railways with their inflexible fixed routes" (Auckland Regional Planning Authority, 1956, p. 5). By the mid-1960s Auckland's population had passed 600,000, and its built form had spread

out considerably along both the northern and southern corridors (Falconer, 2015).<sup>16</sup> During this period, the Government's most significant housing legacy was "to codify the ideas of the suburban family home and contemporary views of urban form" (Ferguson, 1994, p. 143). It was during the 1960s and early 1970s that problems associated with suburban sprawl and a lifestyle based around the private motor-vehicle started to become apparent.

It was not until 1975 with the publication of the 'Regional Growth Strategy' that the idea of consolidation, the forbearer of intensification, appeared formally for the first time on the policy agenda. The introduction and establishment of neoliberal economics in the 1980s and 90s effectively saw government supply-side interventions in the housing market come to an end (Ferguson, 1994; Murphy, 2004). The change in economic policy coincided with the property boom of the 1980s, in which significant office space development occurred (Moricz & Murphy, 1997), much of which was converted into low-cost (and often poor-quality) apartment dwellings in the wake of the 1989 financial crash.

In the 1990s, after the financial crash, Auckland's housing market flourished with significant CBD apartment construction, suburban gentrification, suburban infill and greenfield expansion taking place (Murphy et al., 1999). Intensification increased quickly with 16,000 inner-city apartment units constructed between 1991–2007, a boom that contributed to Auckland's CBD population increasing by 92% (Murphy, 2008). However, because they were considered poor environments for raising children (Dixon & Dupuis, 2003), apartments primarily catered for young adults and 'empty nesters' (Ansell & Thompson-Fawcett, 2008), as well as migrants.

Another factor contributing to this growth was the introduction of the Resource Management Act (RMA), a piece of legislation that uniquely blended neoliberal ideas with environmental sustainability (Dixon & Dupuis, 2003). While the environmental benefits of the RMA have always been questioned, its enabling and pro-development underpinnings contributed to increased housing construction. While the RMA takes into consideration environmental impacts (to varying degrees), it has little influence

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<sup>16</sup> The opening of the Harbour Bridge in 1959 contributed actively to the development of the North Shore from that time onwards, leaving a legacy of suburban expansion.

on the quality of the outcome. This meant that due to a lack of rigorous building regulation elsewhere, much housing constructed in the 1990s (and 1980s) was built using poor construction techniques and low-quality materials. This resulted in the so-called 'leaky building' crisis. This problem affected medium-density housing particularly strongly and for this reason, town-houses and low-rise apartments are viewed cautiously as leak-prone by many Aucklanders. More specific criticisms of intensification are attributed to concerns over poor workmanship (Syms et al., 2005; Waghorn, 2011), outcomes that are out of character with existing housing (Woodcock et al., 2012) and poor-quality design (Carroll et al., 2011). In terms of poor design outcomes, another intensification legacy of this period is the 'shoebox' apartment, a compact dwelling type, typically under 30m<sup>2</sup> which is common-place in Auckland's CBD. These shoebox apartments, while meeting a low-cost / short-term housing need, are widely derided by locals and frequently highlighted as evidence that intensification leads to poor quality-of-life outcomes (see Figure 6 below). This reluctance is reflected in a widespread belief that intensified housing will become the 'slums of the future' (Dixon & Dupuis, 2003).



**Figure 6. The Zest 'shoebox' apartments, Nelson Street, Auckland**  
<http://homes.mitula.co.nz/homes/apartments-zest-building-auckland>



**Figure 7. Poor quality and leaky townhouses (Mt. Eden)**

<https://blog.greens.org.nz/2013/01/23/a-tour-of-aucklands-housing-challenges/>

While unpopular with locals, most of whom live in detached houses and have an inherent bias towards alternative typologies, these compact apartments are an important source of low-cost accommodation for students, low-income households, and new or temporary residents. An actual shortcoming is that there are few apartments available for people who want something bigger, that could accommodate children, but are not in the luxury category. This shortfall is only now starting to be addressed, as will be discussed in later chapters.

#### **4.5 Adolescence (2010–Present)**

Until 1989, greater Auckland consisted of 32 rural and urban borough councils and little in the way of a unified vision and coordinated planning about how the region should be developed. The Auckland region was diffuse, thinly spread, split by parochialism (McLauchlan, 2008) and characterised by suburbs acting like competing villages. To encourage better coordination, these local authorities underwent a

process of centralisation and amalgamation into seven new authorities (the city councils of Manukau, Auckland, Waitakere and North Shore, along with the district councils of Papakura, Rodney, and Franklin), and a broader Auckland Regional Council. In 2010 further centralisation took place with the establishment of the Auckland 'Super City', with the amalgamation of all seven authorities and the regional council. This change was imposed by the Central Government to fix what they considered to be a fragmented, inefficient and multi-council structure lacking in clear leadership. This final amalgamation was promoted to the public as a means to achieve better transport integration, improved land uses, stronger environmental protections, continued economic development and, importantly, effective housing growth management. It is too early for clear judgements to be made regarding the success of the Super City.

In the wake of the Super City establishment, the Auckland Plan emerged in 2012. This spatial plan presented a 30-year vision for Auckland and contained within it the aspirational objective for Auckland to become the world's most liveable city. It was prepared and ratified in consultation with numerous stakeholder groups, including residents, community groups, iwi, infrastructure providers, central government, business groups and voluntary organisations (Auckland Plan, 2012). The plan also presented the Council's vision of intensification and compact development, which represented a shift away from expansionist development policy that had guided development for many years previously. However, the Auckland Plan has no statutory force and is light on details surrounding implementation (Salmon, 2015, p. 20). To realise the plan's vision and replace the existing Regional Policy Statement and 13 district / regional plans, development of the Unitary Plan began in 2012.

The Plan, therefore, has three key roles:

1. it describes how the people and communities of the Auckland region will manage Auckland's natural and physical resources while enabling growth and development and protecting the things people and communities value;
2. it provides the regulatory framework to help make Auckland a quality place to live, attractive to people and businesses and a place where environmental standards are respected and upheld; and

3. it is a principal statutory planning document for Auckland. Other relevant planning documents include the Auckland Plan, the Auckland Long-Term Plan and the Auckland Regional Land Transport Plan.

The Unitary Plan is effectively the rulebook that puts the Auckland Plan into action, as it outlines precisely what can be built and where, thus designating how urban residential growth can and will take place in the future. Accordingly, it is also the blueprint for how significant residential intensification will be undertaken in the next 30 years.

<b>Sept 2012</b>	Early drafts of key sections released
<b>Mar–May 2013</b>	Public consultation on draft Unitary Plan
<b>Sept 2013</b>	Proposed Auckland Unitary Plan notified
<b>Sept 2013–Feb 2014</b>	Draft Unitary Plan submission period (nearly 10,000 received)
<b>July 2014</b>	Second submission period finished (nearly 4,000 further)
<b>Sept 2014–May 2016</b>	Hearings
<b>May 2016–July 2016</b>	Council receives recommendations from Independent
<b>Aug–Sept 2016</b>	Auckland Council release decision for appeal
<b>Sept 2016</b>	Appeal period closed and final decisions made
<b>Nov 2016</b>	The Unitary Plan becomes operative in part

Falconer (2015) claims that the Unitary Plan reflects Auckland finally facing the realities and challenges of planning for a growing city, that planning can no longer continue the way it has before and, importantly, that it must adapt and evolve if it is to accommodate a rapidly growing population. The importance of intensification promoted by Auckland Council has been met enthusiastically by some Aucklanders, especially young people and renters, who see its potential to address both housing choice and affordability problems. At the same time, there remains a strong individual preference (and aspiration) for stand-alone suburban housing amongst many residents (Salmon, 2015), even if it means more commuting time.



**Figure 8. Unitary Plan public opposition**  
<http://www.bra.org.nz/category/auckland-unitary-plan/>

The degree of change proposed by Auckland Council through the Unitary Plan process has scared some Auckland residents, who are fearful that increased intensification will negatively affect their neighbourhoods, both in terms of monetary value and character. As well as anxiety about the Unitary Plan, there are also public concerns about central government policies and legislation, such as the Housing Accords and Special Housing Area Act (HASHAA) 2013. These have been contentious because they allow and / or promote fast-tracked planning and limited notification consents without opportunities for appeal.<sup>17</sup> They also give the central government the power to override council regulations by granting consent directly to speed up development (Murphy, 2015; Salmon, 2015). This has been perceived as a threat to the ability of communities to engage in the planning process and has contributed to criticism about the deterioration of local democracy in Auckland. Public distrust has been exacerbated by the poor reputation of the development industry, where developers are often believed to take advantage of New Zealand's laissez-faire planning system to make quick money with little concern about the outcome. For

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<sup>17</sup> Although in practice there has been little increase in house construction in these areas, but there have been increased land values.

many people, there is a belief that development should not be permitted without significant council direction or oversight (Rae & Dixon, 2001; Murphy, 2008).

#### **4.6 Snapshot of Media Coverage related to Housing and Intensification 2012–2013**

The media is highly influential in both creating and reflecting the tapestry of diverse perspectives on any issue. As McCreanor (2008, p. 93) notes, “As the role of media in society has grown, the proportion of what we know from direct (as distinct from mediated) experience has shifted to the point where mass media strongly shape our personal and collective social realities”. While in its role as the Fourth Estate, it provides a check on government processes and policies, it also reinforces power relations. It suggests, through selective presentation of content, what is relevant and important, and therefore newsworthy; and in this capacity, it can also be a vehicle for introducing ‘new’ ideas.

This 2012–2016 snapshot of online and print media coverage related to housing and planning (particularly plans for intensification and the development of the Unitary Plan) was primarily gleaned from New Zealand’s two biggest media companies, Fairfax Media NZ and New Zealand Media and Entertainment (NZME), using keywords such as ‘intensification’, ‘unitary plan’ and ‘NIMBY’. Auckland-based NZME-owned newspaper, *The New Zealand Herald* is the country’s largest, with 549,000 copies sold between January–December 2015 and a monthly on-line domestic readership of 1,536,000 (based on Nielsen’s online ratings (2016)). My other source, Fairfax Media NZ’s website *Stuff*, is New Zealand’s most widely read news source, with an average domestic audience of 1,905,000 (Nielsen, 2016). *Stuff* includes news and comment from Auckland and other regional and community newspapers. News-oriented publications such as *Metro* magazine and the independent website *The Spinoff* also provided some material.

Special attention has been paid to tensions portrayed between various stakeholders, including developers, residents, lobby groups), Auckland Council and Central Government. Prevalent narratives emerging in the news reports and opinion pieces

included unfair power relations; generational conflict; stakeholder and institutional distrust; a democratic deficit; and home-owner obstructionism (NIMBYism). Here, four categories of media coverage are outlined. The first is a selection of commonly held perceptions of stakeholder groups. The other three focus on binary narratives related to density preferences, the effect of intensification on community vibrancy, and the role of government and regulations in delivering good housing outcomes. The snapshot highlights the diversity of opinions permeating in this space.

#### **4.6.1 Commonly held perceptions about stakeholders**

Below is a selection of common narratives, many of which have been discussed to some degree in the literature review or will be discussed in the results.

##### **4.6.1.1 ‘Auckland Council is not trustworthy’**

The importance of trust in the planning system was a common theme presented by the media, with many articles and opinion pieces presenting pictures of distrust and disharmony between Auckland Council and existing residents and communities. For instance, Auckland City Councillor Chris Darby was quoted as saying that, “carrying the confidence of the public is really critical” (quoted *Metro* opinion piece, 26/02/2016); and Simon Wilson, the editor of *Metro* magazine (19/02/2016), that, “one of the prevailing narratives about the council now is that it cannot be trusted”. This reflected a common perception related to intensification, especially in the context of the Unitary Plan development process. Distrust in the Council was attributed to two distinct shortcomings: their performance and their agenda. The former focused on operational weaknesses and portrayed the Council as inefficient, incompetent or poorly managed; the latter portrayed the Council and its processes as undemocratic, deceptive and dishonest.

Competency criticisms included perceptions that the Council adopted a “‘haphazard, scatter-gun’ approach to intensification” (Auckland 2040’s Richard Burton quoted in a *North Shore Times* news story, 20/05/2013), and a “one size fits all planning

approach that is unresponsive to local differences and needs” (opinion piece by the Character Coalition’s Sally Hughes, *NZ Herald*, 11/07/2013). The Council was also criticised for having a “head-in-sand approach to housing supply” which “shows complete inability to read the future and plan for it” (opinion piece by Mike Hosking, *NZ Herald*, 07/05/2015). Such perceived shortcomings, coupled with stories of past failures, highlighted doubts amongst some commentators about the Council’s ability to effectively manage future residential growth.

Criticisms of the Council’s ‘agenda’ invoked ideas of dishonesty and undemocratic behaviour. This narrative was underpinned by concerns related to outcomes and process. Existing homeowners and community groups were unhappy with intensification plans (both policy and site-specific) that they believed would lead to undesirable effects on local neighbourhoods. They were also upset with a perceived lack of community consultation in the planning process, particularly in relation to the Unitary Plan, where the Council’s (perceived) top-down approach was considered exclusionary and dismissive of local community input. In one *Metro* editorial piece (19/02/2016), residents claimed Auckland Council was “trying to build high-rise apartments behind our backs and doesn’t care what residents think”.

Below is a selection of quotes from existing Auckland residents and community / lobby groups that highlight key criticisms of Auckland Council and the Unitary Plan process:

The Unitary Plan is unwieldy, almost illegible, full of planner-speak ... [it] prevents proper engagement and deliberation on the process and destroys confidence that it’s not a fait accompli foisted on us by the council ... The draft plan and the housing accord have led to fear, uncertainty and distrust in both the process and in those promulgating the plan (opinion piece by former Councillor Christine Rose, *NZ Herald*, 23/05/2013).

Most of the fear and doubt reflected in the public outcry, particularly over intensification, is a result of the council’s “top-down” planning process ... they’ve had no opportunity to influence where it counts - at a local level ... we’ll end up living with the unsound results of a

process that leaves people feeling disempowered and vulnerable (opinion piece by Sally Hughes from the Character Coalition, *NZ Herald*, 11/07/2013).

At the core of it is that a plan is being created which will be foreign to the New Zealand way of life and will be imposed upon us, to our everlasting detriment (resident quoted in a *North Shore Times* news story, 04/12/2012).

This is not about the merits of a compact urban form or intensification. It is about the Auckland Council ignoring the proper process of consultation, submission and hearing, trying to introduce radical zoning changes by stealth. It has been caught in the act and held accountable. Depriving residents of their right to have their say is anti-democratic (opinion piece by Richard Burton from *Auckland 2040*, *NZ Herald*, 18/02/2016).

These statements contain strong allegations and major assumptions, and whether they are true or not, the message they convey is that Auckland Council is undertaking this process in a manner which is neither inclusive nor transparent, with the result being a sense of distrust in the local government.

Although limited, there was some coverage which outlined the perspectives of Auckland Council about the public backlash they had encountered. In one news story, the Deputy Mayor expressed frustration that the Council was getting “beaten to death” over their intensification plans before they even released them (*North Shore Times* news story, 15 / 03 / 2013). In another news story, the Mayor claimed: “we’re damned if we do and damned if we don’t” (*Manukau Courier* news story, 12/08/2014). Acknowledging the difficult position of Auckland Council, a central government politician said that the Council is “caught between a rock and a hard place” (*NZ Herald* news story, 06/05/2015).

#### 4.6.1.2 ***‘Baby-boomers / homeowners are selfish NIMBYs’***

There was a belief amongst some stakeholders that homeowners, predominantly belonging to the ‘baby boomer’ generation, are largely responsible for the perceived lack of intensification progress to date. Self-interest was identified as one problem:

Auckland is a city composed of thousands of petty fiefdoms able to act cooperatively only to protect their own little patch ... all I hear is the wailing bourgeois self-interest that has always driven development in this city, like the snarling of a dog protecting a bone hardly worth having (opinion piece by Paul Little, *NZ Herald*, 09/06/2013).

This criticism was indicative of much negative commentary directed at some homeowners, that not only did they display obstructionist and NIMBY behaviour, but that their position was also misguided. Such perspectives contributed to the narrative that Aucklanders are divided on housing, with local interests pursuing a protectionist agenda at the expense of the greater public good. Opposition groups such as Auckland 2040 and the Character Coalition (interviewed in this study) were accused of NIMBYism and scaremongering by “willfully exaggerating the scale of proposals” and by conjuring negative images of “vertiginous grey tower-blocks” in suburban areas, despite proposals focusing on medium, not high-density housing (opinion piece by Toby Manhire, *NZ Herald*, 26/02/2016).

Existing homeowners were also accused of hypocrisy and having double-standards, for example by the Auckland Council Planning Manager, who reflected one of many public consultation meetings:

A man who introduced himself as Johan [resident] told the meeting he lives in a townhouse and would like St Heliers to remain as it is. “What is the obsession with change? For me it’s simple. I don’t want any change.” But Ms Pirrit [Auckland Council Planning Manager] said: “There’s been a lot of change in these suburbs over time, and the fact you live in a townhouse is an example of that” (*East & Bays Courier* news story, 12/04/2013).

This example was salient, because it strikes to the core of many opposition arguments that changes in the past impacting on others was acceptable, but a change in the future which might affect them was not. As well as being considered a double-standard, such views also contributed to criticism of homeowners wanting to ‘put a

jar' over parts of the city owing to an assumption that any change would be detrimental to the character of existing neighbourhoods.

Criticism of opposition in the media peaked in reference to a highly-contentious Auckland Council meeting in February 2016, when councillors (under constituent pressure) voted against proposals for additional density in the Unitary Plan. While the way that the Council introduced these proposals as 'out-of-scope' was widely criticised, homeowners were accused of using this procedural shortcoming as a smokescreen for pushing a NIMBY agenda:

The Nimbys are in full force, hiding behind the lack of process exhibited by Auckland Council as a reason to stop greater intensification in Auckland (opinion piece by Phil Eaton of the Property Council, *NZ Herald*, 23/02/2016).

These groups, representing a small but well organised number of existing homeowners from certain suburbs, have now chosen to poke holes in the process of agreeing on the plan. But this is just the latest argument they use to disguise the fact that they just don't want our city to develop at all (opinion piece by Sudhvir Singh of Generation Zero, *NZ Herald*, 24/02/2016).

Opposition to intensification was often perceived by its proponents through a generation or life-stage lens, with the baby-boomer generation frequently vilified as an obstruction to change, and younger people (Generation Y or Millennials) portrayed as victims. This generational divide was highlighted by Auckland Council's Chief Planning Officer Roger Blakely: "The older people who went to the meetings organised by Auckland 2040 objected loudly to intensification... what we noticed in the debate was the generational gap" (*NZ Herald* news story, 12/11/2013). Developer Peter Chevin<sup>18</sup> similarly presented an argument of generational injustice, claiming that "existing locals [homeowners] are stopping young couples from owning their first home" (*NZ Herald* news story, 01/10/2013), that "they just don't want change, and they don't care about the younger generations" (*North Harbour News* news story, 18/10/2013). Similar perspectives were evident in news reports and

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<sup>18</sup> Also involved in the Powell Street Townhouses.

opinion pieces throughout the Unitary Plan development process. However, such accusations were sometimes contested by homeowners, who believed they had their community, not self-interest, in mind and were participating as they should in a democratic system:

Aren't Nimbys -- those who will stand up, often selfishly, and take on authority -- part of the character of our democracy? Isn't it a little invigorating to have people who speak out for themselves and their community, even if it may be largely out of self-interest? Isn't that better than just rolling over and accepting your fate? (opinion piece by Bruce Morris [former Deputy Editor], *NZ Herald*, 30/09/2014).

This suggests that community engagement (rather than apathy) in local issues should always be considered positively, even if community motivations and sought outcomes are contentious. In the same article, Bruce Morris suggested that NIMBYism is not necessarily a bad outcome, that it can be part of the checks-and-balances system in urban planning: "Nimbyism, when it means people who act as guardians for their community against forceful bureaucracy, has its place." Messages like this link to the counter-argument of NIMBYism, which challenges the pejorative use of the label to belittle the concerns of existing residents. In one NZ news story, Auckland Councillor Cameron Brewer complained that, "anyone who dared to speak out against the intensification plans was being labelled a Nimby, grumpy old person or a troublemaker", and that "homeowners are getting sick of being completely dismissed" (*NZ Herald* news story, 19/04/2013). This perspective is discussed further in Chapters Eight and Nine.

#### **4.6.1.3 'Young people are the victims of the housing crisis'**

Another prevalent theme was that younger people, aged between 20–40 (often called 'Millennials' or 'Generation Y') are the main victims of the housing crisis. This is linked to the narrative that often older homeowners are obstructing affordable or higher-density housing development in areas where young people want to live:

When is a politician going to stand up to the rich, comfortable and mostly old property owners of central Auckland and tell them to think of the young and poor when they block development? (opinion piece by Bernard Hickey, *NZ Herald*, 03/08/2015)

While this piece acknowledged the problems facing poorer people in Auckland, debate in the media was more focused on the challenges facing middle-class young people buying their first house, rather than affordability problems more widely. Talking about the unaffordability of central living for young people, Generation Zero's Ellie Craft said that, "The over 50s might be able to afford to live here but what about my generation who will have to live on the outskirts where they don't even have adequate public transport?" (*Auckland City Harbour News* news story, 10/05/2013). Young people are often portrayed as "property orphans" who must wait for their inheritance to get onto the property ladder (Veda New Zealand's<sup>19</sup> John Roberts quoted in *NZ Herald* news story, 24/09/2014).

The victim narrative of young people was starkly presented in the wake of the previously noted Auckland Council meeting (in February 2016), with reports of youth representatives being heckled and patronised by some attendees when making a plea to older generations to be more accommodating of their needs. Columnist Toby Manhire reflected that, "We've arrived somewhere pretty dismal when property-owning baby boomers reckon it's okay to publicly mock young people who disagree with them" (*NZ Herald*, 26/02/2016). This meeting stimulated considerable media coverage and strongly criticised older homeowners as being selfish bullies in local democratic processes.

Counter-arguments suggested that young people should stop blaming others and that their own lifestyles and poor money management were a big part of the problem. In particular, the fiscal responsibility of young people was criticised: "their ability to save is atrocious" (John Bolton of Squirrel Home Loans quoted in a *NZ Herald* news story, 22/04/2016). Young people were also criticised for having unrealistic expectations and not being prepared first to seek out modest housing.

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<sup>19</sup> New Zealand's largest credit reference agency.

Given the amount of coverage that would-be young home-buyers received compared to other marginalised groups in the housing debate, one could easily reach the conclusion that they are the only victims of growing housing unaffordability. However, this demographic is but one group affected by high house prices and constraints to growth in Auckland's potentially changing (sub)urban landscape.

#### 4.6.1.4 ***'Developers are only motivated by profit'***

Another narrative in the Auckland housing debate is that developers only care about profit and have little concern about design outcomes and the quality / liveability of what they build. The two quotes below characterise the negative way developers are considered:

Once they get their money they'll disappear and we'll be left with the mess (resident quoted in *North Harbour News* news story, 18/10/2013).

[Developers are] being greedy, trying to maximise the return by building low-cost dwellings and shoehorn as many apartments as possible on the site (resident quoted in *NZ Herald* news story, 01/10/2013).

Aside from negative perceptions about the character of developers, such a belief would appear to be underpinned by an assumption that higher-density development would be substandard both aesthetically and in terms of quality, and that they would likely become ghettos or slums. As discussed in earlier in the chapter, this assumption can be (at least in part) attributed to the poor-quality intensification in the 1980s–90s, which resulted in the often maligned 'shoebox' apartments and contributed to the leaky homes controversy (Syme et al., 2005; Waghorn, 2011; Woodcock et al., 2012; Dixon & Dupuis, 2003).

#### 4.6.1.5 ***‘Central Government is not doing enough to help’***

A common theme was that central government (at the time of writing led by the centre-right National Party) was not interested in easing Auckland’s housing pressures, tackling affordability problems, or addressing the supply deficit. While ideology is one way to explain this perceived indifference (a preference to rely on market forces rather than intervention), some media coverage suggested the Government favoured high prices due to a high voter turnout from homeowners who do not want to see the value of their houses decrease:

The not-so-dirty little secret of the politics of rampant house price inflation is it makes voters richer and happier. Renters don’t vote at nearly the same rate as property owners so politicians can easily preach that they are doing something about housing and safely do very little to stop the inflation (opinion piece by Bernard Hickey, *NZ Herald*, 17/04/2016).

The Government was also criticised for refusing to even acknowledge Auckland’s housing situation as a ‘crisis’, with the then Prime Minister John Key and other senior ministers denying it (*Stuff* news story, 18/05/2015). In response, the centre-left former Opposition leader Andrew Little said, “These are the actions of a bystander Government that have watched the Auckland housing crisis unfold and then done too little too late” (*Stuff* news story, 18/05/2015). Similar views were often presented by left-leaning critics who sought stronger government intervention in the housing sphere.

#### 4.6.2 **Binary views pertaining to intensification**

Media coverage highlighted binary reactions to Auckland Council’s plans for greater intensification. These related to housing (density) preferences, the effects of intensification on community, and the importance of government involvement and regulations. These contrasting perspectives provided insights into the challenge of

achieving change when change is neither sought nor welcome by segments of the population.

#### **4.6.2.1 Housing preference: 'detached housing is the Kiwi way' vs 'intensification is the future'**

A common perspective of cynics and critics of intensification alike was that detached housing is preferable to higher-density housing, and that New Zealanders were unlikely to embrace density the way people do overseas. Reflecting a long-standing position held by many New Zealanders that detached housing is superior (Salmon, 2015), 'Kiwi culture' was claimed to be largely incompatible with intensification. This perception has only been strengthened by the (at least perceived) poor quality intensification that has taken place since the 1980s. Confirming how ingrained this thinking is, the then Deputy Prime Minister Bill English referred to calls for greater intensification as being "about as popular in parts of Auckland as Ebola" (*NZ Herald* news story, 26/02/2014). Jason Krupp from the New Zealand Initiative also questioned the potential uptake and acceptability of higher-density housing: "just because developers build up, does not mean the residents of Auckland will buy into it" (*Stuff* opinion piece, 26/02/2014). Auckland Councillor Dick Quax also highlighted this preference: "Aucklanders for the past 150 years have expressed their preference through the market of a small plot of land and a house on top" (quoted in *Eastern Courier* news piece, 20/03/2013). However, such generalised statements conflate medium-density and high-density housing as a single category of housing and fail to acknowledge the growth in demand for higher-density housing.

In contrast to these perspectives, another narrative promoted the benefits and necessity of intensification, challenging the status quo and encouraging a build-up, not build-out (sprawl) approach to Auckland housing. A core component of this argument was the potential for intensification to help young people onto the housing ladder, and to remain in their existing community after leaving home. The benefits of suburban intensification were also extended to older demographics, where the

central argument was that intensification would enable people to age in place, rather than having to move elsewhere when seeking to downsize:

It will let people who grow up here stay in this area; it will let people like my parents hopefully retire here if they have a well-designed smaller place to live and allowing another family to move into their house (Opinion piece by Kaipatiki Local Board member Richard Hills, *Auckland Now*, 24 / 05 / 2013).

In this way, intensification was outlined as a multi-generational housing solution, albeit one which had still not (at least vocally) been embraced by many of the baby-boomer generation. Between 2012 and 2016, media coverage did focus more on the idea of generational conflict than potential multi-generational mutual-benefits. The degree to which this narrative shifts in the future will be interesting to observe.

#### ***4.6.2.2 The effects of intensification on community: 'intensification will result in more vibrant communities' vs 'intensification will be damaging to the character of existing communities'***

Another binary set of narratives was that intensification would / can either improve or worsen the sense of community in existing neighbourhoods. Opinions identifying a positive link reflect a common theme in academic literature that increased density and neighbourhood population increases social interaction and community vibrancy. This idea was promoted heavily by Auckland Council and Generation Zero:

The younger people who were active on social media wanted to live in a more intensified city - they wanted to experience the extra vibrancy that comes with that, including cultural, retail and recreational activity (Auckland Council Planning Officer quoted in *NZ Herald* news story, 12/11/2013).

When the mayor and councillors gather to discuss the council's submission on the Unitary Plan today, they need to remember that the plan is for all Aucklanders, not just an exclusive group of existing property owners who would prefer our city to be a museum rather than a vibrant place to live and work (Generation Zero's Director Sudhvir Singh, *NZ Herald* opinion piece, 24/02/2016).

Singh's position especially, reinforced the frequently highlighted generational divide in housing discussions. It also suggests a divide between comparatively wealthy homeowners seeking to block change in their neighbourhoods, and in doing so preventing opportunities for younger and often poorer house-seekers. This statement also served as a warning to councillors about inaction or obstructionism, with Generation Zero reflecting a common feeling amongst younger residents and renters who are increasingly frustrated with perceived barriers to change and progress.

Another part of this vibrancy narrative is that intensification both supports existing businesses and encourages new businesses to start in traditionally lower-density neighbourhoods. A pointed example of the benefits intensification brings to the local economy, and vis-à-vis vibrancy was reported in an article about Mission Bay<sup>20</sup> (*NZ Herald* news story, 13/08/2015). In this piece, business-owners stated they were "thrilled" because as a predominantly summer destination, intensification would mean "more locals", which in turn would ensure businesses remain profitable even in the quieter winter months. Such thinking was evident in other articles as well, where local shop and business-owners supported the population increase that intensification would bring.

However, a common counter-argument to this was that intensification would damage the character of existing communities. This perspective was primarily voiced by existing homeowners in reference to either a particular development or regarding proposed zoning changes:

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<sup>20</sup> Mission Bay is a coastal suburb, popular with tourists and locals alike.

We understand Auckland Council's need to plan for a growing population, but we have to fight to protect the heritage and culture of this vibrant community, much of which will be lost if the council goes ahead with plans to redevelop certain streets (resident quoted in *Auckland City Harbour News* news story, 26/04/2013).

This fear appears to be predicated on the assumption that change is bad, as intensification would physically compromise the heritage character of neighbourhoods, and the influx of new people would disrupt the social make-up of the community. A common expression used by the opposition to intensification was the 'intensification is fine, but ...' statement. One example was [intensification is fine] "but not at the expense of historical areas that help to make Auckland and by extension New Zealand, globally unique" (resident quoted in *Auckland City Harbour News* news piece, 26/04/2013). The assumption here is that new forms cannot contribute to character, only compromise it. As will be discussed in later chapters, this belief appeared to be a major obstacle to public acceptance of intensification in Auckland.

The idea of trying to protect local populations from different typologies formed the crux of many arguments opposed to intensification plans, particularly in relation to specific developments, as highlighted in the excerpts below:

Concerned Grey Lynn residents, horrified by the prospect of six-storey developments invading their quiet streets (*Auckland City Harbour News* news story, 26/04/2013).

It seems perverse they would want to displace a great community and replace it with something a lot less connected (resident quoted in *Central Leader* news story, 03/05/2013).

The added cars will decimate the heritage neighbourhood (Action Grafton spokeswoman quoted in *Auckland Now* news story, 22/08/2014).

While quotes such as these were common in local reporting on intensification, they were also criticised by pro-intensification campaigners such as Generation Zero:

Instead of attempting to stoke unfounded fears of the development of a dystopian, overcrowded city, these groups should instead join us in ensuring we have ambitious design and quality standards (Sudhvir Singh quoted in *NZ Herald* opinion piece, 24/02/2016).

A notable aspect of the quotes above is the language used. Much of the language is highly emotive and appears to be used in a way to cause fear and / or outrage from readers. Such arguments were countered by Sudhvir Singh, who expressed frustration about the exaggerated negative effects intensification is assumed to create. Also responding to assumptions that intensification would destroy the character of neighbourhoods and suburbs such as Mission Bay, architect Henri Sayes argued that this was unlikely to occur and that, “the leafy suburbs will stay leafy, just with better cafes” (*The Spinoff* opinion piece, 13/03/2016).

#### **4.6.2.3 *The role of government / council and regulations: intensification must be carefully regulated vs regulation is a barrier***

Another point of contrast in the housing narrative is the role of government and regulations in the delivery of good housing outcomes. These themes are not just related to intensification but to housing more generally, including affordability and supply. A commonly reported view was that house prices could be reduced by simple supply and demand management, where an increase in supply would result in a price decrease. This view was also favoured by central government, with then-Prime Minister John Key believing the solution was simple: “More land needed to be released and more houses needed to be built quickly” (*NZ Herald* news story, 20/10/2014). This statement essentially suggests that land is often captive and prevented from being developed. However, this perspective was contested as short-sighted and overly-simplistic, as it did not consider the infrastructure costs associated with much (especially greenfield) development. Presenting an alternative argument,

the Labour Party housing spokesperson Phil Twyford<sup>21</sup> also cited demand as a problem, saying “The demand side needs to be looked at too”, due to “property speculators buying up everything and driving up prices” (*Manukau Courier* news story, 12/08/2014). The Labour Party also proposed the solution to be a nationwide government building programme, an idea which was widely criticised by proponents of a market approach to housing:

Despite Labour’s recent announcements of a fanciful idea for central Government to become a taxpayer-funded property developer, the best thing Government, local or central, can do is get out of the way. The private sector is better at it and more efficient (Devonport-Takapuna local board member Joseph Bergin, *Auckland Now*, 29/01/2013).

Regulation and planning restrictions were also cited as a barrier to development. A common narrative was that Auckland Council stifled development through their adoption of overly complex policies, overlays and rules (Bernard Orsman quoting [then] Environment Minister Amy Adams, *NZ Herald*, 13/06/2014)<sup>22</sup>. According to one article, “draconian height restrictions have contributed as much to the city’s housing affordability crisis as the metropolitan urban limit” (opinion piece by Jason Krupp of the New Zealand Initiative, *Stuff*, 01/04/2014). In a similar vein, Labour’s Phil Twyford quoted the (then) Finance Minister:

It costs too much and takes too long to build a house in New Zealand. Land has been made artificially scarce by regulation that locks up land for development. This regulation has made land supply unresponsive to demand.

In an unusual occurrence, Twyford agreed with the opposition Minister, pointing out that: “Our own research leaves no doubt that planning rules are a root cause of the

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<sup>21</sup> Phil Twyford became the Minister of Housing and Urban Development in October 2017 when the Labour Party won the New Zealand election.

<sup>22</sup> However, a central component of Auckland Council’s Unitary Plan development was to remove arbitrary restrictions and make it easier to build.

housing crisis, particularly in Auckland” (opinion piece with Oliver Hartwich, *NZ Herald*, 29/11/2015). Proponents of strong regulation and restrictions tended to be existing homeowners and community groups that opposed the proposals in the Unitary Plan. A key component of their position appeared to be quality control, an idea that can be attributed to lack of trust in developers to produce good intensification outcomes. This narrative was prevalent in articles covering community opposition to proposed rule changes in the Plan:

Auckland 2040 fears that the absence of design controls on developments of fewer than four dwellings and the considerable increase in building density, bulk and coverage permitted will encourage poor building design ... Many of the plan’s relaxed building rules will inevitably lead to bigger, more bulky buildings pressed “hard up” on neighbours’ boundaries (opinion piece by Richard Burton of Auckland 2040, *NZ Herald*, 26/02/2014).

The idea of distrust in the development industry, which includes developers and Auckland Council as the permitter / regulator, was also a key theme from interviews with community opposition groups, including Auckland 2040, the Character Coalition and the Powell Himikera Residents Association, as will be discussed in Chapter Eight.

#### **4.7 Conclusion**

This contextual chapter provides both a historical overview of housing and urban development in Auckland since its establishment, and a snapshot of contemporary narratives and discourses related to the city’s housing crisis and council drive for intensification. It presents a city that has undergone significant change, from a location of settlement by Māori, to a thriving colonial outpost, to the sprawling suburban conurbation of today. It is also a city experiencing acute growing pains, with a population undecided on what form they want their city to take in the future. Having transitioned in 2010 from a collection of cities and districts into an amalgamated entity, Auckland Council has, with significant public input, created a bold vision for the city’s future, of which greater housing density and multi-modal

transport are core elements. To see this vision realised, Auckland Council has developed its Unitary Plan, which is essentially the blueprint for the city's growth in the coming decades. However, the Council's plan has been met with resistance by some parts of the population – predominantly existing homeowners, some of whom perceive intensification as a threat to valued lower-density living.

The media extracts in this chapter follow the development of the Unitary Plan, culminating in what became an infamous public meeting where the tensions that underpinned the Unitary Plan development were most starkly revealed. Media coverage presents a housing process characterised by divergent interest groups with competing agendas. Auckland's housing situation is also characterised by stories of distrust, self-interest, council mismanagement and unbalanced power relations, as summarised poignantly by one media commentator: "I'm watching an utterly dysfunctional group of people deciding not to solve a core problem at the heart of NZ's economy and social fabric" (Bernard Hickey quoted in an opinion piece by Toby Manhire, *NZ Herald*, 26/02/2016). Auckland Council as the stakeholder driving the intensification agenda was also criticised for not bringing the public with them: "In a democratic society, even the soundest of policies count for little if they cannot win popular support" (opinion piece by Jason Krupp of the New Zealand Initiative, *NZ Herald*, 23/02/2016). Differences between media rhetoric and participant narratives suggest some media reporting seeks to fuel discontent between different interest groups to present a more engaging narrative. It is against this emotive and contested backdrop that participant views are considered in the following chapters.

# **CHAPTER FIVE: Theoretical Framework, Case Studies and Methods**

## **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter is broadly divided into four parts. The first outlines the theoretical approach adopted for this study, focusing particularly on epistemological and ontological elements, as well as researcher reflexivity. The second part introduces the case-study housing developments selected for this study. Here the history of each development is outlined, as are relevant past, present and future issues from both physical and social perspectives. The third part outlines the qualitative research methods used to conduct primary data collection for this study. The final part outlines the application of thematic analysis to the primary research dataset.

## **5.2 Theoretical Framework**

Given the scope of this study and the conceptual focus of 'community', a theoretically robust yet flexible and adaptable approach was required. Epistemologically, a social constructionist paradigm was adopted to address the research questions. However, the form of social constructionism selected deviated from a traditional relativist incarnation towards one more accepting of realist perspectives. Physical, social and historical ontological lenses reflective of Soja's (1996) 'Trialectics of Being' were also used to strengthen the social constructionist approach.

## 5.2.1 The social constructionist paradigm

### 5.2.1.1 *Knowledge and truth*

Of all the facets of social constructionism, the concepts of knowledge and truth and how they are derived are perhaps the most important. According to Leeds-Hurwitz (2009), social constructionism consists of jointly constructed understandings of the world, with an assumption that understanding, meaning and significance are developed through interaction with other human beings rather than individually. Central to social constructionism is the idea that knowledge is created by the actions of individuals within society (Berger & Luckman, 2011), that it is value-laden (Rouse, 1996) and importantly that knowledge is not what individuals believe, but rather what social groups or 'knowledge communities' believe. In other words, social constructionism holds that knowledge is ultimately derived from communities of people who agree on what is true (Kuhn, 1970). This does not mean we can never really know anything; rather it suggests that there are multiple knowledges rather than knowledge itself (Willig, 2014).

The influence of community on ideas of truth is outlined by Gergen (2009), who states that truth, and by proxy objectivity, are not products from individual minds, but rather products of community traditions. Gergen also contends that scientific claims to universal truth, as with all claims to truth, are specific to particular traditions lodged in culture and history. This 'truth' reflects people's rules and conventions and thus helps them coordinate their actions and determines how they behave in society. As will be discussed in later chapters, many 'truths' were evident in this study, many of which could be attributed to the types of community participants associated themselves with or aspired to be part of.

Social constructionists also assert that perceptions of reality are the result of cultural and societal influences; in other words, that our culture shapes the way we see things. Gergen (2009) argues that part of this is that meaning is derived from social relationships, and that the individual mind only exists in relation to other minds

through shared meanings.<sup>23</sup> Arguments such as these have resulted in resistance from people who perceive their individuality to be threatened; however, social constructionism does not hold that people do not have their own ideas, rather it emphasises that people's ideas and how they view the world are ultimately given meaning by their social context and social relationships (Warmoth, 2000).<sup>24</sup> This supports an approach based on understanding collective and cultural influences on individual behaviour. It also highlights the importance of social and cultural histories and how these may affect people's perceptions of the world around them.

#### 5.2.1.2 *Realism vs relativism*

When deciding to adopt a social constructionist approach, it was important also to clarify my ontological position. A highly relativistic position was certain; however, the degree to which realism would be incorporated was less so. A realist position claims that there is just one objective reality and one true representation to be understood. By contrast, a relativist perspective acknowledges multiple realities, or even that there is no such thing as 'reality' outside the confines of the mind. In this way, relativism purports that nothing can ever be known as definite; that there are multiple realities, with none having precedence over the other (Andrews, 2012). Relativists would argue that objects or events are different to everyone who sees them, for example, a biologist, a physicist and psychologist would all view a desk differently. Understandings of 'community' and the process of urban intensification are likely to vary, reflecting individuals' diverse experiences and situations. For example, from different viewpoints, urban intensification could be interpreted as a means to increase housing supply, a threat to heritage, an investment opportunity or as something that may diminish a person's sense of place. Vested interests are

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<sup>23</sup> This description strongly reflects the interpretation of community that suggests it is a feeling experienced by individuals in relation to others.

<sup>24</sup> These ideas can easily draw comparison to the famous nature vs nurture debate in that social constructionists hold more of a nurture approach, where people are influenced by their surroundings and those around them, as opposed to constructivists whose thinking is more in line with the nature approach, where people's ideas are innate and not influenced by others.

critical to consider and being able to interpret them individually, and as products of social and / or community, influence is key to this study.

On the realist / relativist continuum, social constructionism has traditionally been positioned on or close to the relativist pole; however, it can also be situated at points closer to the realist pole. This has resulted in debates between social constructionists about the degree to which relativism and realism can be mutually accommodating. Strongly favouring the relativist position, Crotty (1998) believes that our thoughts, emotions, and all meaningful reality are without exception, socially constructed. Such thinking is in stark contrast to realist perceptions that consider language and knowledge as an unmediated reflection of an objectively knowable reality (Rorty, 1979).

To explain the underpinnings of relativism, Crotty (1998) uses an analogy of a tree. He acknowledges that while a tree would exist whether anyone knew of its existence or not, he asserts that it is people who construct it as a 'tree', give it its name, and attribute to it the associations we make with trees. He then highlights the importance of understanding the extent to which such associations differ, for example, the word or concept of 'tree' is likely to have different connotations in a logging town, an artists' settlement and a treeless slum. While a tree has a tangible form, the meanings attributed to a tree are constructed, sustained and reproduced through social life. From an ontological standpoint, even strong relativists are unlikely to deny the existence of a material world.

Within the social sciences, positivist perspectives have often been pitted against more relativist ontologies, and the interpretive methodologies applied by its adherents criticised for lacking scientific rigour. In response to such debates, Nightingale and Cromby (2002) claim that the central purpose of strongly relativist theorists is to guard against foundationalism,<sup>25</sup> and to ensure that we do not "find

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<sup>25</sup> Nightingale and Cromby (2002) make an interesting point when they ask a question querying anti-realist claims of foundationalism – *does postulating an external reality of which we might gain 'truthful' knowledge necessarily entail foundationalism?* This is important because foundationalist accusations on the part of anti-realists insinuate that findings from realist studies are invalid due to their adherence to the existence of 'basic beliefs' or 'foundational beliefs', which are properly basic and do not depend on the justification of other beliefs – that exist beyond the realm of belief. This accusatory claim is also identified by Sayer (2000), who believes that many anti-realists assume that

doors shut and voices silenced” through our “claims to the real” (Gergen, 2001, p. 254 in Nightingale & Cromby, 2002, p. 704).

Regarding my ontological position, while relativist, it also recognises objective realities. The concept of ‘neighbourhood’ can be used to illuminate this position. From a realist perspective, I interpret neighbourhood as a physical manifestation made from the proverbial ‘bricks and mortar’, and a location definable by language, spatial boundaries and design principles (Garde, 2004). Simultaneously ‘neighbourhood’ can have diverse meanings from person to person and place to place. Socially constructed meanings associated with neighbourhood can include notions of place attachment (Cattell et al., 2007; Mihaylov & Perkins, 2014); emotional connections (Devine-Wright, 2009); an opportunity for social interaction (Mason, 2010); and a location that provides affluence, aspiration and security (Randolph, 2003).

### 5.2.1.3 ***A ‘dualist’ socially constructed reality***

As social constructionists increasingly move away from strict relativism, a new form of ‘dualist’ social constructionism (Andrews, 2012; Berger & Luckmann, 1991) has emerged, which sees society existing both as an objective reality and many subjective realities. Here distinctions are made between physical features of the domain and people’s representations, beliefs, and interpretations.<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, while the socially constructed world is not physically real, it may still be perceived and experienced as real by real people (Nyquist Potter, 2002); therefore, social constructions can, in fact, become forms of socially constructed realism. Applying this

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all forms of realism are foundationalist and that realists claim privileged access to the world because their accounts stand as objective representations.

<sup>26</sup> By this reckoning, objective reality is created through interaction within, and the effect of people on the social world. In turn, the social world also influences and affects people, thus resulting in routinisation and habitualisation. This thinking asserts that any frequently repeated action becomes cast into a pattern, which can then be easily reproduced. As a result, this allows people to engage in innovation rather than starting everything anew, whereby in time, the meaning of such habitualisation becomes embedded as routine, forming a general store of knowledge. This store is then institutionalised by society to the extent that future generations experience this type of knowledge as objective. This form of objectivity is continuously reaffirmed in the individual’s interaction with others, thereby continuing the process.

to my research topic, neither a full relativist nor realist ontology would suffice. By combining elements from both, analysis can be undertaken about how socially constructed ideas have become habitualised over time to become situated realities for particular individuals or groups.

### **5.2.2 Soja's 'Trialectics of Being' – social, spatial and temporal perspectives**

To strengthen this social constructionist approach, I drew from Soja's (1996) 'Trialectics of Being' model, which emphasises the need to interpret and understand phenomena through three distinct lenses – *historicality*, *sociality* and *spatiality*. Interpreting data through these lenses helped develop an understanding of how stakeholders in the intensification process perceive, understand, adjust to and act upon changes going on around them. It also helped understand and interpret the definitional quagmire that is 'community', as well as other concepts such as 'trust' and 'character'.

Describing his interpretation of human existence, Soja (1996, p. 73) believes that "we are first and always historical-social-spatial beings, actively participating individually and collectively in the construction / production – the 'becoming' – of histories, geographies, societies". Put more simply: people's lives always take place somewhere (spatiality) with other people (sociality) at a certain point in time (historicality). Soja (1996, p. 70) describes this model as:

a statement of what the world must be like in order to have knowledge of it. It is a crude picture of the nature of social being, of human existence, and also of the search for practical knowledge and understanding.

Soja's model is consistent with the social constructionist idea that there are multiple 'knowledges' and 'truths' always forming, and reforming, influenced by a range of factors. In Soja's model the Trialectics – social, spatial or temporal – have equal weight.

Soja's emphasis on equality is mainly due to limitations he sees with traditional (dichotomous) models, where spatiality is often "peripheralized into the background as reflection, container, stage, environment, or external constraint upon human behaviour and social action" (Soja, 1996, p 71). This thinking was inspired by Lefebvre (1991, p. 129), who argues that social processes only become real when analysed through the study of space:

social relations of production have a social existence *to the extent that they have a spatial existence*; they project themselves into a space, becoming inscribed there, and in the process producing the space itself. Failing this, these relations would remain in the realm of "pure" abstraction - that is to say, in the realm of representations and hence of ideology.

This is especially salient in the study of place-based community formation, and using a temporal lens brought to the fore contextual and background information, that enabled a deeper understanding of the values, priorities and motivations that underpinned participant choices and perspectives. This encouraged the gathering and analysis of individual / community histories and future objectives.

Because 'community' consists of people and the relationships between them, an interpretive social lens was essential. In fact, all processes and outcomes discussed in this study have social elements, whether they relate to conceptual ideas or the physical environment. It was particularly useful when trying to understand the importance that social interaction, trust and social capital play in the processes of community formation and place protection. Finally, using a social lens was essential when analysing subjective and personal phenomena such as 'sense of community' and 'sense of belonging'.

Soja (1996) describes three types of space within which all human life occurs. *Firstspace* privileges objectivity and what is physical, measurable and quantifiable. Firstspace is representative of realist perspectives of space, for example, dwellings and neighbourhoods. *Secondspace* privileges subjectivity and is often imagined and based on socially constructed representations. Secondspace is representative of

relativist perspectives of space. *Thirdspace* is a sympathetic response to the more rigid and inflexible dichotomous concepts of Firstspace and Secondspace (Soja, 1996) and is a synthesis of both physical and mental spaces. It represents neither a realist nor relativist position, but something combined, yet also unique and different. According to Soja (1996), Thirdspace is reliant on the Triad of Being where human life is reimagined as simultaneously historical, social and spatial. Interpreting space in this way can be helpful when analysing concepts which are subjective yet strongly linked to the physical characteristics of specific places.

The key consideration with this model is that the lenses should not be used in isolation, or independently from one another. In addition to firming up my ontological position, I have found Soja's model helpful to interpret *how things are* and *how things work* – in short, explaining how the physical world and knowledge about our world are created by social, spatial and temporal influences. It is also consistent with the dual social constructionist approach where both realist and relativist perspectives are acknowledged.

### **5.3 Researcher Reflexivity**

Before moving on to the case studies and research methods, I believe it important to consider myself in the research process. Essentially this means being aware of my own identity and acknowledging the difficulties of remaining outside the subject matter (Willig, 2014), based on the central premise that knowledge cannot be separated from the knower (Denzin, 1994).

According to Willig (2014), there are two types of reflexivity: *personal reflexivity* and *epistemological reflexivity*. Personal reflexivity requires the researcher to reflect on how their own values, beliefs, social identity, political outlook, experiences, interests and aims in life could affect the research and affect them as a researcher. On the other hand, epistemological reflexivity requires the researcher to ask questions such as: *how has the research question been defined and limited? what can be found? how could the research question have been investigated differently? to what extent would this have changed the understanding of the phenomenon being investigated?* These

forms of reflexivity require the researcher to reflect upon assumptions and knowledge about the world and identify any implications of such assumptions. I acknowledged and undertook both types of reflexivity in this study; however, personal reflexivity was done considerably more often. For example, during the interviews, I made a concerted effort to reflect on and put aside my own personal beliefs, should they influence the nature and content of the interview. One behaviour I had to be careful about was transitioning into an information-giving mode and sharing my opinions. The risk of doing this was that it could inadvertently encourage interviewees to provide answers they thought I might want to hear or approve of, thus reducing the likelihood of a genuine answer based on their own perceptions and experiences.

It was also important to understand the reflexivity of the participants; for example, understanding the degree to which their views are reflexive and autonomous or reflective of societal / cultural norms. Understanding participant reflexivity was particularly important, given a variety of opinions surrounding individualism vs collective influence in modern communities. Reflexivity also requires an acknowledgement of the relationship between participants and the researcher, and importantly that these relationships are not static but continuously renegotiated. May and Perry (2011) emphasises that qualitative interviewing is not a passive method of data collection but an active social encounter where both people are affected by the other's presence.

Throughout the planning, researching, analysis and writing processes, I consciously reflected on my objectives, what I was trying to say and that I was not imparting my own beliefs too strongly. To do this, I regularly spoke with fellow researchers to test ideas and discuss potential avenues for inquiry or conclusions. This sounding-board technique, while unstructured and rudimentary, provided a valuable way to test my own thinking and assumptions with people outside my research space.

## 5.4 Research Design

The next part of this chapter presents this study's research design. Figure 9 shows the complete research process. Each of these elements will be explained.

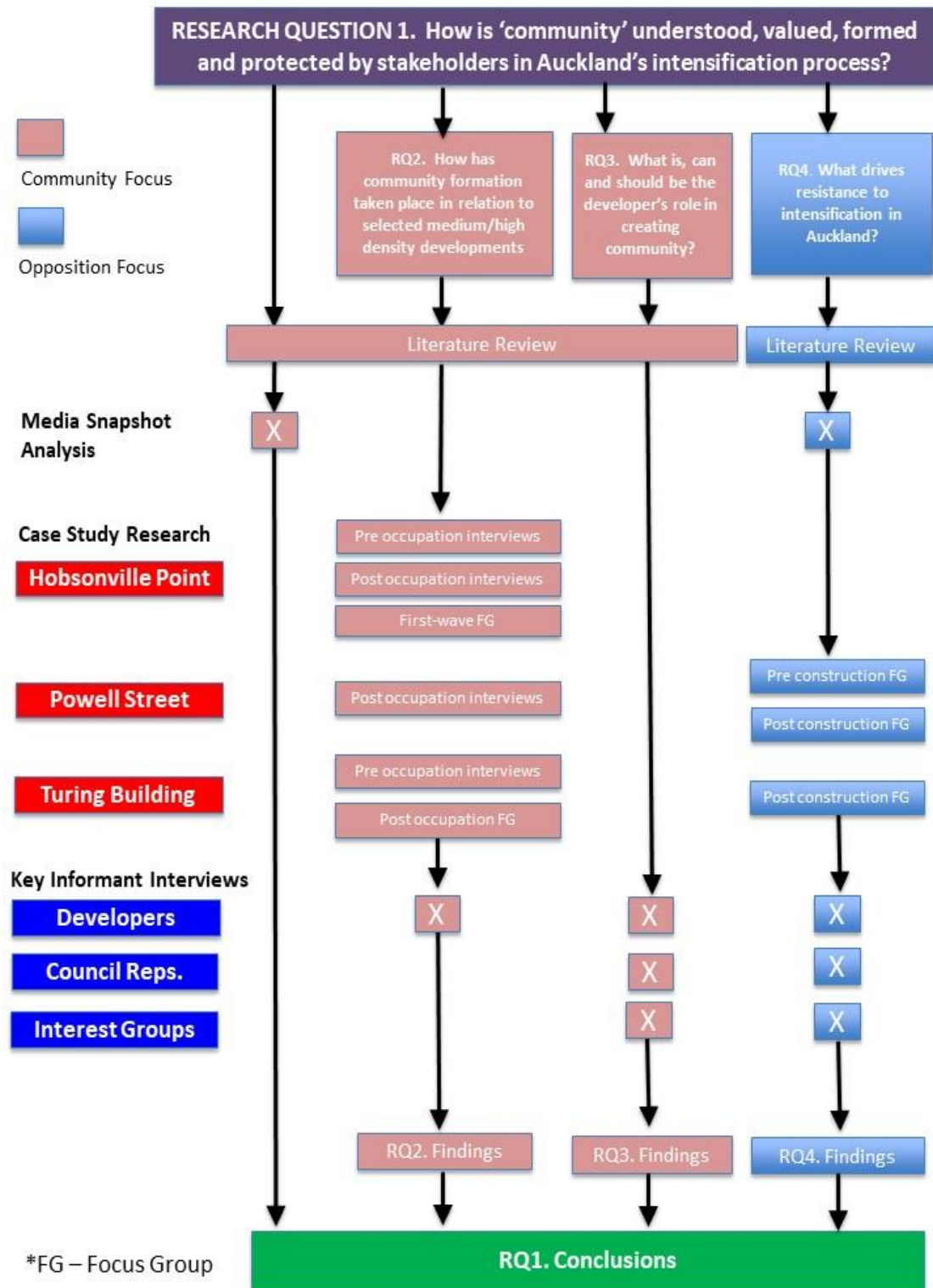


Figure 9. Research design

#### 5.4.1 Selecting the case-study developments

The chapters so far have presented a theoretical and literary account of residential intensification where the challenges and opportunities related to community formation have been discussed. However, the crux of this thesis is to apply these ideas and concepts to community formation as it has taken place within specific intensified developments. The initial plan was to select three 'medium-density' developments outside the CBD, one small, one medium and one large, with a range of price-points. Because I wanted to conduct longitudinal research, to be eligible, the developments had to be at a certain stage of development, so residents could be interviewed before and after they had moved in.

After considering many developments, based on these criteria, the following developments were selected as case-studies: Hobsonville Point (large – 22km from the CBD), Springpark (medium – 13km from CBD) and Powell Street (small – 9km from the CBD). However, due to development complications, the Springpark development was replaced by the Turing Building,<sup>27</sup> a small-medium-sized apartment building located 2km from the CBD. Pros and cons were associated with this change. First, it is an apartment building, not a medium-density development. Second, when selected, the building had just been completed, and the first residents were in the process of moving in. However, given the small (not high-rise) scale of the building, and the fact that longitudinal interviews would still be possible (albeit slightly time-condensed), it was deemed suitable.

The following map indicates the locations of the three selected developments. This not only shows their location in Auckland but also their distances from the CBD. The size of the star represents the scale of the developments, with Hobsonville Point being large and the other two small.

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<sup>27</sup> The company developing Springpark, a site with over 400 units planned, went into receivership in April 2014. After paying off its debts it again went into receivership in December 2015. From 2016 the site was under control of a new developer and the development is now called the Richmond. The affordable characteristic that underpinned Springpark has not been retained.



**Figure 10. Locations of selected case-study developments (source: google maps)**

Each of these case-study developments presented a unique opportunity to examine elements of Auckland’s intensification process as it was happening on the ground. Significantly, they all presented an opportunity to analyse how ‘community’ is emphasised and incorporated into the design and marketing of each development differently. The background to each of the developments is presented.

#### 5.4.1.1 ***Hobsonville Point***

Hobsonville Point is a 167-hectare mixed-use (residential, commercial, industrial) suburban development situated on the western fringe of Auckland. It is bordered by low-density residential housing to the south,<sup>28</sup> farmland to the west and the upper Waitemata Harbour to the north and east (see Figures 10 and 11). Hobsonville Point is 22km from the CBD.

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<sup>28</sup> Hobsonville Point abuts onto the original Hobsonville township.



Figure 11. Hobsonville Point's site plan [www.hobsonvillepoint.co.nz](http://www.hobsonvillepoint.co.nz)

While in many respects it has the characteristics of a 'greenfield' development, it is in fact 'brown-field', as the land was previously the site of a large Royal New Zealand Air Force (RNZAF) base, which had not been fully operational since 2001 when the New Zealand Defence Force began relocating operations. However, numerous RNZAF buildings remain on the site, including some detached service houses, service buildings, hangars and office buildings. Some of these are now being used for other purposes such as a farmers' market, community hall and the offices. Many of these buildings are considered to have heritage value, which has resulted in the preservation and restoration of many of them to retain the character of the site.

It is important to note that the history of Hobsonville Point precedes the RNZAF with archaeological evidence of Māori occupation long before the arrival of Europeans (Clough & Macready, 2009). The area now named 'Bomb Point' was previously known to Māori as Te Onekiritea which translates to 'white clay', in reference to the resource used as a pigment by local tribes (Kawerau a Maki, 2009). In 1853 Ngāti Whātua sold the area, which was primarily Kauri forest, to the Crown. Captain

William Hobson initially thought it to be a suitable site for the country's capital (NZGB, 2010). While this idea was quickly rejected, Hobson's name remains associated with the site.



**Figure 12. Hobsonville Airforce Base** [www.hobsonvillepoint.co.nz](http://www.hobsonvillepoint.co.nz)

Construction of the development is managed by Homes. Land. Community<sup>29</sup>. (HLC), a wholly owned subsidiary of the Housing New Zealand Corporation (HNZC) tasked with combining good urban design and affordability in a commercially profitable and community-focused way. To do this HLC teamed up with several building companies who have been given significant freedom to design their dwellings in creative ways. Unlike many other car-oriented suburbs in Auckland, Hobsonville Point is being constructed with walkability and pedestrian safety in mind. It is also designed to promote social interaction between residents, which is one facet of HLC's goals to encourage community formation on site (Opit & Kearns, 2014). Importantly, and as will be discussed in later chapters, the focus on community at Hobsonville Point is evident not only in the design of the development but also in the marketing and promotional materials associated with it (see below).

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<sup>29</sup> Known as Hobsonville Land Company when the project began.



## HOW DO I GET INVOLVED *in the Community?*



Hobsonville Point is a very easy place to meet people and have as much involvement in the community as suits you. Everyone is new here (or newish) and there will be people newer than you arriving within a week of you moving in. Everyone is keen to make connections and become acquainted with their neighbours.

To facilitate you getting to know your neighbours, Hobsonville Land Company (HLC), its development partners, and the Hobsonville Point Resident's Society run events regularly. They range from larger annual events, such as Come Fly With Me – a kite and model aircraft spectacular – and The Runway Challenge, a fun run with military-style obstacles, to regular smaller, neighbourhood events such as barbecues. As well as events there are various group activities happening at Hobsonville Point on a regular basis, such as dance classes, sailing and preschool play groups. There is a community section on our website where you can find out what's coming up. One of the best ways of ensuring you don't miss out is to sign up for our newsletter so that it is emailed to you. Just scroll to the bottom of the home page at [hobsonvillepoint.co.nz](http://hobsonvillepoint.co.nz) and type your email address in the space provided.



Catalina Café, Hobsonville Point Farmers Market, and the playground at Hobsonville Point Park are all social hubs for the community. As the community grows, more community focal points will emerge. Monthly art and craft markets are becoming established; a community garden is underway now; the Kite Range near Bomb Point will become an outdoor venue for music and theatre; and The Landing will be developed to include cafés and a waterfront promenade.



## JOINING THE COMMUNITY

- [Why People Choose Hobsonville Point](#) • [Who Lives Here](#)
- [The Resident's Society](#) • [How to Meet Your Neighbours](#)



Figure 13. Community-oriented marketing materials at Hobsonville Point  
[www.hobsonvillepoint.co.nz](http://www.hobsonvillepoint.co.nz)

Whilst Hobsonville Point is now largely free from controversy since it was first proposed in 2005, there was significant community opposition due in large part to HNZC proposals for affordable social housing. Resistance was most evident in the actions of the Hobsonville-West Harbour Ratepayers Association, who produced a

petition with over 770 signatures opposing the plan for reasons including the risk of property devaluation and increased crime. In the end, it went to the Environment Court, which sided with the HLC to allow social housing. However, when the government changed, the newly elected Prime Minister John Key quickly removed the social housing components from the plan, effectively removing one of the most important facets of the new ‘integrated’ development (Opit, 2012). Social housing was replaced by ‘affordable’ under the Gateway scheme,<sup>30</sup> which was itself superseded by the Axis scheme after only a short time.



**Figure 14. Differing housing typologies at Hobsonville Point (photographs: author)**

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<sup>30</sup> The Gateway scheme allowed people to pay for the house upfront but did not require payment for the land for 10 years.

Hobsonville Point offers a range of dwelling types and sizes, including detached housing, semi-detached housing, townhouses and apartments. The cheapest is the Axis home, which is sold for \$450,000–\$650,000 and must account for at least 20% of total sales. The intention of the Axis homes is to provide an option for people who earn an ‘average’ Auckland wage (household income no more than \$120,000 gross per annum), of which over half are sold to first-home buyers. A caveat of the Axis scheme is that sales must be made to New Zealand residents and they cannot resell or rent the house out in the first two years after purchase. Because of high demand, there is a ballot system operated by each building company ([www.axisseries.co.nz](http://www.axisseries.co.nz)). Other dwellings reflect market prices and can be bought for up to \$1,500,000. Essentially, the idea behind the range of typologies and price-points is to cater to a range of lifestyles and demographics. This, in turn, is believed to encourage greater diversity in the development.

When completed, Hobsonville Point will consist of at least 4,500 dwellings of mixed size, density, design and price, and an estimated population of more than 10,000. The site includes community facilities, such as a primary school and high school, cafés, restaurants, a GP clinic / pharmacy and a farmers’ market. As of March 2017, 946 homes were completed, with 414 Axis homes sold and approximately 2,350 people living in the development ([www.hobsonvillepoint.co.nz](http://www.hobsonvillepoint.co.nz)).

#### 5.4.1.2 ***The Turing Building***

Named after British mathematician and scientist Alan Turing, the Turing Building is a 27-unit boutique apartment development situated on the corner of Great North Road and Ariki Street in the inner-suburb of Grey Lynn. The building consists of one-, two- and three-bedroom apartments, ranging from 58m<sup>2</sup> to 126m<sup>2</sup>. Constructed by Ockham Residential, the Turing Building was completed in December 2014 with the first residents moving in just prior to Christmas. It is 2km from the city centre.



**Figure 15. The Turing Building from Great North Road**  
<http://www.ockham.co.nz/the-turing-building/gallery/>

Following in the footsteps of previous Ockham developments, the Turing Building was designed with social interaction and community in mind. This is evident in the layout: the top floor is a shared space available for all the residents to use. It comprises a kitchen, lounge, billiards table and a large outdoor deck with tables (see Figure 16) and is a space controlled by the residents. Community-oriented design is a major part of the Ockham Residential philosophy and one which differentiates their developments from many others of similar size.



**Figure 16. Shared lounge and deck at the Turing Building (photographs: author)**

Prior to construction, the site was occupied by a car-sales yard from 1971 (see Figure 17), similar to many of the other sections along Great North Road. Before that, there was a house on the site. In 2002 there was a proposal to build a church on this site; however, this never progressed past the planning stage.

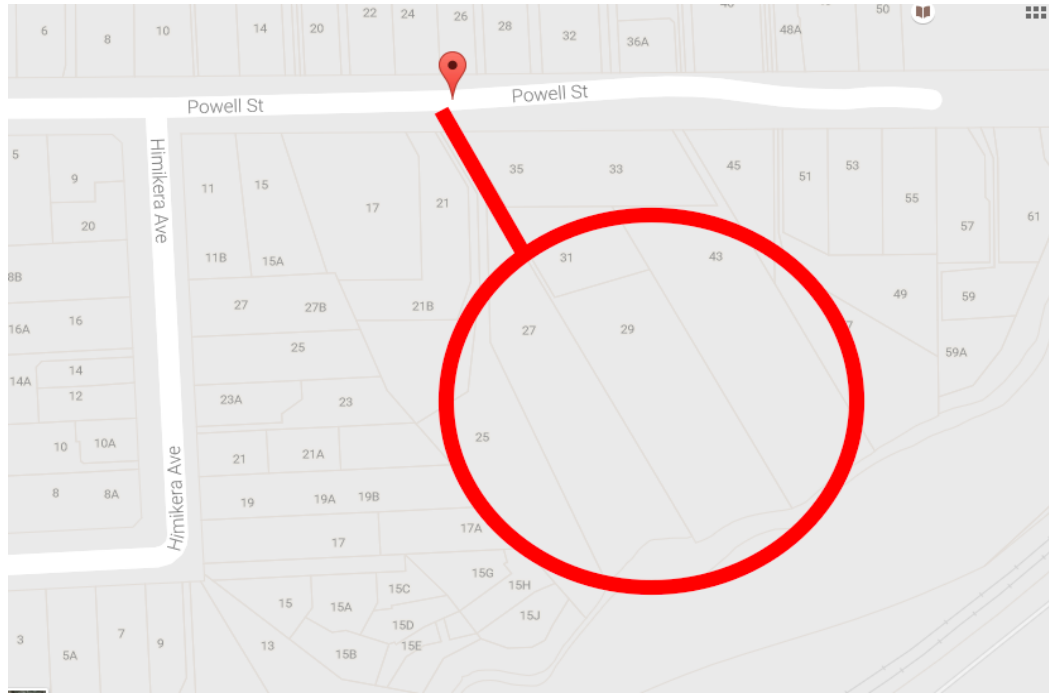


**Figure 17. Turing Building site before construction (source: google maps)**

While Great North Road is widely characterised by light industrial businesses, only one section back from the road, the primary land use is single detached suburban housing. Subsequently, the close proximity of residential housing to commercial / industrial sites on the main road has created tension as developers have increasingly sought to redevelop these sites. While there was not significant homeowner opposition to the Turing Building specifically, adjacent residents hold general concerns about the redevelopment of Great North Road, particularly in relation to height limits, shading and increased traffic generation.

#### 5.4.1.3 *The Powell Street townhouses*

The third case study is a small townhouse development situated in the outer-isthmus suburb of Avondale. The site has a single entrance on Powell Street, yet it also backs onto properties on Himikera Avenue (see Figure 18 below). Powell Street is 9km from the city centre.



**Figure 18. Location of Powell Street development (source: google maps)**

The development sits on a 10,599m<sup>2</sup> / 2.6-acre section in a natural basin set below the street level and behind and below the original Powell Street residences. The development consists of 35 dwellings, has a small communal greenspace in the middle, and some bush with a stream running through it at the bottom of the site. The surrounding land is predominantly low-density suburban housing, much of which is infill from earlier property subdivisions.



**Figure 19. Artist's impression of the development before construction**

<https://www.thepropertymarket.co.nz/properties/avondale/powell-street-development/gallery>



**Figure 20. Completed development (photograph: author)**



**Figure 21. Existing character of Powell Street (photograph: author)**

The land was originally owned by Auckland Council, which planned for it to be incorporated into motorway upgrades. However, changes to the motorway plan meant the land became surplus to requirements, so the council subsequently sold it to the developer for residential purposes. Construction began in October 2013 with a plan for people to move in by the end of 2014. All dwellings were sold off the plan for \$549,000 before the development was eventually completed at the beginning of 2016 – some 18 months later than first projected. By the time of occupation, the value of each dwelling had gone up by approximately \$200,000.



**Figure 22. Development site before and during construction (photographs: author)**

From the outset, the construction process was problematic. Before construction, the land had taken on the appearance and utility of green space for local residents. For this reason, when plans were announced that the site would be developed, some members of the neighbourhood voiced displeasure at the idea of losing this valued space.

There was strong local opposition from the Powell Himikera Resident's Association, which formed to fight the development, committed significant time and money, including fundraising \$20,000 for a lawyer to fight the development at the Environment Court. Although this legal action did slow down the development and lead to some design changes, it was unsuccessful in preventing the development from going ahead.



**Figure 23. Public opposition to development**

<http://www.newshub.co.nz/nznews/avondale-residents-reluctant-on-unitary-plan-2013061618>

In addition to local opposition, the development required more extensive earthworks than initially envisaged by the developer, and had problems surrounding flood risk mitigation and plumbing, financial difficulties with the building company and a challenging relationship with Auckland Council. Issues with Auckland Council are particularly pertinent, for they may be representative of problems inherent more widely in the intensification process, as will be discussed in Chapter Eight.

#### **5.4.2 Selecting the research participants – who and why?**

A key data source for this study was a carefully selected group of individuals who were each involved in specific ways in Auckland's residential intensification process. These participants provided a range of insights: some high-level, strategic and citywide; and others specific to individual developments. To gain a variety of perspectives, three sets of people were spoken to. The first was individuals (key informants) who held positions of significance in Auckland's intensification process. The second was people who had bought a dwelling off the plans at one of the case-study developments. The third was longer-term residents who either lived near one of the new developments or in the case of Hobsonville Point within the development already. As well as outlining who was selected to participate in this research, this section provides a rationale as to why each set of people was selected.

##### **5.4.2.1 Key Informants**

The key informants were 10 individuals who represented a specific roles or interest groups in Auckland's intensification process. The purpose of these interviews was to gain expert perspectives on the intensification process and the challenges surrounding it. It was an opportunity to identify how the concept of 'community' was interpreted differently by each individual based on their (group's) priorities for housing in Auckland. The intention was that these interviews would provide useful data about specific developments as well as city-wide policy and strategy aspects, such as the Unitary plan development. The 10 key informants interviewed each belonged to one of three groups – property developers, Auckland Council, and community interest / lobby groups. Key informants are not identified by name but by their position and / or the organisation they represent.

##### Property developers

There were two main reasons to interview developers. The first, related to the case-study development was to discuss their objectives and motivations as well as the challenges they faced regarding the specific development. The second was to discuss

intensification more generally, with attention given to strategic planning, procedural issues, stakeholder engagement, opposition, and the role of developers in community formation processes. Their wider strategic insights, alongside site-specific accounts, provided a plethora of information. For each of the three case-study developments, at least one representative was spoken to. Given the scale and scope of the Hobsonville Point development, two interviewees with different responsibilities were selected.

Key informant 1: Hobsonville Point developer representative 1

Key informant 2: Hobsonville Point developer representative 2

Key informant 3: Turing Building developer representative

Key informant 4: Powell Street developer representative

#### Auckland Council

It was important to speak with a selection of Auckland Council representatives due to its regulatory role in housing and its lead role in the Unitary Plan development. These interviews focused on planning and policy priorities, as well as the challenges of working with a diverse range of stakeholders and leading a process characterised by often contrasting perspectives. Participants were selected to provide insights from both political and planning perspectives of the council. Of the two planning representatives, one was policy-based and heavily involved in the Unitary Plan development, and the other was focused on development-level resource consenting.

Key informant 5: Auckland Council elected representative

Key informant 6: Auckland Council planning representative

Key informant 7: Auckland Council consents representative

### Community interest / lobby groups

It was also important to speak with community interest and lobby groups in Auckland's intensification process, for their efforts were influential in the development of the Unitary Plan. Three specific groups were chosen to understand better their concerns and their agenda related to intensification. Two of these groups (Auckland 2040 and the Character Coalition) were either concerned about or opposed to the degree of intensification suggested by Auckland Council, while the other (Generation Zero) sought and lobbied for greater intensification provisions.

Auckland 2040 (<http://www.auckland2040.org.nz/>) and Character Coalition (<http://www.charactercoalition.org.nz/>) are both coalition groups that have incorporated a number of smaller interest groups into their broader structure. While there are some minor differences between them,<sup>31</sup> they both oppose Auckland Council's intensification plans, believing them a threat to the character of many existing neighbourhoods. This relationship was actually ratified by the issuing of a joint statement of agreement (<http://www.charactercoalition.org.nz/auckland-2040-character-coalition-joint-statement-of-agreement>):

#### **We Stand For:**

- Protection of the character of residential neighbourhoods
- Location of apartment zoning to follow local planning studies with meaningful community consultation
- Focusing intensification into localities with adequate provision for infrastructure, including roading and public transport
- Protection of rights of affected parties to oppose developments

#### **We Oppose:**

- Random high-density multi-story apartments haphazardly scattered throughout Auckland
- Poor planning and provision for infrastructure

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<sup>31</sup> For example, Auckland 2040's stronger emphasis on planning and policy processes, and the Character Coalition's specific interest in heritage outcomes.

- Inadequate community involvement and removal of residents' rights to oppose inappropriate developments
- Fast tracking of the implementation of the plan

**What We Want:**

- We want the Council to "ReThink the Plan" in order to balance intensification with infrastructure capability and urban character values
- When Council agree to "ReThink the Plan" we expect the following commitments:
- ReThink provisions and zoning related to apartment development in residential zones
- To undertake infrastructure and town centre studies prior to introducing an apartment zone
- To institute a local planning process and to undertake community consultation for such zones
- Modification of planning rules to ensure the protection of amenity and natural values in environmental zones
- To retain resident rights of notification
- Adopt a staged approach to implementation

Generation Zero, on the other hand, is supportive of Auckland Council's intensification plans, and while they lobbied for additional intensification, they also supported Auckland Council to pass and ratify the Unitary Plan. Unlike Auckland 2040 and the Character Coalition, which were formed in response to concerns over housing, Generation Zero has a broader agenda. According to their website, they were founded "with the central purpose of providing solutions for New Zealand to cut carbon pollution through smarter transport, liveable cities & independence from fossil fuels" (<http://www.generationzero.org>). Within the Unitary Plan process, Generation Zero has proven to be one of Auckland Council's strongest allies.<sup>32</sup> In the media, and during public consultations, Generation Zero have often been pitted against Auckland 2040 and the Character Coalition, often within the broader narrative of generational conflict.

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<sup>32</sup> To the degree that accusations are made by opposition groups that Generation Zero are council funded or a Council proxy organisation.

Key informant 8: Auckland 2040 representative

Key informant 9: Character Coalition representative

Key informant 10: Generation Zero representative

#### 5.4.2.2 *Incoming residents*

This group consisted of people who had bought a dwelling off the plan at one of the three case-study developments. There was a dual purpose in interviewing these people. The first was to understand their expectations and concerns moving into medium-density housing, many for the first time. The second was to understand the importance of community in their decision and whether a sense of community had developed within their development since moving in. To do this, I needed to speak with people before and after settling into their new homes and again post-occupation.

While interviewing people from a range of demographic groups was desired, participant demographics were not considered in the recruitment process. This was because two of the developments consisted of only a small number of dwellings, making the pool of potential participants small to start with, a challenge that would only have been exacerbated by demographic objectives. Accordingly, anybody who had recently bought a dwelling off the plan and was waiting to move into one of the developments was eligible to be interviewed.<sup>33</sup> Names are not used in reporting the results, with each participant referred to as either a 'Hobsonville Point resident', 'Turing Building resident' or 'Powell Street resident'.

#### 5.4.2.3 *Existing neighbourhood residents*

This group of participants consisted of people who either lived close to one of the new developments or in the case of Hobsonville Point have already lived in the development for at least two years. The intention when speaking to nearby residents was to gain an understanding of their concerns and expectations regarding the

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<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, in some cases there was little diversity amongst residents to choose from.

development, in particular how they thought it could influence their local community. In the case of existing Hobsonville Point residents, the intention was to learn about how they had seen their local community change since moving there, with the continuous influx of new residents.

*Powell Himikera Residents Association (PHRA)*

This group consisted of residents who live close to the Powell Street development who opposed the development. The purpose of speaking with them was to understand their concerns, particularly regarding the way it could / did impact their local community. Their views were sought during and after construction to understand to what degree their concerns and expectations were justified and realised. Alongside data gained from the new development's incoming residents, feedback from this existing group provided the opportunity to learn about whether a sense of community was forming between original and new residents. Furthermore, speaking to them provided an opportunity to gain first-hand accounts from those often described as selfish or as obstructionist NIMBYs.<sup>34</sup>

*Grey Lynn Residents Association (GLRA) and Arch Hill Matters (AHM)*

The next group of existing residents were members from the GLRA and AHM groups (for the sake of simplicity they are referred to as just GLRA). Unlike the PHRA, these two groups had a wider membership catchment that allowed anybody from the suburbs of Grey Lynn or Arch Hill to join. Grey Lynn and Arch Hill have both been undergoing changes in recent years with considerable gentrification having taken place. This has resulted in growing tension and unease from longer-term residents who perceive the character of their suburbs to be under threat by intensification. These groups were selected because they were both critics of intensification taking

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<sup>34</sup> The original plan was to conduct two focus groups with residents from Powell Street and Himikera Avenue. The second was to take place one year later, once the development was completed and people had moved in. The rationale for this longitudinal approach was to allow comparison between opinions pre- and post- development occupation and furthermore to determine whether neighbouring resident concerns and expectations were realised. Unfortunately, significant delays to the development meant that the second focus group could not be undertaken.

place on Great North Road, of which the Turing Building was just one example. While the Turing Building provided an interesting example, the intention was to gain an understanding about local concerns regarding intensification on Great North Road more broadly.

#### *First-wave Hobsonville Point residents*

When this study commenced in 2013, there was already a well-established group of first-wave residents living within the development. Speaking with a selection of these people provided an opportunity to learn about how community formation had taken place from the outset, and how this has changed as the population has continued to grow.<sup>35</sup> I also wanted to learn the degree to which community was a factor in their decision to buy, for unlike later residents there was no visible community that could serve as an enticement, rather only the potential for community. This was designed to provide a basis for comparison between the characteristics and perceptions between these residents and later residents. As will be outlined in the following section, a combination of semi-structured interviews and focus groups were undertaken to speak to the groups and individuals discussed in the sections above.

## **5.5 Research Methods**

This section outlines the research methods employed in this study. In line with the Social Constructionist methodology outlined earlier in the chapter, a qualitative research approach was taken. This consisted of a combination of semi-structured interviews and focus groups with selected participants as identified in previous sections. Where possible, a longitudinal approach was taken, with some people interviewed at different stages in the development process. This was to gain an understanding of how and why people's preconceptions or expectations regarding specific developments differed from pre- and post-construction / occupation.

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<sup>35</sup> Initially I was also interested in gaining the views of those living adjacent to the building site, however this proved problematic for there were very few people still living in the original housing, as many had already moved away or were just short-term renters.

These primary research methods were adopted alongside secondary methods, which included a review of academic literature and official plans / strategies / policies, and a snapshot of key themes and discourses evident in media coverage related to intensification. This research was undertaken in compliance with the regulations stipulated by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee (UAHPEC).

RESEARCH TASKS	2014				2015						2016
	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Apr	May	Oct	Nov	Sept
<b>HOBSONVILLE POINT</b>											
Incoming Resident Interviews											
Follow-Up Incoming Resident Interviews											
Long Term Resident Focus Group											
<b>TURING BUILDING</b>											
Incoming Resident Interviews											
Follow-Up Incoming Resident Focus Group											
Neighbouring Residents Focus Group											
<b>POWELL STREET</b>											
Incoming Resident Interviews											
Neighbouring Resident Focus Group											
<b>OTHER</b>											
Key Informant Interviews											

### 5.5.1 Semi-structured interviews

There are three basic types of interview: structured, unstructured and semi-structured. Structured interviews follow a predetermined and standardised list of questions [that are] asked in almost the same way and in the same order, while unstructured interviews (e.g. oral histories) are directed by the informant (Dunn, 2016). Striking a balance between structured and unstructured techniques, a semi-structured interview approach was taken.

#### 5.5.1.1 *The rationale for using this method*

Semi-structured interviews offer the flexibility to combine predetermined questions with a conversational manner that enables the interviewer to explore emergent issues as and when appropriate (Longhurst, 2016). The dual nature of this

interviewing method allows for both a high degree of participant comparability with the ability to acquire data outside initial lines of questioning. Such an approach requires continuous reflection to ensure that key areas of inquiry are covered and that when deviations occur, they yield useful and relevant information (Roulston, 2014).

Another facet of a semi-structured interview style is that it allows participants to interact naturally with the interviewer. Accordingly, the success of each interview is dependent on the communication skills of the interviewer, which includes their ability to establish rapport with participants early on, structure questions clearly, to listen then probe and prompt appropriately, and to encourage participants to speak freely (Clough & Nutbrown, 2012). Developing rapport is particularly helpful in a conversational approach, as it helps to develop trust with the participant, and in doing so encourages open and honest responses. Furthermore, a semi-structured approach which encourages free-speaking can result in some participants asking questions themselves, and they become more engaged in the topic. This also requires interviewer reflexivity, for the way that an interviewer answers questions (e.g. what do you think community means?) could influence the participant's response. While this is not a *faux pas* in social constructionist research, critics of qualitative interviewing maintain that interviewers who contribute their own personal perspectives may produce results that lack validity and can create biases (Roulston, 2014). This requires a cautioned approach that simultaneously maintains a relaxed and conversational approach.

#### 5.5.1.2 ***Question development***

For each interview, there was a set of predetermined questions informed by the literature review, media coverage pertaining to Auckland Housing and community, and my own knowledge of the topic. The questions developed were often tailored to the participant, although a small number of standardised questions were also included, such as those related to defining community. In the case of incoming residents, there was less variation with both Hobsonville Point residents and Turing

Building residents asked questions related to their specific development (in addition to standardised conceptual questions). Due to time constraints, Powell Street resident interviews were conducted by a colleague who developed their own set of questions, although they were aware of my research objectives and their line of questioning reflected mine in most respects.

#### **5.5.1.3 *Research Procedure***

All interviews we conducted at a place of choosing by the participant. Before each interview began, the participant was required to read the information sheet and sign a consent form. With the permission of the participant, each interview was recorded and transcribed. All participants were offered the chance to see the transcription of their interview should they want to remove or change any details. Nobody requested this. Interviews lasted from 30 minutes to 90 minutes, with the key informant interviews generally longer than incoming resident ones.

### **5.5.2 Focus groups**

In addition to semi-structured interviews, focus groups were undertaken. Also known as group interviews, focus groups have their origins in market research (Morgan, 1988) and involve a moderator or facilitator (myself) to guide the direction of the conversation. In total, five focus groups were conducted over the course of the study, two with existing Powell Street residents, one with residents in proximity to the Turing Building, one with Turing Building residents and one with long-term Hobsonville Point residents.

#### **5.5.2.1 *The rationale for using this method***

Although focus groups can afford opportunities that interviews cannot, such as avenues of discussion spurred on by the group dynamic, the key reason behind the decision to conduct focus groups was logistical. In many cases the information I sought could have also been elicited from individual interviews; however, due to the

significant amount of time required to organise, undertake and transcribe each interview, focus groups were considered the best option in some cases. Another reason for choosing to run focus groups was that in these five cases, the participants of each session were already representative of community groups where they mostly knew each other already. It was anticipated that the sense of commonality and familiarity between residents would allow for a more open conversation.

#### 5.5.2.2 ***Question development***

Focus group questions were chosen on a case-by-case basis, with each group interview focused on different research areas. For example, some were focused more on planning and procedural challenges, while others were more about social interaction. At the same time, some similar themes were present in each session, particularly in relation to community formation.

#### 5.5.2.3 ***Research Procedures***

Each focus group took place at a location within the neighbourhood in which the residents lived. All focus group participants were required to read an information sheet and sign a consent form before taking part in the session (see appendices for versions of these). Details of each focus group are outlined:

1. Powell Street Existing Residents' Focus Group  
01/10/2014 at 17B Powell Street (resident's house)
  
2. Grey Lynn and Arch Hill Existing Residents' Focus Group  
23/03/2015 at Citizen Park (bar) in Kingsland
  
3. Existing Hobsonville Point Residents' Focus Group  
29/04/2015 at the Radar Station (public meeting place) in Hobsonville Point
  
4. Turing Building Incoming Residents' Follow-Up Focus Group  
23/11/2015 at the Turing Building rooftop lounge (public space)

5. Powell Street Existing Residents' Follow-Up Focus Group  
26/09/2016 at 47 Powell Street (resident's house)

I recorded and transcribed each focus group. All participants remained anonymous during this process. All focus groups were between 1.5 to 2 hours long.

### **5.5.3 Participant recruitment**

An important and sometimes challenging component of the primary research process was the recruitment of interview and focus group participants. This process was varied and required a range of different approaches depending on the participant or group.

#### **5.5.3.1 Key Informants**

Ten key informant interviews were undertaken, each lasting between 60–90 minutes. When it came to selecting interviewees, stakeholder group representatives were considered appropriate, rather than requiring a specific individual. This allowed for a degree of flexibility with most groups having numerous people that could present their group's views.

The recruitment of key informants was a three-stage process:

1. Identification of stakeholder groups who play an important and / or interesting role in Auckland's intensification process.
2. Contact made (by phone or email) with each group to ask if a representative would be willing to participate. If by email, the information sheet was attached to the invitation. If by phone, an email with the information sheet was sent as a follow-up.
3. Once an individual was selected, interview arrangements were made with them. Each interview was organised at a time and place convenient to them.

### 5.5.3.2 *Incoming Residents*

The process for recruiting incoming residents was different from that of the key informants. It was also more complex and time-consuming because the identities of buyers off the plan were unknown to me so I could not contact them directly. This meant cooperation with the developers and / or building companies to assist with recruitment. Although there were differences regarding recruitment from each development (as will be explained shortly), the following process was used in each case:

1. Contact was made with each developer about how best to invite those who bought off the plan at their developments to participate in the project. I was then put in contact with individuals responsible for sales. These were representatives from the developer (Turing Building), building companies (Hobsonville Point) or real estate agency (Powell Street).
2. On my behalf, these representatives contacted dwelling purchasers to invite them to participate in this research.
3. If willing, the purchaser's contact details were either provided to me by the representative or the incoming resident would contact me directly through the information provided to them by the representative. Interviews took place at locations of participants' choosing.
4. At the end of each interview, participants were asked if they would be happy to take part in a follow-up interview approximately a year later after they had moved into their new home.
5. The organisation of a follow-up interview was conducted on an individual basis with residents, as their contact details were already held. The plan was to hold a follow-up focus group with these residents rather than individual interviews.

The number of recruited residents at each location is shown below:

		<b>Hobsonville Point</b>	<b>Turing Building</b>	<b>Powell Street</b>
Pre-Occupation	<b>Desired Number of Participants</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
	<i>Number of Participants Interviewed</i>	8	6	0
Post-Occupation	<b>Desired Number of Participants</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
	<i>Number of Participants Interviewed</i>	4	4	12

For each case-study, 10 people were sought, but as can be seen, this was not achieved. Why these numbers were not reached is explained below.

#### Recruitment of Hobsonville Point incoming residents

Recruitment at Hobsonville Point was undertaken with the assistance of two building company representatives (one of whom was also an incoming resident). This person who worked in sales for one of the building companies operating at Hobsonville Point contacted recent buyers individually to ask whether they would be happy to participate. Because she had good relationships with her clients, she was able to recruit six people on my behalf. Other building company representatives were less effective, with only one person recruited from the Universal Builders representative. Other building companies working at Hobsonville Point were harder to engage with. The final participant was recruited without building company representative help, with one participant providing a recommendation.

The follow-up focus group for these residents was abandoned as a time and place to suit all participants could not be found. Individual follow-up interviews were subsequently conducted with four of the eight original interviewees.

#### Recruitment of Turing Building incoming residents

Recruitment at the Turing Building was undertaken through one sales representative at Ockham Residential, who emailed buyers on my behalf a few weeks prior to them being able to move into the development. When this invitation was sent out, not all 27 units had been sold, which meant that only residents / owners of 15–20 units

received the invitation. Of this number, six agreed to participate. Due to the communal nature of this development, a follow-up focus group was planned with residents. This is discussed in a later section.

Likewise, at Hobsonville Point, a follow-up focus group was planned to speak with residents after they had settled into life in the building. Recruitment consisted of recontacting those who had previously been spoken with and expressed interest in follow-up discussions at the time. Four of the original participants agreed to take part. The other two did not participate because they were landlords, not residents, so did not feel their views would be of benefit. Although requested, they were not prepared to contact their tenants on my behalf to see if they wanted to participate. Some flyers were also produced and put up in the building. The focus group was conducted in the rooftop lounge.

#### Recruitment of Powell Street incoming residents

The same approach was taken at Powell Street as with the other two developments, by enlisting the help of the sales representatives to contact buyers on my behalf. They did so with a bulk email which was ultimately unsuccessful for recruiting interviewees. The plan then shifted to contacting them individually by letter-drop once they had moved into the development; however, significant delays to the development prevented this. Fortunately, a colleague was able to interview 12 newly arrived residents in September 2016 and provided me with the interview transcripts. Challenges and limitations are discussed in more detail in section 5.7.

#### **5.5.3.3 Existing neighbourhood residents**

The recruitment of existing neighbourhood residents required various methods depending on the characteristics of the participating group or person. How the recruitment of each existing resident group was conducted is presented below.

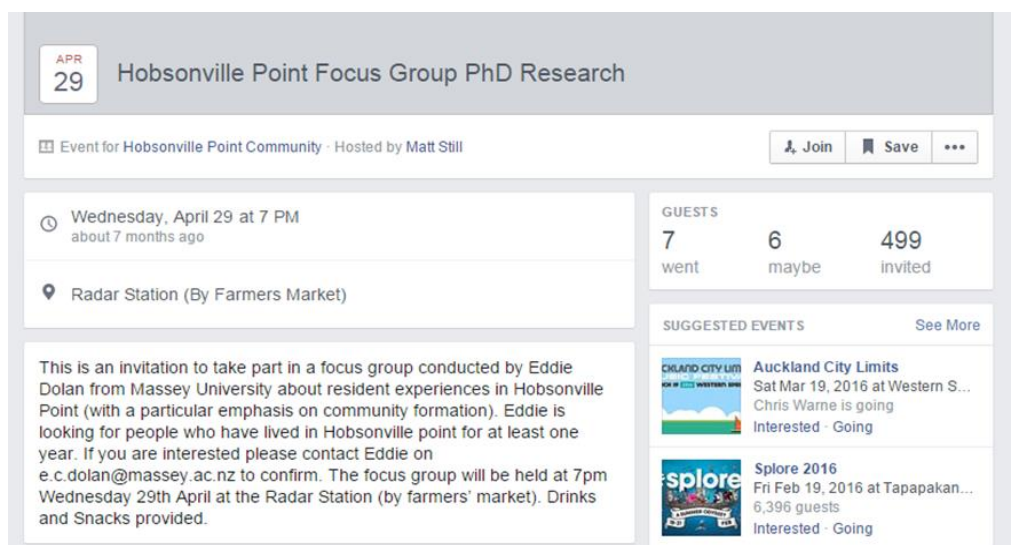
## Powell Himikera Residents Association

Through conversations with the PHRA, it was decided the focus group would be held at the house of one participant. After deciding on a suitable time and date (October 2014), an invitation letter was delivered to all houses on Powell Street and Himikera Avenue. This was done three weeks before the focus group date. This invitation contained background details about the research, research objectives, focus group details and how to RSVP. The letter-drop garnered some interest; however, to increase the numbers, two people who had already agreed to participate helped by encouraging some of their neighbours to join in as well.

The follow-up focus group was conducted in September 2016 after contacting prior participants individually to organise. As with the first one, this focus-group was hosted by one of the participants.

## First-wave Hobsonville Point Residents

The focus group took place on-site in a Hobsonville Point community facility called the Radar Station. Participants were recruited directly through the Hobsonville Point Community Group Facebook page (see Figure 24 below). Eight people attended the focus group conducted in April 2015.



The image shows a screenshot of a Facebook event page. At the top, the date is 'APR 29' and the event title is 'Hobsonville Point Focus Group PhD Research'. Below the title, it says 'Event for Hobsonville Point Community - Hosted by Matt Still' and has buttons for 'Join', 'Save', and a menu icon. The event is scheduled for 'Wednesday, April 29 at 7 PM' and is located at 'Radar Station (By Farmers Market)'. A 'GUESTS' section shows '7 went', '6 maybe', and '499 invited'. There is a 'SUGGESTED EVENTS' section with two items: 'Auckland City Limits' and 'Splore 2016'. The main text of the invitation reads: 'This is an invitation to take part in a focus group conducted by Eddie Dolan from Massey University about resident experiences in Hobsonville Point (with a particular emphasis on community formation). Eddie is looking for people who have lived in Hobsonville point for at least one year. If you are interested please contact Eddie on e.c.dolan@massey.ac.nz to confirm. The focus group will be held at 7pm Wednesday 29th April at the Radar Station (by farmers' market). Drinks and Snacks provided.'

**Figure 24. Hobsonville Point focus group invitation (Facebook)**

## Grey Lynn Residents Association and Arch Hill Matters

To arrange this, I contacted two local resident associations who had been vocal in the media regarding intensification along Great North Road. These were the Grey Lynn Residents Association (GLRA) and Arch Hill Matters (AHM) groups. While a letter drop (as with Powell Street) was considered, this proved logistically problematic due to the hundreds of houses that would need to be delivered to. Consequently, the focus group was organised entirely through the resident associations, with all participants belonging to either the GLRA or AHM. To encourage people to attend, each group posted an advertisement on their respective Facebook pages (see Figure 25 below).



**Figure 25. The GLRA focus-group invitation (Facebook)**

The location for the focus group was a local pub, regularly frequented by many of the participants for their group meetings. Five people attended the event, which was slightly below the anticipated number, as three people did not turn up on the night.

It was conducted in February 2015. Given the focus of this meeting was not a single development, a follow-up meeting was not considered necessary.

## **5.6 Thematic Analysis**

Nowell et al. (2017, pg. 2) state that “If readers are not clear about how researchers analyzed their data or what assumptions informed their analysis, evaluating the trustworthiness of the research process is difficult.” Reflecting on the importance of this assertion, I outline the thematic data analysis approach used in this study. As a widely used approach for qualitative research, thematic analysis is a method used to identify, analyse, organise, describe and report themes from selected data sets (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis is also a useful method to explore the perspectives of a diverse range of participants both in terms of highlighting similarities and differences, and forming unexpected insights (Braun & Clarke, 2006; King, 2004). Reflecting the lack of literature about thematic analysis (compared to grounded theory or ethnography), there remains little consensus about what thematic analysis is and how it should best be undertaken (Attride-Stirling, 2001). However, ambiguity surrounding thematic analysis is largely negated by the flexibility and adaptability of the approach, which can be altered and revised to meet the needs of the researcher or as changing circumstances may require.

As can be seen in the diagram below, the thematic-analysis approach adopted for this study was comprised of multiple stages. While these stages were sequential, reflecting the flexibility in the thematic-analysis approach, my process was also recursive, allowing me to go back and forwards between stages if required.

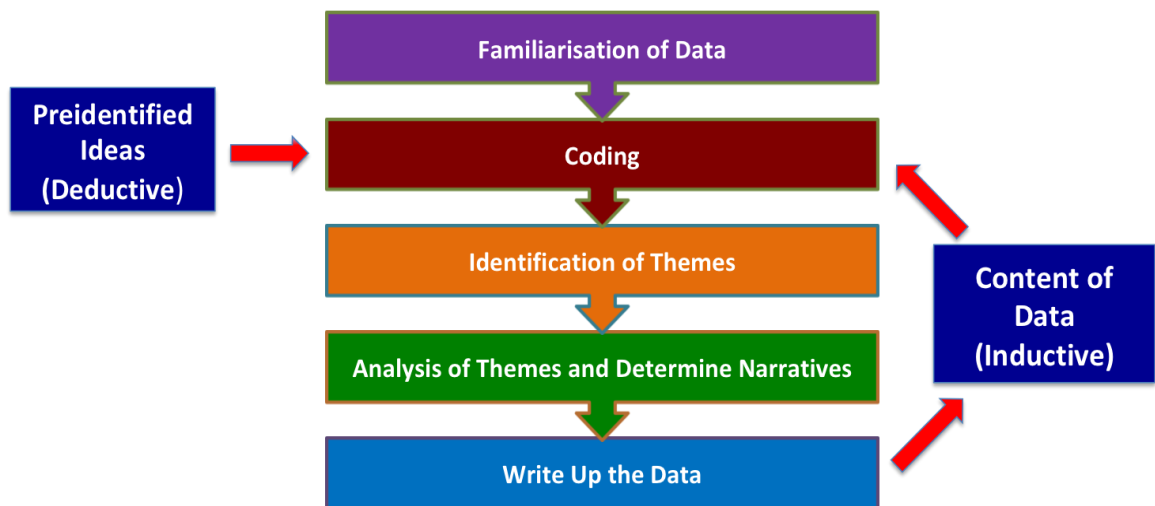


Figure 26. Thematic-analysis process

The first step of my thematic analysis was *Familiarisation of Data*, a process consisting of multiple readings of my interview transcripts that allowed me to develop a coding frame. Following this, I began the more complex two-stage task of *Coding*. Initially I developed codes based on my interview questions (deductive coding), which themselves were influenced by existing academic literature and the media coverage. Following this, I developed additional codes based on themes derived from my interview data (inductive coding). This second coding process was undertaken by identifying and noting codes as I read through the interview transcripts. This was done more than once due to the extended interview timeframe. There were two types of codes. One type only related to specific stakeholder groups, case-study developments or processes (e.g. opposition to development or community outcomes at Hobsonville Point), and the other type more general (e.g. definitions of community). These two sets of codes were derived from a single data set consisting of all interview transcripts. The process of coding was predominantly manual, taking notes and making annotations for each interview transcript. NVivo was also used as a secondary mechanism.

The next stage was the *Identification and Analysis of Themes*, a systematic process that involved categorising and grouping these codes into themes that represent outcomes and narratives of interest (e.g. different types of community, the commodification of community or institutional distrust in the planning process).

Throughout the research process, when revisions to research objectives occurred, additional coding and thematic analysis took place. This was important, given the longitudinal elements of the research programme where themes emerged later in the process. The key themes and narratives identified in this process underpinned the content of much of the discussion in the results and conclusion chapters (Six - Nine).

By taking a social-constructionist approach to this research, the thematic analysis sought out not only surface level 'semantic' meanings but also the underlying latent ideas, conceptualisations and assumptions, with patterns identified as being socially produced (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

## **5.7 Key Research Limitations**

The primary research component of this study experienced some significant limitations that affected the manner and scope in which the research could be undertaken. The challenges encountered could largely be attributed to three factors:

1. Casestudy selection was dependent on specific timeframe criteria to allow for longitudinal research to be undertaken.
2. I was reliant on the goodwill and cooperation of developer-side representatives or landlords to recruit incoming interview participants.
3. There was no way to guarantee interviewees would be able or willing to participate in a follow-up interview at a later date.

## **5.8 Conclusion**

This chapter introduced the reader to my theoretical framework, research design and research methods. Reflecting the pluralistic nature of my research topic and the diversity of views surrounding Auckland housing, I adopted a social-construction approach. This acknowledges that understanding, meaning and significance are

developed through interaction with other human beings, that knowledge is created, value-laden and ultimately derived from communities of people who agree on what is true. Adding to this approach, I have also incorporated Soja's (1996) 'Trialectics of Being' to guide my ontological outlook. This model emphasises the need to interpret and understand phenomena through three lenses: spatiality (people's lives always take place somewhere), sociality (with other people) and historicity (at certain points in time).

My research design and methods were also outlined, with a description about my qualitative approach consisting of a series of key informant interviews with people with important roles in Auckland's the intensification process, interviews with residents moving into new developments, and focus groups with residents living adjacent to new developments. The three case-study developments of Hobsonville Point, the Turing Building and the Powell Street townhouses were also outlined.

# CHAPTER SIX: Perspectives on 'Community' and Factors Contributing to Community Outcomes

## 6.1 Introduction

Chapter Two highlighted that 'community' is a complex construct with diverse meanings. In particular, three meanings, or interpretations, of 'community', are evident: community as an observable group of people bound together by commonality; community as an individual's feeling of belonging in relation to others; and community as a product or resource that people consume or utilise for specific benefits. Chapter Two also identified a range of perspectives about the role of 'place' in community, with some authors suggesting that community has become, or is becoming, de-localised over time; in other words, space and place are less important in community formation processes. This perspective has been aligned with the emergence of 'communities of interest' and has raised questions about the importance, value or even future of localised forms of community, especially related to neighbourhood. However, in planning and policy circles, there remains a strong belief that the physical environment and urban design positively or negatively influence community outcomes and so remains a key component of their community planning repertoire.

The first of three results chapters, this chapter expands on discussions presented in Chapter Two. These discussions are general and conceptual in nature, rather than site-specific, and incorporate perspectives elicited from all the interviewees equally. As such, this chapter canvases and introduces ideas and viewpoints that will be investigated further in the following chapter in relation to community outcomes within the three case-study developments.

The first section briefly describes the ways in which interviewees differentiated the concepts of 'community' and 'neighbourhood'. The next section explores how social, temporal, geographic and utility commonalities contributed to community outcomes. The impact of population diversity / homogeneity on community is explored, with age, life stage and ethnicity identified as most important. This discussion also questions normative associations attached to community diversity. Following this, physical and spatial influences are discussed, with particular attention given to propinquity, density and design. The final section examines the role of planners and developers as enablers or creators of community and starts to address questions of whether they *can* and *should* pursue such goals.

## **6.2 Differentiating 'Community' from 'Neighbourhood'**

When asked directly to differentiate community and neighbourhood, for most people, the distinction was simple: community represents a group of people while neighbourhood is a physical location within which people live, work, and interact. Community was also considered to be quite interpretive, while neighbourhood was not, as it comprises defined boundaries and physical design features (Garde, 2004). Examples of this differentiation were provided by three Hobsonville Point residents and one Turing Building resident:

I think community for me is about a spirit; a neighbourhood is more about locality.

Community is a connection between people, while neighbourhood is more of a physical location.

It's the people who make community, facilities, brick and mortar sort of enhance things but it's mostly the integration of people. (Hobsonville Point residents)

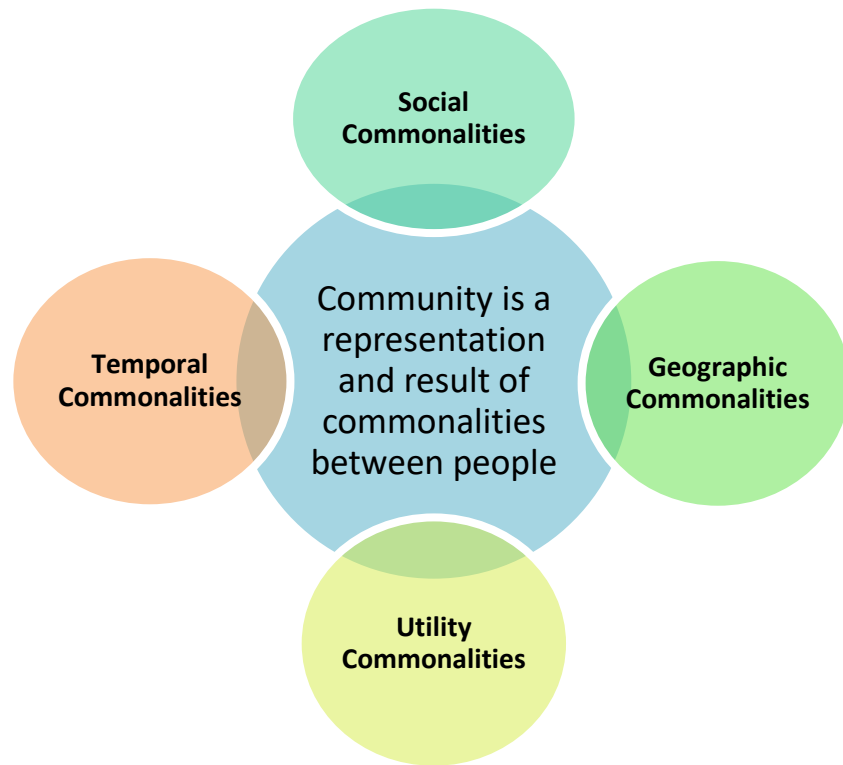
If you say the word community I think about the relationships in an area, not so much the area itself, but how I interact with the people. (Turing Building resident)

Linguistically, this differentiation was clear with words like ‘connection’, ‘spirit’, ‘interact’, ‘relationship’ and ‘people’ used to describe community, and words like ‘facilities’, ‘area’ and ‘location’ used for neighbourhood. Such differentiations do not contribute in terms of defining community, but they help clarify what it is not. One point to note was that community was inherently perceived by interviewees as a positive outcome. This was observed by the Generation Zero representative who said, “You do not often hear about bad communities as such, rather you hear about good community or no community”. The most common negative perception related to community was its perceived absence. Neighbourhood, on the other hand, was considered more diversely by interviewees, with neutral, positive and negative associations given to it.

### **6.3 Community is an Outcome Based on Commonality**

Reflecting common interpretations in academic literature, many interviewees perceived community as being a group of people with something in common (Gans, 1961; Panzetta, 1971; Syme et al., 2005; Talen, 2002; Stein & Harper, 2012; Howarth & Andreouli, 2015). Such perceptions focused strongly on the idea of sharing, believing that when something is shared, this can create a bond between people which in turn can create a sense of belonging. For some interviewees, to experience community was simply to be around like-minded people, while for others, the binding commonality was interpreted in a more nuanced manner.

Influenced by Soja’s (1996) ‘Trialectics of Being’, and informed by interview data, four types of commonality were identified (see Figure 27 below). These were ‘social commonality’, which includes shared interests, values and norms; ‘temporal commonality’, which includes shared visions for the future (and an appreciation of the past); ‘geographic’ commonality, which is based on the locations in which people spend their time; and ‘utility commonality’, which represents people seeking benefits associated with belonging to a group, such as social capital and sense of safety.



**Figure 27. Community as both a representation and result of commonalities between people**

### **6.3.1 'Social commonalities' – shared interests, values and norms**

The simplest description of a social commonality as described by interviewees was people who have a common interest, with one example being, “A group of people who have come together that share something in common or shared interests, or share experience” (Generation Zero representative). Reflecting the diversity of interpretations in Chapter Two, some participants also saw commonalities as something deeper than just ‘shared interests’. Brint (2001, p. 8) interprets community as being a group of people who not only share “common activities and / or beliefs” but are intrinsically bonded by “loyalty, common values, and / or personal concern”. A similar perception was held by an Auckland Council Policy representative who defined community as a “common set of morals, rules, and principles about how you do things”, making community comparable to a code of conduct which members must adhere to if they want to belong. This perception differed from the others above, as it draws upon the exclusionary aspects of community underpinned by a

pressure to conform. In other words, without commonality, inclusion into a group may or will not occur.

While most interviewee perceptions aligned with the 'observable group of people bound by commonality' interpretation of community, a small number focused more on feelings of belonging and membership, for example: "a *feeling* that you belong with a group of people and that you have something in common with them, some shared interests and values" (Turing Building resident), and "[community is] where there's feeling and a sense of belonging" (Turing Building resident). These perceptions suggest such diversity in the way that community is understood, with membership criteria incorporating physical, social and affective factors.

### **6.3.2 'Temporal commonalities' – a shared vision for the future and a shared appreciation of the past**

Temporal factors (the past, present and future) were another type of commonality perceived to contribute to community. Bauer and Gaskell (2008, p. 343) believe communities to be "diverse identities coming together around a common concern or interest to debate and create a 'future for us'". Similarly, interviewees identified time-based factors such as a "common endeavour" (Turing Building resident) and a "common outcome or goal" (Auckland Council Policy Representative) as an important binding force.

Future-focused commonalities (as well as shared values) were central to the formation and actions of both Auckland 2040 and the Character Coalition, the two pan-Auckland community interest groups which most strongly challenged Auckland Council regarding their intensification plans in the Unitary Plan development process. Both groups are 'communities of interest' formed as an outcome of homeowner fears and assumptions about character loss within some existing neighbourhoods and suburbs resulting from intensification. The Character Coalition representative identified the basis for their group as "strength in numbers", consisting of people from "other neighbourhoods in Auckland [who] felt the same way as we did and had similar desires for the future of Auckland" and that "there was something about

where they lived that they cherished and they didn't want to see massive change". What makes this group interesting and complex is the mix of temporal factors at play, for although they sought a particular future, this future was often focused on protecting heritage architecture and character (past) by maintaining the status quo (present).

Both Auckland 2040 and the Character Coalition represent broad and multi-scalar communities of interest that incorporate specific local interests under an umbrella / coalition arrangement:

It's a group of people with a common idea, a common standard, so we represent about 100 community groups. Now each of those community groups agrees or sympathises with our objectives, and that makes them part of our community (Auckland 2040 representative).

Within these structures, different sets of objectives coexist. Simultaneously these groups represent communities of interest operating within localised communities of propinquity (at the local scale) and communities of propinquity operating within an even larger community of interest (city-wide scale).

Like Auckland 2040 and the Character Coalition, the youth lobby group Generation Zero comprises a diverse group of individuals (rather than pre-existing interest groups) who have come together over shared (primarily) environmental concerns. What most clearly differentiated Generation Zero from the other groups was their position related to 'change'. For Generation Zero, their common interest was to change the current system, while Auckland 2040 and the Character Coalition were focused more on preservation. To attach socio-political labels, Generation Zero is considered a 'progressive' interest group, while Auckland 2040 and the Character Coalition are 'conservative' in nature. Their difference also lay in scale, with Auckland 2040 and the Character Coalition focused on Auckland outcomes exclusively, while Generation Zero has a planetary (climate change) focus.

### **6.3.3 'Geographic commonalities' – shared locality and interaction through proximity**

For many participants, community was understood to be the people who live in their neighbourhood. This belief runs contrary to arguments that neighbourhood / localised communities are increasingly irrelevant in modern society (Gans, 1961) due to an increasing delocalisation of social life (Wellman, 1979). The importance of propinquity to one's understanding of community was evident in interviewee descriptions referring to it as "those who live around you" (Turing Building resident) and "knowing your neighbours" (Hobsonville Point resident). Some people elaborated, stating that "[community] is basically knowing whom [sic] your neighbours are or at least knowing their names and to be able to have some sort of conversation rather than walking straight past and going into your house" (Grey Lynn Residents Association (GLRA) member). Similar perceptions identifying social interaction in addition to proximity were held by many interviewees.

Regarding the influence of density on community formation, the general impression gained from the interviews was that intensified living has the potential to result in positive or negative outcomes, depending on other factors, and assumes that:

Living in more intensified developments does mean you have to bump into people more than when you are sitting by yourself in a house on a big section, so I think those informal interactions happen more in an intensified situation (Auckland Council policy representative).

However, the increased likelihood of neighbourly interaction within higher-density developments was considered risky by one Hobsonville Point resident:

Intensification provides discreet houses built close together, which if you play your cards right can mean a tight neighbourhood [community]. It can also if you don't play your cards right can be a bloody nightmare.

The cautionary aspect of this view owed its origins to negative past experiences of living in higher-density housing where noise from ‘inconsiderate’ neighbours was a major motivation to leave. Reflecting such concerns, the Auckland Council policy representative outlined a lack of etiquette due to the unfamiliarity of higher-density living amongst New Zealanders as a significant challenge:

I think one of the challenges for New Zealanders is to learn how to behave properly in those areas and that is about good manners, so while you might be used to in a single house playing the stereo up loud because there was a separation, obviously living in a more intensive development you have to be more respectful of your neighbour and that in itself is a hard thing for New Zealanders to learn, to think about each other and your impact on each other more.

While somewhat speculative, this comment is indicative of the social challenges that can be associated with shifting from low to higher-density living – both personally and collectively as a society. The degree to which such concerns were actually realised is discussed in the next chapter. Overall, the feeling amongst most interviewees was that density could produce both positive and negative community outcomes depending on other factors.

#### **6.3.4 ‘Utility commonalities’ – individual benefits derived from group belonging**

The fourth type of commonality was that of utility, that by belonging to a group, individuals can enjoy benefits that would otherwise not be available to them. This interpretation was focused more on the role and needs of the individual and / or family unit than the other commonalities discussed above. In this interpretation, the concept of community is just as much about the individual as it is the collective, and that one’s community is experienced differently by all members. One Hobsonville Point resident had a particularly insightful perspective on what community meant to her:

Community is a network as well, but it is like a sort of spider web with you being that central person with all these different arms that are interconnected, associated in some ways, some with others and some not. So, community is actually about me, I believe, and I'm the centre of my community.

This interviewee's interpretation of community represented the furthest conceptual shift away from Tönnies' *Gemeinschaft* in this study. This individual-centric interpretation also reflects elements of social capital, including the value of social networks and collective efficacy, and the benefits these can realise (Putman et al., 1993; Bourdieu, 1986; Portes, 1998). Utility-oriented commonality as a component in community outcomes was most explicitly identified by the Turing Building developer representative:

[community is] a collection of people that work collectively to make each other's lives easier and better ... the whole concept of community for thousands of years has been underpinned by the mutual benefits derived from forming communities together. What is a community? A community is a group of people who live together because they derive mutual benefits from doing it.

The type of community described above reflects interpretations of 'elective belonging' (Talen, 2000) in which communities are 'choice-oriented' (Brint, 2001) and characterised by voluntary membership. The Turing Building developer representative's description is comparable to Schmalenbach's (1922) concept of 'the Bund', where community is the result of deliberate socialisation by individuals who seek out others with similar beliefs, values or objectives (Hetherington, 1994).

However, other interviewees interpreted individualism less positively, particularly when it occurs within communities of propinquity. Community was believed to be diminishing due to people becoming more self-focused and / or seeking greater isolation or privacy within their neighbourhood. Two interviewees succinctly articulated this concern:

The bit that worries me the most about how we live our lives going forward is four walls, blinds down, completely focused on the individual (Auckland Council elected representative).

I think we've become probably a lot more self-centred. People are time-compressed these days. Therefore things like community and investing time in helping and supporting community goes a little by the wayside (Hobsonville Point resident).

While the resident's views suggest circumstantial challenges impacting on neighbourhood socialisation, the Auckland Council elected representative perceived individual privacy to be a lifestyle choice at odds with their understanding of community. The resident's perception differed to the 'Bund-like' interpretation of the Turing Building developer representative's, as it was predicated on the belief that individual-centric actions are detrimental to community outcomes. In the following chapter, when community formation within the case-study developments is discussed, such Bund-like interpretations of community more than any others in this study represent a mid-point between Gemeinschaft-like communitarianism and Gesellschaft-like individualism. The contrasting perceptions highlight a strong diversity of understanding of the relationship between individualism<sup>36</sup> and collectivism in the modern community context.

#### **6.4 The Influence of Diverse / Homogenous Populations on Community**

This section outlines interviewee perceptions about the effect of diversity / homogeneity on the community. In keeping with academic perspectives described in Chapter Two, participants supported ethnic, life-stage and socio-economic diversity

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<sup>36</sup> Another way that individualism was interpreted in relation to community was that "tolerance, curiosity, openness but also respect for other people's personal and physical boundaries" (Turing Building resident) characterise positive forms of community. The key word here is 'but'; a sense of community is desired, but with limits. This sentiment was shared by numerous residents living in Hobsonville Point and the Turing Building, who wanted to enjoy positive aspects of community such as the sense of belonging, safety and social interaction, while at the same time maintaining privacy and boundaries, with many stating they wanted closeness but not 'to be in one another's pockets'.

(in general); however, when diversity was discussed in a localised setting, perspectives were more varied. Results also suggest there can be a blurred line between commonality and homogeneity, to the degree that a homogenous community could be interchangeable at times with a population characterised by strong commonalities.

#### **6.4.1 Diversity is good, but ...**

Auckland Council's elected representative said that "homogeneity is a thing of the past" and that "communities that are widely diverse and live comfortably together and are well provided for are the best kind of communities". They also stated that it is the job of the council to allow for diversity where possible. This view represents the common political position of diversity, which, as an outcome, is portrayed as inherently positive (Grant & Perrott, 2009; Howarth & Andreouli, 2015). Another favourable perception of diversity, in particular, ethnic diversity, was given by a Turing Building resident:

I think diversity is what saves a community, homogeneity is dangerous because it becomes more narrow, whereas if you have diversity and people who don't speak English properly and have a completely different upbringing to you, that is good for you, you need to be challenged by that because otherwise you can be always thinking your way is the right way all the time and it might not be. I think diversity is absolutely essential for a community!

Their argument suggests that diversity is just as much about bettering individuals through increased tolerance and understanding as it is about bringing people together. The value of learning was similarly identified by a Hobsonville Point resident: "Look I think the more diverse you can make it the better, I think with diversity you understand how the other half lives and that can only be a good thing". These two views reflect the central thesis behind Allport's (1954) 'Contact Theory', which promotes the benefits of interaction between diverse peoples to overcome differences in society.

Recognising challenges associated with diverse communities, other participants provided more cautious support: “I think it is rather nice to have a mix ... I think that’s what makes Kiwis more interesting, and especially *if* there is a sense of that community fostering interaction with one another” (Hobsonville Point resident). This ‘if’ highlights a point of contention in debates regarding community diversity; that if diversity is not coupled with interaction, then it can detract from, not improve, the community experience. This concern was noted by one Turing Building resident: “I would definitely prefer diversity, but it has to be matched with a degree of openness and curiosity, otherwise you just get people living in silos.” Similar feelings were expressed by other interviewees for whom diversity was perceived positively, yet with a discernible degree of uncertainty or caution. This uncertainty was most evident in comments made by one Hobsonville Point resident who (in principle) favoured diversity yet in practice found it difficult to form relationships with people from other cultures and subsequently preferred ethnic commonality (homogeneity) in their community:

I’m probably with the like-minded people, forming the community. I mean the ethnic thing is interesting because you often don’t assimilate into an ethnic community unless you have a way of getting into that community. It’s not something where you’ll just knock on the door and say “Hi, can I join in your Tongan feast” because you need an invitation.

This position echoes Talen’s (2002) findings that an appreciation of diversity does not necessarily translate into social interaction, given that individuals may simply lack the knowledge, confidence or ability needed to forge relationships across cultural boundaries.

When it came to encouraging neighbourhood diversity, some interviewees highlighted the importance of the built environment, identifying housing choice (price points and type) and quality amenities as necessary. The Auckland Council elected representative believed that “good urban design” was required to “build a range of dwellings that actually allow for diverse communities”. A housing-choice

approach was similarly favoured by the Hobsonville Point representative: “If you have just one type of house then you build for just one type of person ... if you build a range of housing typologies, you will attract a range of people. It is really very very simple.” At the same time, they acknowledged the importance of amenities: “I think the more amenity you put in, the broader range of people you appeal to, the deeper the mix of the community, the richer and more interesting it becomes”. These perspectives often emphasised physical determinist thinking underpinning council and developer actions.

On the other side of the diversity debate, some participants believed that population homogeneity more than diversity contributes to positive community outcomes. This position was consistent with findings from studies that found homogeneity rather than diversity to be the stronger binding factor in community formation processes (Gans, 1961; Alesina & La Ferrara, 2000; Putman, 2007; Talen, 2002; Engbers, 2015). As highlighted by the Turing Building developer representative, central to the diversity–homogeneity debate is the factor of scale:

There is nothing wrong with your neighbourhood being homogenous as long as your neighbourhood abuts the other ones. That is how I see it; I don't think there is anything wrong with small-scale homogeneity. If it is mixed you probably don't have anything in common with your neighbours; it doesn't form community, it will break down community. Because if you don't have anything in common with your neighbours, you don't actually socialise with them.

The Auckland 2040 representative also supported localised homogeneity: “I think there's a degree of homogeneity within a physical area about what they expect, and that I think is really valuable because that brings people together.” Both the perspectives suggest that homogeneity at a building or neighbourhood level can yield positive community outcomes, while homogeneity at a wider geographic scale is undesirable. The degree to which diversity and homogeneity contributed to residents' sense of belonging at respective developments is discussed in the next chapter.

Differentiating homogeneity from commonality was challenging in the data, for sometimes the examples given by participants could be interpreted as commonality or homogeneity. This overlap is interesting, because as a concept homogeneity is often regarded as an undesirable outcome associated with negative beliefs and practices. On the other hand, commonalities or 'things in common' were frequently discussed as positive outcomes which can help bind people together. For example, a high proportion of affluent retirees living in a specific neighbourhood could be interpreted as a positive binding commonality or homogeneity based on age or socio-economic inclusion / exclusion. The blurred line between these two terms highlights just how diverse people's thinking is in this aspect of society and the difficulty (if not futility) of attaching positive / negative labels to these perspectives.

## **6.5 Physical Determinism and Spatially Influenced Community**

Interviews revealed a strong belief that the design of the built environment (at both the building and neighbourhood scale) influences planned and unplanned social interaction. The design and quality of the built environment were identified as important factors in community formation processes, particularly relating to life in higher-density neighbourhoods where people live close to each other. This view keeps with Buckner's (1988) observation that the physical attractiveness of a neighbourhood strengthens community outcomes such as social cohesion and sense of community. Similarly, Mannarini et al. (2006) and Westaway (2006) both argue that residents experience a greater sense of belonging and community when they positively regard or take pride in their neighbourhood. However, some interviewees focused on potential problems associated with higher-density development, often not considering the possibility of positive outcomes. Auckland 2040, Character Coalition, and Powell Himikera Residents Association representatives frequently reiterated that intensification leads to the creation of 'slums' or 'ghettos' and that it would detract from or destroy the character of existing neighbourhoods. These interest groups, echoing many media reports of concerned homeowners, also expressed fears and assumed that intensification would be done badly, as they believed it had been in the past, which could disrupt or diminish attachment to place,

induce community inertia and a weakened sense of community. Such existing resident responses support the view that pride in one's neighbourhood is a binding influence and a strong contributor to community formation at different scales of propinquity in Auckland.

Interviewees also considered dwelling design to be influential (both positively and negatively) on community outcomes. Surprisingly, these views were informed less by the aesthetics of the dwelling and more by the inclusion / exclusion of backyards and front spaces (gardens and porches) that were deemed influential. According to Calthorpe (1993), front porches / gardens enhance a neighbourhood's sense of community, for they require people to focus their attention outwards not inwards. This view was shared by the Hobsonville Point developer representative, who favoured the inclusion of front spaces, believing they "encourage people to engage with each other, to say hello, to see each other". This position was shared by a Hobsonville Point resident who described community as, "being in the garden and somebody stopping and saying hello". In this case, street-facing spaces are a bump-space where people in both private and public spaces can interact. Alluded to by the Hobsonville Point developer representative, the value of this design feature not only exists in its capacity to encourage social interaction, but also in the way it increases the peoples' visibility in the neighbourhood, which in turn helps make the neighbourhood feel more vibrant and welcoming.

A number of views were also expressed about the influence of backyards on community. For one Hobsonville Point resident, backyards were considered too private: "those with quarter-acre back sections where you never really see them [the occupants]". However, other interviewees attributed greater value to backyards in the community sense. For another Hobsonville Point resident, the lack of private playspace in medium-high density housing was problematic, "particularly for children because as houses get small and smaller, there is less room to kick a ball". Another person noted that, "As houses shift more towards apartment type things, there are not the kids meeting one-another in the backyards or playground to swing so I think it has changed quite remarkably" (Turing Building resident). This perception was unique amongst the interviewees, for it was the only one that identified the backyard

as a focal point for social interaction for neighbourhood children, and thus important to the community. Providing a contrasting perspective to this, one Auckland study found that the lack of private backyards in higher-density developments encouraged parents and children to spend more time outside the home and at the park socialising with others (Carroll et al., 2011). This finding, which was similarly noted by some interviewees, reiterates the importance of providing quality public spaces in higher-density developments where there is a lack of private space, particularly for 'play' activities.

## **6.6 Deliberate Community Formation – The Role of Developers and Planners**

Developers and planners interviewed believed to varying degrees that the design of a development can influence social and community outcomes. Therefore, a potentially important avenue of inquiry was to discuss the degree to which planners and developers *can* and *should* actively pursue community formation outcomes. The following section presents perspectives on this from community interest groups, Auckland Council and developers themselves.

### **6.6.1 Council and interest group perspectives**

In the case of developers, the motivations to encourage community formation are centred on two influences. First, they are encouraged (or required) by planners (and guidelines) to design their developments in ways that include high-quality public spaces with the intention of making social interaction easier. Second, they have recognised some diversification in consumer demand, with smaller and higher-density houses characterised by quality public spaces and walkability now sought after in addition to large detached dwellings.

While Chapter Two highlights a diverse range of perspectives about the role and responsibilities of planners and developers in relation to community formation

processes, positions held by interviewees were less diverse, with many believing community outcomes should be a consideration when planning new developments:

I would probably be on the strong end of the continuum which is I think we do need to be in there. We don't make everything happen, but if we are not there being sensitive and facilitative and a bit intentional about some of this, we can clumsily get in the way of community stuff happening (Auckland Council elected representative).

This comment concurs with Talen's (2006) assertion that planner motivations are both holistic and strategic, with positive social outcomes (e.g. social cohesion and social capital) a desirable objective. However, it also reflected a commonly held view amongst interviewees that although planners and developers *should* incorporate community goals into designs, they need to know their limitations.

More specifically, the Auckland Council elected representative believed the role of planners and developers as community builders should be only at the initial stages of development: "there is a role for a little bit of that community manufacturing to start building the framework for communities to grow on ... [but] you can't totally plan". In other words, planners should simply be "putting the enablers in place" and "creating spaces for accidental interactions", whereby to do more than this would be beyond their remit, as suggested below, and also their ability:

I don't think you can build a community, but you can build the conditions that can allow community to happen (Auckland Council policy representative).

They [communities] can't be manufactured, but you can create an environment that facilitates the development of community ... if you create the right environment you create the opportunity for people to create a community. But you can't manufacture it (Grey Lynn Residents Association member).

Focusing specifically on developers, another participant also believed that they need to adopt an all-inclusive approach:

There are definitely things they *can* do, developers *should* do that, especially on larger scale developments, as once you've got them they will be there for a long time, so they do have some responsibility, they aren't just building houses and roads, it is going to be sold to people living within them, so they do have some responsibility to have more of a holistic approach (Generation Zero representative).

They also said that if developers "design it [the development] badly, so there's not good interaction", community formation will be a difficult outcome to achieve. Similar thoughts were shared by the Auckland Council policy representative:

The physical framework of an area can be set out that makes the development of a community easier to achieve than otherwise ... If you live in a place where you can go about your everyday life and never bump into a person, to have that chat on the street or that kind of social connection, then you are unlikely to create a community.

This reiterates the importance of careful planning to encourage social interaction, particularly through the creation of 'bump-spaces', such as the aforementioned green spaces and front gardens of dwellings (Kearns et al., 2017). Similarly, the Auckland Council policy representative's views constituted a thinly-veiled criticism of low-density, automobile-dependent suburbs with poor walkability.

### **6.6.2 Developer perspective**

When developers were asked about their role in community formation, with the exception of Hobsonville Point developer representatives,<sup>37</sup> their responses mirrored those presented above – that they should not, or need not, pursue community objectives beyond close attention to design. For example, the Turing Building developer representative believed that "it is really important to have community spaces" and that "it is important that your designs allow for people to

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<sup>37</sup> Their position on this was less clear. While comments suggested an approach similar to others with an emphasis on design, as will be discussed in the next chapter, they also promoted social interaction through community events and activities.

socialise together". The actions of developer interviewees appeared to be underpinned (to varying degrees) by a holistic, if not altruistic, view of community in their development. At the same time, they also acknowledged their commercial motivations and how community outcomes were valuable in terms of marketing and promotion:

I think that the big thing socially we see is looking at what this particular community, what could make their life better and more enjoyable. If you look at it clinically, from a commercial point, we want to have a community that works and people are happy, so they'll go off and say it is a great place to live. That is what sells houses, and it is also what makes communities work (Hobsonville Point developer representative 2).

To do this successfully, all the developers, and especially those behind the Turing Building and Powell Street townhouses, believed that attracting owner-occupiers rather than investors was key:

As part of urban design, you've got to get high percentages of owner-occupied, if you simply sell these things off the plan to the Chinese investors, then you get what you don't want, which is basically, you don't get communities because rental properties don't build communities, owner-occupied builds communities (Powell Street developer representative).

I'm assuming that a more stable population where you can build long-term bonds with people actually are more stable and viable communities ... I would have thought that transient communities tend to be, with people coming and going have less, they are not putting their roots in (Hobsonville Point developer representative).

This building has been finished for two and a half years, and there have only been three resales ... Because it is a good building and largely owner-occupied, then everyone has got to know each other, so they are more relaxed. There is a Sunday afternoon drinks up on the roof lounge every first Sunday each month ... I think owner-occupier is a big thing (Turing Building developer representative).

These perspectives were in keeping with research linking tenure and ownership with community outcomes (Ancell & Thompson-Fawcett, 2008; Carson et al., 2010).<sup>38</sup> Marketing and promotional efforts at each development to different degrees targeted owner-occupiers while trying to avoid investors. Due to housing pressures in Auckland, where demand exceeds supply, community benefits may have little effect on the developer's ability to sell their dwellings. Therefore, it could be deduced that this approach, which encourages positive experiential outcomes, suggests a shift towards long-term thinking with an emphasis on reputation and legacy. It is also important to acknowledge that these are the opinions of only three developers and are not necessarily representative of the attitudes of others in the industry.

## **6.7 Conclusion**

Conceptually, community was regarded by interviewees as being different from neighbourhood, with community representing people, and the social interactions / relationships between them, and neighbourhood being the physical environment within which community processes occur. For many interviewees, community outcomes were believed to be underpinned by different, although sometimes overlapping, commonalities. The most commonly identified was 'social commonality', which represents people bound by shared interests, values, culture and norms. 'Temporal commonality' (shared visions for the future and an appreciation of the past), 'geographic commonality' (the locations in which people spend time together), and 'utility commonality' (shared benefits associated with group membership) were also identified as influential factors contributing to community.

Ideas about the role and influence of diversity and homogeneity on community were also explored. Overall, diversity (primarily ethnic) was perceived by interviewees as a positive element in community formation processes, albeit with caveats. The main caveat was that for diversity to be a positive influence on community, it must be

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<sup>38</sup> Although it did contrast with some literature, which was either inconclusive (Braun & Palmer, 2002; Winstanley et al., 2003; Prezza et al., 2009; Sautkina et al., 2012) or rejected such connections (Carson, 2010; Forrest & Kearns, 2001).

coupled with interaction and openness, and that if this does not happen then diversity can lead to social silos, isolation and negative community experiences. Other interviewees believed that population homogeneity more than diversity contributes to positive community outcomes. In such cases, differentiating homogeneity and commonality was somewhat challenging with homogeneity in effect representing an extreme (and often pejoratively viewed) form of commonality. Physical and spatial influences were also found to be influential to community outcomes, especially, propinquity, density and design (both at the dwelling and street / neighbourhood levels. Related to this, many interviewees recognised the role of developers in community formation processes, not only in terms of ability but to varying degrees of obligation. Incorporating design elements that encourage social interaction was the most widely-identified example, that enabling community should be a key factor in the development design process. The role of marketing and other methods (e.g. pricing and amenities) to attract certain types of community-minded people' was also noted as influential. Overall, interviewees were less cynical than researchers about the role developers in community formation processes.



# CHAPTER SEVEN: Community Formation in Three Medium-Density Developments

## 7.1 Introduction

The previous chapter focused on conceptual interpretations of community and interviewees' general views on community formation. This chapter focuses specifically on community formation as it has occurred in relation to the three case-study developments: Hobsonville Point, the Turing Building and the Powell Street townhouses. The analysis is primarily derived from the perceptions of the residents who live within the developments; however, the views of the developers and neighbouring residents are also included where relevant. For each development, I discuss key reasons and motivations for people choosing to live in each development, as well the degree to which their expectations (good and bad) were realised. I also examine how community has manifested and what factors contributed to these outcomes.

## 7.2 Hobsonville Point – A Community So Far Delivering on High Expectations

Marketing and promotional efforts on the part of the developer *Homes. Land. Community.* (HLC), actively portray purchasing at Hobsonville Point as more than buying a house. Instead, its publicity asserts that people are joining a community. The degree to which this claim extends beyond marketing into lived experiences is explored in interviews with a selection of Hobsonville Point residents.

### 7.2.1 Reasons why people moved to Hobsonville Point

Two groups of residents were asked *why* they moved to Hobsonville Point. There were ‘first-wave’ residents who moved into the development’s first tranche of housing and so had lived there for at least a year when interviewed and ‘second wave’ residents who had bought a dwelling off the plan and were waiting to move into the development. These interviews revealed a range of motivations, with some notable differences between the two groups.

With the exception of one individual, all first-wave residents were motivated by the comparatively low-priced housing at Hobsonville Point,<sup>39</sup> the quality of construction and the child-friendly environment. Two of the first-wave residents moved to Hobsonville Point from Christchurch after the earthquake in 2011. According to one of these residents, the earthquake was a motivating factor for a number of early buyers. Only one person cited ‘community’ as the prime influence for moving to Hobsonville Point; however, unlike later residents who were inspired to join an already established and growing community, this person’s interest lay in the foundation of community: “... with two brand new schools, as a youth worker I thought it was an opportunity to have, for a school to have people in there that are just purely focused on culture and youth needs ...”. The attitude of this individual exemplified the importance of ‘champions’ to the community outcomes identified at Hobsonville Point, a topic that will be covered later in this section.

For second-wave residents, by the time they bought their dwellings, Hobsonville Point already had many of its planned services and amenities well established (e.g. schools, shops, cafes and public spaces). At the time of purchase, there was also an established sense of community due to the socially active nature of first-wave buyers. This meant that second-wave residents were able to see more clearly what they were buying into and so make more informed decisions, compared to first-wave residents who were taking more of a gamble.

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<sup>39</sup> Specific attention was given to the no longer available Gateway scheme (discussed in Chapter Five). Those who bought through this scheme did not believe they would have been able to move to Hobsonville Point under the current Axis scheme which replaced it.

For some residents, especially those who were retired or planning for retirement, there was a desire to move from their older villas into warmer, drier, cheaper, smaller<sup>40</sup> and easier to maintain new-builds. One resident cited the economic advantages of Hobsonville Points housing:

my house that I was living in was requiring a lot of upkeep and a lot of financial input, so I was looking to spend \$60,000 to re-roof and re-deck, so I thought that it might be more sensible for me to put that money into a new house.

Another resident cited quality:

I really believe in brand new homes; they are healthy homes for people to live in. Healthy and warm as opposed to going into something that is 20+ years old ... They are cold and uninsulated; they are drafty and often mouldy ... By purchasing at Hobsonville Point, they get something which is brand new with today's brand new warranty built under today's building code.

When asked if moving from an older detached house to something newer and more compact was difficult, one retired resident believed that for some it might be, but that it was "just a mindset thing". They also believed that there would be many more people of a similar age seeking to move into the medium-density housing (a finding also evident at the Turing Building). This view contrasts with the common media discourse that older people (often referred to as baby-boomers) are anti-intensification.

Some interviewees either had young children or they were planning to have them soon. For them, the walkable distance from the schools and early childhood facilities to their homes was a pull-factor:

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<sup>40</sup> Many older residents were empty nesters, so downsizing was a strong desire for them.

The high school and primary school are both really close to each other, not one here and the other far far away, so walking distance.

What you can really put a value on is that we can walk around the corner to John's school, drop him off and come back home, jump in the car or walk down to the ferry, whatever it might be. That is just fantastic!

Having both levels of school within walking distance from home also offered families stability and convenience, and the ability to put down roots. The walkability of the development was also considered advantageous by those without children and was frequently outlined as a point of difference between Hobsonville Point and other Auckland suburbs.

A sense of safety and support, both in terms of the pedestrian-friendly physical environment and the types of people living there, was noted by some as an attractive feature. In the excerpt below, a young mother compared life in the northern suburb of Torbay (where she lived before moving) to that in Hobsonville Point:

[in Torbay] I was running with the girls in the pram, and I fell and broke my foot about two months ago out on the street there. People saw me, and then nobody stopped. They just kept driving past, and I had to walk home on a broken foot because nobody helped me. Whereas at Hobsonville Point we went to look at the houses in winter and it started raining, and a couple came out and said "come in, come in" and gave us towels and it was so nice. They didn't know us, so already I've just seen such a difference.

This story suggests that the 'sense of community' emphasised by HLC is more than just marketing, that community-minded people may be drawn to live in the development and this has become a self-fulfilling process.

A notable difference between first- and second-wave residents was their expectation of community. For first-wave residents, there was an evident degree of uncertainty, with one person describing it as a "leap of faith", and another noting that "there was always the risk that it won't deliver on its full potential". This was not a fear for

second-wave residents, many of whom spent considerable time walking around the neighbourhood and investigating the houses and community before committing to purchase. With regard to community specifically, first-wave residents also expressed uncertainty, for, unlike the positive experiences of the young mother from Torbay described earlier, there was no established sense of community when they made their purchase: “we were in so early on, the community wasn’t there at all ... [it was] just a dream”. In many ways, the first-wave residents were the risk-takers who provided the basis for the strong sense of community that would later appeal to second-wave residents and beyond.

### **7.2.2 Hobsonville Point’s sense of community**

This section draws from first-wave residents and the follow-up interviews with second-wave residents after they had settled into life in the development. In this section, resident views are not differentiated by when they moved into the development. The overall impression derived from these interviews was that Hobsonville Point has a strong and growing sense of community, with interviewees believing the population to be kind, supportive and friendly: “what we have actually experienced personally is just the warmth of people”. Many residents said they had formed strong or at least friendly relationships with their neighbours, a closeness described by one as like “real old-school New Zealand”.

One course of inquiry was to determine whether resident experiences differed from, or met their expectations prior to moving. Results indicate that everybody’s expectations were either met or exceeded. Reflecting again on the experiences of the young mother, when asked a year later whether the development’s sense of community matched her early impressions and still compared favourably to Torbay, she responded:

Absolutely, yes very much so! You go for a walk, and everybody says hi. At Halloween, we all took the kids out with some friends who lived a few streets over, and everybody was so cool, and all the houses were dressed ... 80% of the houses were into it which was really cool. In

Torbay there was nobody, they wouldn't even answer the door. Here you kind of feel like you are out in the community.

A retired resident provided another positive impression of the community being established:

There is an amazing sense of community being fostered; we're always getting letters from Crockers<sup>41</sup> about backyard camping for kids, cricket matches, families on the green are going to happen on the next few Sunday afternoons by the playground there. All sorts of things going on you can be involved with if you want.

Aside from their general positivity, both quotes identify a child-friendly social environment as an important part of the emerging Hobsonville Point community. The second account also identifies the active role taken by non-resident organisations, this time the body-corporate, in organising community events.

However, not all residents found it easy to establish new relationships with those living around them. One challenge identified was maintaining existing relationships at the same time as forming new ones. One middle-aged resident who moved from elsewhere in Auckland believed she would "have to work hard to meet people and find myself in the [new] community". When interviewed a second time, she reaffirmed this difficulty:

I'm probably reluctant to leave my church community... they have been my people for 30 years and they come here although I do want to be integrated into the community here as well so it would be a little bit of stretching.

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<sup>41</sup> This business has a role similar to that of body-corporates. They run meetings and work to maintain specific zones / streets 'laneways' in the development.

While this challenge was only outlined by one resident, this was likely to be a challenge experienced by many people who had moved into the development from other Auckland neighbourhoods.

### **7.2.3 A physical environment conducive to social interaction and community formation**

In the previous chapter, the physical environment and housing density were both considered by interviewees as factors that contribute to community formation outcomes. Some people also believed that it was the role of developers (and to some degree councils) to design and create environments that encourage social interaction between neighbouring residents. In other words, there was some expectation that developers should create 'places' that were likely to be valued and utilised by residents, rather than spaces largely without meaning. Sack (2001, p. 233) says that, "places are the primary means by which we are able to use space and turn it into a humanized landscape". Drawing from site observations and interviews, HLC committed considerable effort to plan and design the physical environment of the development for just this purpose, to create a humanised landscape that people will want to use and spend time in. Talen (2006) suggests that the Congress for the New Urbanism's (CNU) principles have become normative goals in residential planning. This was clearly apparent at Hobsonville Point, where the influence of the neo-traditional New Urbanism appeared to underpin the developer's design approach (e.g. CNU Principle 23: Streets and squares should be safe, comfortable, and interesting to the pedestrian. Properly configured, they encourage walking and enable neighbours to know each other and protect their communities).

Reflecting the point above, when asked about what underpinned their design decisions, the developer representative 2 said that intentional efforts were made to incorporate: "physical structures which give people the opportunity to bump into other people in an informal way in a space that they want to enjoy and hang out in". This was done because HLC considered it important to "give people who are living here the opportunity to get to know their neighbours". This suggests that facilitating

if not encouraging social interaction was also a goal of the developer. The apparent success of this objective (at least at the time of the interviews) was considered a win-win for both residents and the developer / building companies. It also reflects in practice what many marketers project through advertising in relation to master-planned developments – that people are buying more than a house; they are joining a community (Chamberlain et al., 2010; Arvanitakis, 2009; Opit & Kearns, 2014; Collins & Kearns, 2008). The reported positive, and somewhat neo-traditional community outcomes at Hobsonville Point contrast with some of the criticism surrounding master-planned / New Urbanist development, such as Knox (2008, p. 173), who said that “the classic idea of community exists only in the developers’ advertising”.

This section identifies three ways in which Hobsonville Point’s physical environment was found to be conducive to social interaction and enabling a sense of community: density of dwelling design, the development’s unique sense of place, and its walkability.

Compared to most suburban developments in Auckland, Hobsonville Point is relatively higher-density. This characteristic, whether favoured by residents or not, makes it difficult for people to avoid some degree of interaction with neighbours. While this scenario is likely to be unappealing to many prospective residents, the developer representative 2 believed that for most residents this would not be a problem: “the density is such that people are in each other’s face, so I think that if you are someone who really doesn’t like that you’d probably choose not to live there. So there might be a little bit of self-selection.” This suggests that the types of people moving to Hobsonville Point are either favourable of, or at least accepting of, higher-density. However, in Auckland’s housing market where demand is greater than supply, people’s preferences may be compromised to secure tenure.

While many of the residents interviewed found higher-density living acceptable, privacy was still important. Therefore, housing is designed in a way that combines proximity with a degree of privacy. According to one resident (who also works for one of the building companies), this had been done effectively:

One of the things they do very well here because you've got one architect that is deciding all of the homes in what is called the superlot, they think about privacy ... The only way that that can happen is to do it the way it has been done and design everything by one company rather than each plot being design[ed] individually by individual architects, and I think it has worked very well.

One of HLC's objectives was to establish senses of 'place' within the development. As a new development, this is not easy; however, HLC was lucky the site already had a strong sense of heritage linked to its former use as a base for the Royal New Zealand Airforce (RNZAF). HLC proactively incorporated this history into the development to create a unique, heritage-oriented sense of place that differentiates Hobsonville Point from other greenfield developments. Reflecting Soja's (1996) interpretation of 'place' as simultaneously physically and socially imagined, heritage at Hobsonville Point was embedded both in the physical structures of the development and more abstractly through the integration of stories and images of the site's history into the design (e.g. through media, place names, artwork and signage). Referring to the site's historical, the developer representative 2 believed that people derived pleasure from living near, or being able to look upon, the old structures, referring to this benefit as "borrowed grandeur". Their rationale was that, "if you live next door to something old and amazing, you might feel part of it", an idea that HLC thought added value to not only the house but also to the broader experience of living there. This account echoes Lewicka's (2008) finding that place attachment is stronger in neighbourhoods characterised by historical (predominantly pre-World War Two) architecture, and Harvey's (1990) link between heritage and identity. To achieve this 'heritage' sense of place, HLC repurposed many of the old buildings for public and private purposes, for example, the Catalina Café (formally the RNZAF signals and communications centre), the farmers' market (formally a seaplane hangar) and Sunderland Lounge (formally the RNZAF cinema). To varying degrees, all these buildings contribute to a sense of place in the development. Significantly, the farmers' market and the Catalina Café were established very early on in the development process, which contributed

to making Hobsonville Point a destination even before the community became established.

It was evident from speaking with HLC that they believed it important for residents, and particularly children, to understand the site's history and that they are not the first community to live there. HLC believed that by making a connection between people and place, a sense of history could be retained. The schools were strong proponents of this, with teachers focusing on local history to help the students understand "how people lived here before and how they can relate to it". Physical outputs from this included designs and artwork around the development. However, limited attention was given to pre-RNZAF history, specifically, the pre-European Māori settlement.

Another priority of HLC was to create a highly walkable development, sympathetic to pedestrians rather than drivers. This effort was acknowledged by residents for whom the walkable nature of the development was perceived very positively, particularly in the way it encourages social interaction. The link between walkability and social interaction was identified by one resident, who explained that when walking "we wave to people that we know, we stop and talk". This type of behaviour surprised another resident who stated that, "people walk in this community far more than I ever understood people would and in walking are willing to stop and talk for 10 minutes and come into your home". Such accounts suggest that HLC's goal of encouraging social interaction through the provision of the walkable environment (effectively a bump-space) has been successful so far.

Lund (2003) finds that strolling trips are more conducive to neighbouring behaviour than destination trips. According to residents, the environment catered well to both types of trip with both being identified as creating opportunities for informal interactions with other residents. One resident said that:

Footpaths change the whole dynamic, and we can walk everywhere within 5–10 minutes, we naturally every day will drop into neighbours deliberately whereas in the past you had to jump in the car, and that changes how you live your life.

Both the quality of the physical walking infrastructure and the short distance between destinations (e.g. between schools and home) were perceived positively. The findings presented here are consistent with literature that links walkability to positive social relations and community formation (Kim & Kaplan, 2004; Lund, 2003; du Toit et al., 2007).

#### **7.2.4 Social and physical factors created a safe environment**

Speaking with residents after they had moved and settled into the development, many saw the safe environment as a contributing factor to positive community experiences. These positive perceptions related to two factors: the physical design of the development and the perceived trustworthiness of the residents. When discussing safety at Hobsonville Point, many comparisons were made about how life 'used to be' and how 'it is now'. For instance, one father said:

I sort of hark back to when I was a kid, and there used to be a bunch of kids around the neighbourhood, who would just roam freely ... All the parents knew one another; they knew that if their kids were over at such and such's place, then it was all cool. There was just that trust and sense of freedom. I think we don't have that so much these days.

Strengthening the neo-traditional character of Hobsonville Point, the same resident believed that life in the new development offers those same opportunities:

One thing I really like about Hobsonville Point so far is that my oldest son is all over the place, he's out there with his new friends from school, he's made new connections. They are all able to roam freely around the neighbourhood; people kind of accept that it is all good. There are no security issues. The issues around cars shooting around the place have largely been taken off the table through the design.

A safe environment, particularly for children, was also a priority of HLC, who wanted the development to be “car-friendly to get here but pedestrian-friendly once you're inside, so there is actually a safe place to play on the roads” (developer representative). The developer’s translation from vision to reality illustrates master-planning that was responsive to council and citizen concerns related to low-density, car-oriented suburbs. Evidence of this vision becoming a reality was provided by one resident:

The guy over the road here on the corner, most nights he is out on the street with his sons kicking the rugby ball and it is so nice to see that because that is what I used to do when I was growing up, and that is not what you see in other parts of Auckland because the traffic is so fast or it is so busy that you would probably end up getting killed. But it is an acceptable thing to be doing that out here.

A mother and daughter also shared their perceptions of community safety. From the perspective of the mother, “It is very safe as a single parent, I feel safe, and I know Joanna<sup>42</sup> goes off on her bike with her friends, and I’m never concerned about where she is”. This was reinforced by the daughter who said: “I feel safe and I’m 16, just walking out in the pitch black”. It is this type of story that reinforces the positive reputation of life at Hobsonville Point, and in so doing further attracts the kinds of people for whom such considerations are important.

These accounts suggest that a ‘traditional’ community appears to be forming and as more safety-focused people are attracted to live in Hobsonville Point, as the development expands, the more desirable it will become to similarly minded people. This reintroduces the previously discussed link between the type of people who live in a neighbourhood and the sense of community that exists there. For one resident, this idea was linked to the socio-economic status of community members: that the lack of residents of lower socioeconomic status made the development more desirable. According to one resident, their friend accompanied them to Hobsonville

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<sup>42</sup> Pseudonym.

Point and took note of the types of vehicles parked in driveways or on the street. They then revealed that because most of the cars appeared to be new, there should not be any problem with “people who can’t afford to be here”. This elitist and discriminatory position suggests a viewpoint that safety and trustworthiness can be linked to affluence or lack thereof.

Informal monitoring of other people’s children was also identified as a factor that contributed to community safety. This view was based on the perception that children are highly visible and so are better known and better monitored by other community members. In the words of one resident, “[Hobsonville Point] is certainly a place where you know most of your neighbour’s children, and that will help because you can actually pull them up if something is getting off the rails so to speak.” The idea of monitoring was also outlined by another resident who said that although it is not their job to be watching children’s behaviour too closely, community members do have a responsibility to look out for dangerous or unsavoury people. Put more colloquially, they described “all for one, one for all” and “give a shit” attitudes as particularly important for community to develop. The community supervision and, at times, even quasi-guardianship of other people’s children highlighted above, suggest there is a strong degree of trust between many residents. Echoing Putman’s (1996, 2000) belief that social capital exists when trust is high, the trust shown between residents indicates the existence of valued social capital amongst some of the development’s population.

### **7.2.5 Diversity is favoured yet it presents challenges**

Research investigating whether diverse populations (Moran, 2011; Stolle et al., 2008; Marschall & Stolle, 2004; Joppke, 2009; Howarth & Andreouli, 2015) or more homogenous populations (Putnam, 2007; Collier, 2013; Alesina & La Ferrara, 2000; Costa & Kahn, 2003; Goodhart, 2004) contribute more to positive community outcomes presents mixed results. Continuing the discussion started in Chapter Six, the perceptions of Hobsonville Point residents about diversity in their development

were similarly mixed. According to the young mother interviewed, it was important to have a balance of ages / life-stages in the development:

I realised recently that there is a retirement village in Hobsonville Point, so maybe there will be lots of old people moving into the place, but I guess that is all right as they are the ones who are really good at gardening and meeting and talking, so I think that will provide a good balance.

This observation identified the perceived value of retired residents as community instigators. At the same time, based on her own circumstances, she also desired greater life-stage commonalities, for example when talking about the neighbourhood population she said, "I would prefer that they had small children ... I would perhaps prefer to have kids nearby". This reflects the previously discussed idea of diversity at scale – that people broadly favour diversity, but in their immediate environment the preference may be for commonality. Such thinking reflects the Turing Building developer and Talen's (2002) findings that an appreciation of diversity does not necessarily translate to social interaction

There was a range of views surrounding ethnic diversity and the inclusion and / or sociability of particularly Asian people within the wider Hobsonville Point community. There were feelings from some people that Asians were the group most different from the general population. The lack of sociability on the part of some Asian residents was viewed differently by those interviewed.

One account highlighted challenges owing to language difference:

My neighbours this side are Chinese and don't speak any English, so we gesticulate because they are keen gardeners too, so we compare gardening notes ... I wish I could communicate with the people next door; that is just language ... it must be very isolating for the older couple not to be able to speak English.

As well as outlining a clear sense of personal frustration, this account also revealed concern about the difficulties their neighbours may be experiencing by not being able to integrate properly into the community. Another account attributed this to unfriendliness: “We don't often say hi to the Singaporeans and Indians as much ... I guess the invite to come in and be a bit more involved is less”. However, for another resident, cultural differences were the issue:

Ours is a different way, say the Chinese families you've got to build a real trust friendship before they will come along to community events, so for most of us if the land company will run a BBQ or something but a number of Chinese families that I have talked to about it, they are like we won't come to it unless we have a relationship first with the people. It is different, we go there to get the relationship, and they will go there once they have the relationship.

Having identified this challenge, there were concerns that not enough has been done to build relationships between residents from different ethnic groups, with one resident noting that, “there isn't anybody yet who has tried to bridge that gap”. The degree to which such gaps have subsequently been bridged (or widened) as the development has progressed would be an interesting avenue for future research.

Of all the residents interviewed, only one displayed strong opposition to diversity. Their concern was not related to life-stage or ethnicity, but socio-economic status:

I don't want riff-raff, I want to live next door to professional people. People who have bought a house for \$800,000–\$1,000,000 statistically tend to be better behaved. Professional people with kids are your optimum neighbour, right? They are the kinds of people you can generally lend your tools to and expect them back in good condition. Those are the kind of people I want to live with.

This perspective stemmed from the person's previous living situation where they lived near many disruptive low-income residents. To get away from these types of people was cited as a prime motivation for moving to Hobsonville Point.

The lack of socioeconomic diversity in the development was attributed by some residents to the increasingly high prices for housing, especially since the removal of the original Gateway scheme for lower-income families. Having bought a Gateway house, one resident was particularly saddened by the removal of the scheme as well as the general lack of affordable housing:

it [the price to buy a home] was around the 500s; now you're into 750–1 million so that is going to change the dynamic of who can actually move here. I think we need to have more affordable homes in this; I think that Gateway was awesome ... I think it added something to the community and I don't know why the government got rid of it ... It is really important that we have a diverse community; I mean I feel sad that I'd be priced out of here now.

#### **7.2.6 Intentionality, the 'right' attitude and community champions**

This section looks at the importance of intentionality and openness on the part of residents in developing a sense of community. Interview findings suggest that there are two types of people who make community formation possible. The first is 'champions' who actively work towards developing a sense of community; the second is a wider group who are less active than the champions but still desire social interaction. People with little interest in community were also mentioned. This will not be discussed in any detail. The importance of champions was outlined clearly by one resident: "you need drivers because there are drivers and there are followers." Three of the residents interviewed could be identified as drivers of community within the development. The first was the youth worker who moved to Hobsonville Point with the direct intention of community development. The other two were highly active in the Hobsonville Point Community Facebook group, with one being the creator of the group and the other regularly providing advice<sup>43</sup> and helping people get to know each another. The importance of this page to Hobsonville Point's growing sense of community will be discussed in a later section.

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<sup>43</sup> Looking beyond the resident population, the efforts on behalf of some HLC staff have also proactively helped residents, by organising formal events and simply supporting resident-led initiatives.

Alongside the efforts of these champions, a general attitude that is supportive of community development was identified. With only a few exceptions, all residents interviewed supported growing the community: “there is a willingness from people, and people are doing their best to create that [community].” Another resident noted that while there are a few “unfriendly” and “snarky” people around, “most people have been really cool, and I feel like when we go out, we actively seek to be part of the community”. This shows intentionality on the part of some residents, suggesting the developing sense of community is largely the result of deliberate actions and attitudes. The role of marketing and promotion should not be underplayed here in, that HLC has spent considerable effort creating a product that will be attractive to those who desire and are prepared to pay for a community experience as well as a new house.

#### **7.2.7 The role of Facebook as a forum and a virtual bump-space**

Some of the strongest evidence of community in the development is the ‘Hobsonville Point Community’ Facebook group. Established and moderated by a small group of residents, this private page provides a platform for conversations, debates, queries and disputes to unfold. According to residents, the Facebook group is both a good way to meet new people and a means to get help or discuss challenges in the development. It is also used to reach out for help, as evident in the account of a resident who experienced flooding in their house:

I put an SOS out on the Facebook page, and I had all these responses, and one guy said to turn the water off, but I’d only want the water off to that toilet, not to the rest of the house. Someone else said where to look to find the lever of the system which I was able to find.

Another resident recounted helping out somebody else:

At Christmas time somebody moved in and didn't have a phone charger so they went on Facebook and I said yeah we can drop you one round and they were five blocks away so yeah that probably wouldn't normally happen in suburbia.

By October 2016 there were over 3,300 members,<sup>44</sup> a number which had grown quickly since its establishment. To understand the type of activity occurring on the page I monitored it for a single 24-hour period on 12–13 October 2016. In this period there were 18 separate posts, many of which had multiple replies:

- The Hobsonville Point Junior Sailing Club seeking new children to join
- A query regarding the quality of a particular local restaurant
- A new resident asking about joining a local orchestra to make new friends
- An advertisement for a local garage sale
- A request for a local young person to help out with gardening work
- A question regarding items sold by local businesses
- An update from HLC about 'placemaking' works going on in the area
- A report and photo of a parked car being hit by another vehicle
- A query about the Christmas market
- A query about local flower companies to assist with a wedding
- A posting about a lost cat
- A question from a potential buyer about terraced housing, e.g. noise
- A request for a babysitter
- A request for a part-time house cleaner
- A request from a local school student for recipes they can include in a cookbook they are compiling as part of a cancer fundraising event
- A query from one musician about starting a local band
- A local truck driver offering his services
- A request from someone seeking IT help
- A reminder from the local children's cheerleading group about a taster day

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<sup>44</sup> To give an idea of popularity, by June 2018 there were over 7,000 members.

As well as providing an informative and useful tool designed to resolve specific issues or queries, this page also serves as a virtual bump-space, with significant social interaction taking place between members. This Facebook page does not fit within the general characteristic of a virtual community, in that while interaction occurs online, members likely interact in person too.<sup>45</sup> Also, the page is underpinned strongly by the geography and amenities of the development, and populated by members (at least that is the intention of the page) who share proximal commonalities. Therefore, I would describe it as an online-spatial community. Essentially this page could be interpreted as a mechanism for initiating or incubating relationships and smaller communities of interest. The page also appeared to contribute strongly to the seemingly high level of social capital (Bourdieu, 1986; Loury, 1992; Putman et al., 1993; Portes, 1998) within the Hobsonville Point population, providing a bridge between individuals who may not otherwise interact. While the page offers tangible benefits to members, for those Hobsonville Point residents who are not members, there is a high chance of exclusion from certain aspects or benefits of this community. While residents did not widely identify with this point, one did acknowledge this as a potential downside, suggesting that if people were not members of the group they might not be aware of just how much community there is at Hobsonville Point. This was considered a risk particularly for older residents who do not use social media.

### **7.2.8 Transitioning to a post-HLC environment**

Many residents identified the important role that HLC has played in creating the sense of community they enjoyed in the development. Furthermore, some residents also indicated a belief that HLC should continue to play a role in the community beyond the provision of a quality physical environment (e.g. organising social events and conflict resolution). However, such expectations concerned the developer representative 2, who believed members of the community were too reliant on HLC. They saw some residents as not fully understanding the role of the HLC as primarily

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<sup>45</sup> As suggested by interviewees and observation of conversations on the page.

to manage the construction of the development, rather than manage the community itself:

There has been a lot of people come from neighbourhoods where you don't really have to talk to your neighbours because there is enough space for you to keep to yourself and people have forgotten how to do that. I've taken some phone calls from people saying their neighbour always parks in front of their house and I don't think that is right. So I'm like why are you talking to me about that? It is about learning. It is a very slippery slope because we do get involved because feel like we should if someone has got a problem and as a result, we are often called on to deal with more stuff.

At the time the interviews were conducted, HLC was attempting to step back from involving themselves too much in community activities or problems. Specifically, they were anticipating handing responsibility to the Resident's Society, for activities such as running events, managing community facilities, and dealing with complaints like "the council isn't maintaining my verge". This transition will represent a point of learning for Hobsonville Point residents and HLC alike. Some residents who were sold on the idea of joining a ready-to-enjoy community will need to take more ownership of the negative as well as positive aspects of their growing social setting. Given the reliance on them in certain aspects of Hobsonville Point's community formation and maintenance, HLC needs to reflect on their role in future developments; however, by adopting a hands-on community role at the outset of the development, they set in place expectations that may be difficult to draw away from.

### **7.3 The Turing Building – An 'Island' Community in a Suburban Sea**

Having discussed how and why community manifested in the large-scale Hobsonville Point development, I now turn to the first of the smaller case-studies, and the only apartment development analysed. This section will cover the following: why people moved to the Turing Building, their experiences of community in the building; factors contributing to community outcomes; and the degree to which resident social

interaction has extended to people living outside the development. I interviewed residents just as they were moving into the development and then again after living there for nearly a year. The discussion below is derived from these interviews, as well as the interview with the developer.

### **7.3.1 Reasons for people moving into the Turing Building**

While each resident's motivations for moving to the Turing Building were unique, a synthesis of their accounts allowed me to identify four key factors that underpinned their decisions to buy a unit in the development.

#### **7.3.1.1 *The benefits of apartments over traditional (detached) housing***

A desire to move away from traditional (and larger) detached houses to smaller dwellings was a motivation for many of the residents, in particular, because life in the Turing Building was thought to require significantly less effort, time and money spent on property maintenance. A common factor among most of those interviewed was their age (in their 50s or 60s) and pragmatism was a key part of their decision-making due to physical limitations as they continue to age and prepare for retirement:

I've been living in this duplex for 23 years, and it's an older place which was built in the 30s, and there is a lot of maintenance on it, non-stop, and I'm sick of doing that, I just wanted to move into a building where I don't have to worry about maintenance, someone else will worry about it. At my age I can't paint ceilings anymore, I used to but I can't, I don't want to anymore.

Other residents had similar thoughts: One expressed frustration with the maintenance required for her bungalow: "I can't really keep up with it; I really need to sell this!" Another considered it "silly rattling around in a big house which needed a lot of maintenance". Finally, one resident said, "I wanted something on one level

because I had a knee operation last year and as I said, the body is not going to stay together, and my joints have had it, and I can't cope going up and down stairs the whole time and stuff like that". In each of these cases, downsizing to a smaller dwelling was thought to be a logical progression in their housing pathways, and one that some believed would become a significant movement in Auckland's housing market in the coming years.

In the post-occupation focus group, one resident claimed that, "everybody has downsized ... just about everybody has moved from a house to here". The common feeling amongst the group was that residents who had been previously lived in detached houses were very satisfied with the shift into higher-density housing. Highlighting significant latent demand from this age cohort for this type of housing, one person said many residents had considered living in an apartment for some time and had "just been waiting for the wheels to turn in this direction".

#### **7.3.1.2 *Time spent in apartments outside New Zealand***

A factor for some residents was prior experience in apartments, even if only for a short time. For example, one couple moved to Auckland from New York and had grown used to apartment living, knew how it worked and valued the benefits it offered. Again highlighting the latent demand in the market, they "didn't want to do the free-standing house and garden thing" and had been "waiting for Auckland to deliver" quality higher-density options. Another couple cited positive impressions gained from staying in apartments when travelling, and that having always lived on the outskirts of Auckland, they really wanted to enjoy the 'urban' experience and the new opportunities this lifestyle could offer. One man also considered the Turing Building to represent the best of both worlds, that the building represented density but not at a scale that would be offputting. Furthermore, there was a belief that with more Auckland residents having spent time overseas, acceptance of apartment living in Auckland was likely to improve.

### 7.3.1.3 *Design features*

The unique design of the development was another motivation for some residents to move to the Turing Building, especially the top-floor shared space. One resident compared the building to other apartment buildings in the market: “One of their selling points, points of difference is the shared space, but not just any old shared space; the rooftop shared space is something pretty special.” Many residents thought this shared space would provide an opportunity to meet their neighbours and establish relationships and a sense of community within the building. This was predicted to happen in two ways: first that the rooftop would serve as a bump-space, and, second, that it would be a popular place for organised meetings:

We recognised that if people are going to use it, you’ll probably meet your neighbours whether you want to or not ... we have the option to say: “hey do you want to meet upstairs for a cup of tea, a beer, or a game of snooker or whatever.”

For one resident, this space was actually the main factor that convinced them to transition from a detached house to an apartment. They outlined initial concerns about feeling constrained and trapped inside an apartment, yet these were ameliorated by the openness offered by the rooftop space. While all interviewees were positive about this space, some considered the rooftop to be more a bonus rather than a motivating factor and would have purchased in the Turing Building whether or not it was there.

Many residents were also impressed by the high-quality construction of the building and the fittings in the units. This positive assessment was significant because dwelling quality was considered missing or lacking in many other high-density developments in Auckland, particularly with public concerns still prevalent regarding leaky buildings and inner-city ‘shoebox’ apartments. Reflecting such concerns, many interviewees said they conducted thorough research prior to purchase, with many comforted by the quality of previous Ockham Residential apartment developments. The reputation

of the developer was possibly the most important factor in people's decisions to buy a Turing Building apartment.

#### 7.3.1.4 *The reputation and philosophy of the developer*

The final factor influencing resident decisions to buy in the Turing Building contradicts the common discourse (as evident in media coverage and other interviews) that developers are untrustworthy and only profit-focused. According to many residents interviewed, the good reputation of the developer, and his philosophy, helped convince them to take a risk and buy an apartment off the plan. This trust exhibited was directed at both the developer as a trustworthy individual and, as stated below, as a company that can deliver on time and without financial risk:

I trusted Ockham as a firm, that they weren't going to go under, that I wasn't going to pay a deposit and the chances are if you bought off the plan you weren't going to find yourself financially embarrassed ... I also saw they were very 'in' with Auckland City Council and I thought that helps.

The positive relationship with the council was particularly important to this resident, who also cited problems other developers had experienced getting building consents from the council. The success of past projects gave the developer credibility in the eyes of the interviewees, as he was considered to be a safe and reliable choice:

We'd been watching Ockham really carefully; we're not the type to buy off the plans as we're aware of the hassles people doing that. But if you watched someone build something and see that it looks great and actually delivers on what they say they are going to provide, and on time.

As well as reliability, the developer's philosophy and approach also appealed to some. This one was perceived to be different from other developers, as he is focused on good outcomes for residents, particularly with regard to maximising the social benefits of higher-density housing. One resident stated that, "He's very thoughtful ... he has got a great philosophy and social conscience", and that, "I fell in love with the Ockham philosophy really ... I thought these people are different". One comment effectively encapsulated the perceptions of residents towards the developer: "One of the things that I like about the building is the fact that everyone thinks it is a great building, all the people you meet, they all seem to think Ockham is a good developer." Results suggest that the idea of a thoughtful developer with a social conscience is unusual in Auckland's development industry.

### **7.3.2 The early sense of community**

During the focus group conducted with residents after they had settled into life in the Turing Building, much of the conversation focused on the degree to which community had formed amongst those in the building. Overwhelmingly, the perception was that a strong sense of community had developed, with some residents already claiming to be close neighbours. In many respects, the focus group felt more like a meeting between friends than an externally organised event consisting of people who only recently had started living together. This cannot be interpreted as close relationships across the building, but, at a minimum, it showed that relationships had formed between at least some people.

Much of the bonding evident in this group could be attributed to the open personalities of the people spoken to. As at Hobsonville Point, intentionality regarding community and neighbourliness was evident amongst some residents. Examples include events organised by residents designed to kick-start then maintain the formation of relationships. One resident recounted their first week in the building: "All the people who moved in the first week got together, had a grand old party and traipsed through each other's apartments from the top floor walking down. It was a hoot!!" However, while positive, such behaviour is not necessarily indicative

of community life more widely in the building, and there was little evidence that all residents shared this social outlook. In fact, focus-group participants expressed uncertainty about the inclusiveness of their new community group, that some people in the building, for whatever reason, did not socialise with their fellow occupants. If there was a particular schism revealed, it might have been a division between the predominantly mature residents interviewed and the small number of younger renters in the building. There were suggestions and speculations that the younger residents did not feel comfortable using the shared space if other people were also there, that it was more a space for homeowners in the building. The conduct of these younger people was also mentioned, with a feeling amongst some residents that as renters they were not as interested in creating bonds with others in the building. Further research into the experience of renters in this building (and other developments) could yield useful insights into community outcomes in new developments and challenges of inclusivity related to tenure.

### **7.3.3 Key factors contributing to this sense of community**

Having established that there is a sense of community taking shape in the building, at least for some residents, I also wanted to know what was contributing to this. Two key factors were identified: the first being the design of the building and the second being the types of people moving in there, and commonalities between them.

#### **7.3.3.1 *The design of the building***

As with Hobsonville Point, physical design elements of the development were found to contribute to community outcomes. The shared space on the top was identified by the focus group as a meeting point for social interaction, whether planned or unplanned, between some building occupants. While the views and amenities of this space were popular, it was the space's neutrality that appealed most, for it provided them with a location outside their own units in which to socialise. In part, this was attributed to upkeep being the responsibility of a cleaner, not themselves directly.

While feedback identified this space as encouraging social interaction, the degree to which it would become an epicentre for the building's sense of community was less clear. This was partly due to the space being underutilised, an outcome that the group attributed to uncertainty and a lack of confidence on the part of other residents about how to use the space, including expected behaviour and etiquette.

Another uncertainty was related to the degree to which the rooftop could be utilised as a private space, for even though it could not be booked out officially, people did use it for events such as birthday parties. This type of use was considered acceptable by the focus-group participants, yet they did acknowledge that such quasi-private activities might be off-putting to other residents. Given uncertainties surrounding the use of the space, members of the focus group believed that people who are less confident might avoid using the space in order to avoid awkward encounters. This apparent lack of confidence was evident in observations made by focus-group participants who recounted times when they were using the space, and other residents tentatively came to the top floor only to leave again when they saw it was being used. This observation suggests that the sense of community developing with the shared space as the neutral point of interaction was not inclusive of all residents. However, this focus group was conducted after residents had been in the building for less than one year, and so the views expressed may just represent the first stage of what could become a wider sense of community, led first by those who are most enthusiastic.

Aside from the shared rooftop space, the small scale of the development was highlighted as another factor that contributed to social interaction in the building. One resident stated: "I think the fact that it is a relatively small building helps, you don't feel you can meet anybody, walk past and not know who they are". This perception suggests that even if people are not interested in forming close relationships with their neighbours, it is hard to be anonymous and avoid contact, as can occur in lower-density developments. Another resident also identified the size of the development as influential but, instead of outlining the difficulty of avoiding people, they focused more on the positive: "it is relatively easy to know everybody, even though 27 apartments means maybe 40 people. That is not too many people."

Overall, the feeling amongst residents was that due to the size of the building, social interaction would always take place and so lead to a closer sense of community.

### 7.3.3.2 *The people who live there*

In the previous chapter, developers claimed that a high proportion of owner-occupiers in a neighbourhood contribute to a stronger sense of community. This is based on the premise that owner-occupiers, not renters, are more likely to engage socially and meaningfully with their neighbours. A similar belief was held by the residents interviewed, who highlighted the high proportion (estimated 21 of 27 units) of owner-occupiers in the building. They believed that because owner-occupiers plan to live in the building long-term, they were more community-minded or, as put by one resident, “[they] have got a vested interest; they are not just passing through”. This assumption was strongly believed and uncontested<sup>46</sup> amongst those interviewed and reflected other New Zealand research (Ansell & Thompson-Fawcett, 2008; Winstanley et al., 2003), while contradicting international research (Sautkina et al., 2012; Forrest & Kearns; 2001). This difference suggests there could be a cultural difference in the way renters are perceived in the community setting.

Another argument provided that differentiates owner-occupiers from renters related to building maintenance and the protection of capital investment:

Because we are owner-occupiers we all kind of have a high sense of, I mean I expect me and John,<sup>47</sup> we are not wealthy people, this is it, this is what we have put all our money into, and we want to keep this place nice and it is not like we’re not going to worry about it, I always leave it the way I find it.

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<sup>46</sup> Again, if it had been possible to speak with renters, then alternative perspectives on community formation based on tenure could be better understood. This was a noted limitation in this study, and, although I sought to include renters in this study, the unit owners would not make the request on my behalf to their tenants.

<sup>47</sup> Pseudonym.

This view infers that owner-occupiers in the building may have a stronger sense of pride and responsibility in their physical environment than the renting occupants, and so will look after it better. The comment above also suggests that owner-occupiers perceive their apartment differently, that for them it is their home while for renters the unit is just somewhere they are living for a time. Such an assumption raises many questions about the roles and perceptions of renters in community processes. It may also reflect perceptions in New Zealand that favour homeownership over renting as a form of tenure, with renters identified more as potential homeowners-in-waiting than people who do not necessarily desire ownership. The assumption that renters do not contribute to a sense of community as strongly as homeowners could also be interpreted as a reflection on New Zealand's rental market in which people on average stay in one accommodation for much shorter periods than they do in countries that provide greater security of tenure for renters (e.g. Germany).

While not voiced explicitly, there appeared to be a feeling of 'us and them' when homeowners described renters in the building, although not necessarily in a critical manner, but rather due to unfamiliarity. Only one direct criticism of renters was noted: "there's only been trouble with one unit, and it is these young renters who have done things like vomit up here and things like that, then had noise control for a party and things like that, so they don't really go down all that well." However, this incident appeared to be isolated and was not considered to represent ongoing problems. A key question that would be worth addressing is whether the renters, either independently or as a group consider themselves part of the Turing Building community or if, as suggested, they are less inclined or feel less confident about interacting with others in the building.

Prior research suggests that higher-density developments with few children living in them typically lead to weaker senses of community (Howley, 2009; Kim, 2007). While this finding is consistent with Hobsonville Point community outcomes, in the Turing Building the lack of demographic and life-stage diversity appears to have actually contributed to sense of community developing between residents spoken to (all but

one participant were empty-nesters in their 50s or 60s<sup>48</sup>). The extent of life-stage homogeneity at the Turing Building was evident when one resident claimed that no children lived in the building. This life-stage commonality was perceived to improve trust between residents, whereby according to one person they were so trusting of their residents that they did not even lock the door to their apartment. While such an account would not seem out of place in a village or small-town community, in a high-density urban development, where people have not known each other for long, this was surprising.

Regarding ethnic diversity, interviewees suggested that the Turing Building's population was quite homogenous. However, there was also some difficulty in identifying and gauging diversity: "In terms of diversity, there is that French couple ... I don't know if that counts as diversity?" Similar uncertainty was also given regarding Americans and South Africans in the building. Whether or not the population of the building was diverse, from a cultural standpoint, commonality was noted and identified as a factor making social interaction easier.

Finally, the focus-group participants felt they had bonded due to their similar circumstances and approaches to transitioning from low- to high-density housing. They felt a sense of camaraderie due to their adventurous nature and willingness to take a risk:

I think that we were all a little bit like pioneers in the Auckland scene ... You do feel as though you are in the vanguard and it gives us a common sense of belonging with the people in the building.

Reflecting this perspective, the feeling from the interviews and the focus group was a sense of excitement and enthusiasm amongst the building's residents. This finding contrasts with Downing et al.'s (2010, p. 394) belief that, "time-poor middle-class residents prefer to buy-in to neighbourhoods with ready-made community

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<sup>48</sup> It is worth reiterating that the life-stages of those spoken with are not necessarily representative of the wider Turing Building population.

infrastructure and thus bypass the bond of ‘frontier-community’ actively forged in traditional newly developing neighbourhoods”. Amongst these residents, it was the fact that all the residents were new, and for many, this was the first time they had ever lived in an apartment; this hitherto unfamiliar life appeared to be galvanising them into a close-knit group.

#### **7.3.4 A limited sense of community with neighbouring residents**

While there was evidence of community formation taking place *within* the building (at least between some residents), the extent to which social interaction had taken place *between* Turing Building and other Ariki Street residents appeared minimal. Comments made by both Turing Building residents and Grey Lynn Residents Association (GLRA) members indicated that the senses of community experienced by those inside and outside the development had not transcended the boundaries of the development. This finding did not reflect a lack of interest or intent from either group but rather highlighted a difficult context within which a shared sense of community can develop. People from both groups indicated that they would like to develop a wider sense of community, but unfortunately had not yet been able to. There was also little optimism that this would happen to any significant degree in the near future. Comments made by one resident effectively summarised the experiences of their fellow residents spoken to: “I haven’t met anybody ... anybody who lives over there, I wouldn’t know them if I saw them, even down Ariki [one of the two streets the development sits on]”.

For residents, the design of the building was found to contribute to a sense of community within the building; however, according to the GLRA, the building’s design was considered obstructive to wider social interaction and was described by one member as “a model of what not to do if you want to create community” because residents “step straight out onto the street or into their car” with “no opportunity for interaction” with their neighbours. Furthermore, the design of the building was actually considered to be detrimental to achieving positive (wider) community outcomes:

We actually wanted to have the majority of apartment blocks to have small business on the ground floor so there will always be some vibrancy in the community all the time, whereas if you have just got an apartment block like the Turing, people come and go and that's it, there is no sort of vibrancy going on.

However, it would be inaccurate to suggest fault lies with the developer, who, due to council height restrictions and the inclusion of the rooftop shared space (instead of further units), needed to maximise the ground floor space to make the development financially viable. This essentially meant that enabling and encouraging social interaction and sense of community was prioritised within, not outside, the development, resulting in some social insularity. This situation suggests that if height restrictions could be loosened or removed, there would have been greater scope for the ground floor to be used in a more community-oriented way, which would have reflected an outcome, not rules-based approach to consenting. GLRA members also believed that height restrictions could and should be negotiated in this type of situation if mutually beneficial outcomes would result. The final outcome (at least at the time of interviews) was that an 'island' community – and effectively a gated one – had been established, which, while providing a sense of community to residents, so far added little in terms of vibrancy within the immediately surrounding neighbourhood.

#### **7.4 The Powell Street Townhouses – Two Communities, One Street**

Community formation processes in relation to the Powell Street development differed from those found at the other two case-study developments. The manner in which research was able to be undertaken also differed due to circumstantial challenges (outlined in Chapter Five). Unlike at Hobsonville Point and the Turing Building, community outcomes relating to the development were able to be analysed in the context of two distinct groups: those who moved into the new development and those who lived close to or adjacent to the development (in Powell Street and Himikera Avenue). Likewise, as in previous sections, motivations for moving into the

development are the first focus, followed by community outcomes and factors contributing to them.

#### **7.4.1 Reasons why people moved into the Powell Street townhouses**

Two key factors were identified by incoming residents for why they chose to buy / rent in the Powell Street development: first, that the dwellings were new and high quality; and, second, that by Auckland standards they were relatively affordable. Many Powell Street residents interviewed preferred the ease and convenience of new housing when compared to the effort and costs associated with older stock. While this was also a reason given by residents, a notable difference here was the relatively younger age of many interviewees, with many being first-home buyers in their 20s or 30s. As one person stated:

In our price range, there wasn't a lot that you didn't need to do a lot of work to them to make them nice ... so we liked the idea of buying something that was brand new ... you don't want to spend your weekends mowing lawns. I like the fact that it's a very maintenance free [home].

These preference trends suggest notable demand, across age ranges, for convenience, comfort and simplicity. Based on only a small number of interviews, this does not necessarily reflect a major change in wider housing preferences which traditionally favour larger, detached and more private dwellings; rather it suggests that there is diversification of demand in the housing market.

The importance of the development's high-quality construction and design was identified by many residents as a factor in their decision to buy there. For example, when one resident was asked why they moved to the development, they said, "It was the house really [why we chose the property], the fact that they were new, that they were double-glazed, that they seemed to be quite dry and that they were warm". The decision of some residents to buy in the development was also a rejection of older stock characterised by numerous shortcomings. Such comments reflected the attitude of the developer, who sought to provide better quality housing that could

be found elsewhere in the neighbourhood. The effectiveness of this approach was evident in the account of one resident, who said that although he initially bought the dwelling to be an investment property, he was so impressed with the quality he decided to move in himself. Such perceptions differ significantly from the perceptions of neighbouring residents, many of whom assumed it would be a low-quality development and would detract from the neighbourhood (discussed more in Chapter Eight).

The centrepiece of the development, the shared open space, was not generally identified as a motivating factor for purchasers but rather as a bonus or nice, but largely unimportant, feature. However, one resident did identify it as a positive factor:

I was very surprised they could afford to leave a big space like that ... that made me feel a bit more comfortable that there'd be space if I wanted to go outside and have a lie on the grass or something or have friends over and we wanted to be outside.

The ambivalence regarding the shared space element of the development provided a stark point of difference with the other developments, where the shared spaces and amenity values were major pull-factors. As will be discussed below, unlike the Turing Building, which consisted of a similar number of dwellings, the sense of community taking shape in the Powell Street development was attributed much more to proximity than shared space.

#### **7.4.2 Promising signs – an emerging sense of community in the new development**

When the interviews were conducted, residents had only lived in the development for six months or less. While this was not enough time to gauge a strong understanding of some community outcomes, findings indicate that social interactions were taking place and a sense of community was developing. Four

factors were found to contribute to this emerging sense of community: life-stage commonality, density, social media, and a high proportion of owner-occupiers.

Similar to Hobsonville Point and the Turing Building, life-stage commonality was a bonding influence that encouraged social interaction, trust, and a sense of belonging between residents. In Hobsonville Point, interviews suggested a prevalence of two life-stage groups within the development – young families (often first-homebuyers) and empty-nesters downsizing from larger suburban dwellings. In the Turing Building there was less variety, with empty nesters along with other childless households making up a large part of the resident population. At Powell Street there was also less diversity than at Hobsonville Point, but, unlike the Turing Building, the resident population was described as consisting of many people in their 20s and 30s. Resident comments indicated a prevalence of younger people in the development:

We had a 'meet and greet' with all the neighbours, and it seems like everyone was our age ... It was quite lovely.

There's a lot of people our age in this development, and we've got a neat little group of friends ... I'd be happy to bring up kids with the early stages in here.

It has been really nice to see that there are people with children here ... you don't want to be somewhere that either you are going to have lots of parties or you are going to annoy the neighbours with screaming babies.

Essentially, this resident appreciated having others 'like them' in the neighbourhood. This commonality existed within an ethnically diverse population, which was not identified as positive or negative in the context of community formation.

The second factor that was found to contribute to the sense of community was the density of the development. Feedback from two residents suggested density as being an important factor that enabled or encouraged social interaction, especially compared to the opportunities for social relations in traditional neighbourhoods:

One thing that's really nice about living in an area like this is because you can't live in isolation; you have to know who your neighbours are ... There's a really nice sense of community here ... I think with larger properties it's easier to get away with not knowing who your neighbours were.

When I first moved here [to New Zealand] I found that really isolating; it almost felt like you didn't have any neighbours cos you'd never see them ... I think you just see your neighbours more often in a place like this, [even] just standing on the balcony.

Various inferences can be drawn from these comments. One is that intensification (and thus proximity) makes resident contact and / or social interaction largely unavoidable. Another is that due to the relative isolation and privacy of detached lower-density dwellings, it may be more difficult for residents living in such neighbourhoods to establish a sense of community. Due to the small number of people interviewed, these points cannot be regarded as conclusive; however, within this population, the density of the development does appear to contribute positively to emergent community outcomes.

The third factor contributing to development's sense of community was the residents' Facebook page. As at Hobsonville Point, Powell Street residents used this platform as a means of communication and networking. In particular, it was said to be a useful organising tool for residents to arrange social events, as explained by one resident:

There's been quite a few [gatherings]. Using the Facebook group going, "Oh, drinks my place Friday," and everybody heads over to have a couple of drinks together ... And dropping by for drinks and dinners and what not. That's probably leading towards the friendship side where you actually do interact on a more deeper [sic] level.

The practical benefits of organising social events through the Facebook group were evident, with the final sentence encapsulating the potential for online groups as an effective mechanism for instigating local relationships. With Facebook identified as influential to community outcomes in two of the three developments, further

investigation into the long-term application of this tool could be interesting, especially to determine whether it actually increases or decreases the number of direct social interactions. Furthermore, the use of social media such as Facebook provides an alternative way to interpret people's sense of community within geographical / localised populations – it suggests that such communities are simultaneously spatial and non-spatial and so require alternative ways to categorise them.

The final factor claimed to contribute to a sense of community in the new development was the high proportion of owner-occupiers compared to renters. This outcome reflected the intent of the developer, who outlined their approach to community formation as encouraging owner-occupiers rather than investors to buy into the development:

I talked to the agents and said I want owner-occupier first home buyers, they are the target market. We did it through marketing, the way we were promoting the product, particularly early on was very very much owner-occupier centric ... We specced them up a little bit to appeal to owner-occupiers because investors want cheap, sturdy, they prefer a lower price just to get a decent yield, whereas owner-occupiers are much more interested in the finish of things.

While the high proportion of owner-occupiers in the development and the emerging sense of community amongst residents could indicate that the developer's approach was successful, there was little indication on the part of residents that tenure was important to establishing a sense of community.

A noticeable difference between community outcomes at the Powell Street development, compared to Hobsonville Point and the Turing Building, was the degree of expectation and intentionality on the part of residents. An early impression gained from Powell Street residents was that sense of community was neither sought nor expected when they decided to buy off the plan. However, although community was not a motivating factor, once they moved in and started to enjoy the sense of

community, it was unsurprisingly perceived favourably. Comments from two residents emphasised this outcome: “I didn’t expect that [neighbourly interaction] to be honest but it’s actually quite nice”, and “I didn’t actively go looking for it ... it’s a really nice added bonus of being able to know your neighbours in such a way.” This was the key point of difference with Powell Street to Hobsonville Point in particular, and Turing Building to a degree, that the community outcomes identified were more organic than pre-determined through careful planning and deliberate decision-making.

#### **7.4.3 Unity through adversity – a greater sense of community amongst existing residents**

The Powell Street development was unique amongst the case studies, as it contributed to community outcomes outside as well as inside the development. The proposal for the development of 35 townhouses on land that was used and valued by some locals set in motion considerable local opposition and the establishment of the Powell Himikera Residents Association. While this opposition was eventually unsuccessful in preventing the development from being built (this opposition will be discussed in detail in Chapter Eight), there was a silver-lining for residents, as they formed relationships and developed a sense of community that had previously not existed between them: “I’m very happy, because of this development I’m sitting here with my neighbours. If this development hadn’t happened, we wouldn’t be here.”

The sense of community that developed amongst Powell Street (and Himikera Avenue) residents was an example of community through commonality. The commonalities that brought residents together were temporal (working together towards a preferred future goal; social (unity through adversity and a perceived threat to their community); and spatial (the point of dispute being a piece of land within their neighbourhood). Alongside these commonalities, there were also ‘champions’ who drove the agenda and worked hard to get people working together effectively. The efforts of these champions resulted in a number of fundraising events that brought together people, from both inside and outside their neighbourhood:

We started to decide we have to raise some money, so we had a couple of street parties. We had the neighbourhood day, you know sausage out on the grass verge, and then we had a couple of street garage sales, about half a dozen places up and down the street.

During this period of community action, some residents remarked that they formed a number of new relationships: "I think the community we have got here now is the result of that development causing the locals to get together. If that development hadn't happened, I probably wouldn't know you." When speaking to the residents about their experiences with the development, I expected quite a tense meeting and anger about what had happened. While there was a sense of frustration about the conduct of the developer at times, the group were largely accepting of the outcome, especially the positive social outcomes for their street: "To me the greatest win of it ironically was the connection between all of us, it was a good community building event really." In fact, the focus groups (which were held in the homes of residents) felt more like a catchup between friends, with me as a guest, not a facilitator.

However, when the development received final approval and construction began, the residents found that although they had established a better sense of community, there was no longer the same impetus bringing them together:

since opposition efforts have dissipated, so too has some of the interaction between residents ... The interest is there because we've got established relationships, it's just we don't have a uniting cause to the same extent.

This revelation suggests that resident proximity and spatial commonality may not be enough to maintain a strong sense of community and that there needs to be something more, whether a shared goal or social imperative.

#### **7.4.4 Integration between new and existing Powell Street residents**

With the completion of the development and a new group of people moving into the neighbourhood, this research identified two separate community outcomes: a sense of community developing amongst new residents and a stronger sense of community emerging within existing residents. The notable absence was integration and a wider sense of community taking shape. When discussing the new residents before the development was completed, one existing resident wanted to make them feel welcome:

We're going to have 35 new families, so the challenge in a way is to make friends with these people and to make them part of the community, not just because we weren't happy with the thing anyway. It's not a reason for ostracising those new people.

This attitude remained after the new residents arrived, although little integration had yet occurred: "I haven't met any of the people as yet which is a bit of a shame really; it seems like it would be nice for them to be part of a community of some kind." One of the key reasons identified for this lack of integration was the physical layout and topology of the new development. It is separated from the street, down a steep driveway which leads to a cul-de-sac. Because the new development was not a thoroughfare to anywhere else, existing residents found it awkward to go there, as it felt somewhat like a private place, separate from the rest of the neighbourhood. Existing residents in the post-occupation focus group still expressed curiosity about the people in the new development but had not yet made the social connections:

I would be really interested to know if they are having contact with each other (probably not) because they are a community separate from the rest of the street. I would like to think there is community of some kind down there.

The ways in which community has and has not formed in relation to the Powell Street development has yielded insights that could help our understanding of the social

challenges facing community integration when infill developments take place within existing neighbourhoods. These findings also reveal the influence of all three forms of commonality in community formation processes, that social, spatial and temporal factors are all important in different ways to establishing unique senses of community in or in relation to developments.

## **7.5 Conclusion**

This chapter identified community taking shape at each of the three case-study developments. Findings suggest that community formation was influenced strongly by the types of people moving into each development. Although more as an enabler, the physical design of each development was also considered important.

At all three locations, housing density was acknowledged as contributing to community formation. Regardless of desire, residents were unable to avoid some degree of social interaction. While potential shortcomings associated with density were identified, none had as yet materialised, with people so far enjoying or not minding this closeness with their neighbours. Bump-spaces at each development were also important for providing the opportunity for social interaction. In particular, the shared rooftop space at the Turing Building, and the safe / pleasant walking environment at Hobsonville Point were highlighted. The high quality of housing at each development was found to attract people who planned to live there for a long time and who were willing to, or wanted to, invest time in forming relationships with other residents. Inference can also be drawn that well-used high-quality spaces may have encouraged attachments to place, with imaginaries formed around both the dwelling and wider environment combining to create a 'sense of home'.

Findings suggested that the developers can and have designed their developments in a way that is conducive to resident social interaction. As to whether they should, many residents believed that developers have a role in assisting community formation by designing the development in a way that encourages social interaction and a sense of place. However, the degree to which the developer did and perceptions of whether they should differ at each site. At the Turing Building and in

Powell Street, residents were satisfied with the community-friendly design and did not believe that more from the developer was required. However, in Hobsonville Point, the situation was much more complex, with HLC and the building companies going beyond this by organising and managing community activities. As will be discussed in the next chapter, at Hobsonville Point some residents considered HLC to be a sort of community promotion organisation and dispute mediator. This was a concern for HLC, who did not believe this should be within their remit moving forward.

While a conducive physical environment was considered important, interview findings suggest that the types of people who choose life in such a development (and are willing to take part in research) are important drivers of community formation. At each development, while diversity was perceived positively, it was the commonality or even homogeneity among residents that most strongly contributed to social interaction, a precursor to community formation. Most of all it was people sharing a common life-stages that helped form bonds. At Hobsonville Point this was most evident with the high number of young couples and families living there, an outcome which itself was influenced by, at least initially, comparatively affordable housing options, a safe and walkable environment, and schools on-site. Although at a smaller scale, a high proportion of young couples and families at Powell Street also appeared influential. On the other hand, it was 'baby-boomers', and 'empty-nesters' at the Turing Building that seemed to form the core of the community. Aside from life-stage, an orientation to neighbourly engagement appeared to be important, as many interviewees actively sought to develop a sense of community with others and were willing to participate and become involved. This was most evident at Hobsonville Point, where a number of highly motivated residents drove community formation efforts. As will be discussed in detail in the final chapter, community formation observed at Hobsonville Point is reflective of Schmalenbach's (1922) concept of the Bund, which incorporates both affective and rational behaviours in an elective form of sociation between members who recognise the benefits of community.

# CHAPTER EIGHT: Tension, Distrust and Community Opposition to Intensification

## 8.1 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed community outcomes in three higher-density developments in Auckland: Hobsonville Point, the Turing Building and the Powell Street townhouses. For each development, participants were interviewed about the sense of community taking shape within the development. This chapter changes focus and explores the tensions, resistance and opposition to intensification identified across the various components of the study; a backlash that came primarily from existing homeowners, many of whom were representatives of organised community interest groups. Results suggest that this backlash is attributable in part to a planning system perceived to be inefficient, unfair, undemocratic, biased, top-down and most of all untrustworthy. These findings could be interpreted as a 'crisis of trust' (Swain & Tait, 2007; O'Neill, 2002; Tait, 2011; Laurian, 2009), a concept characterised by a lack of trust in institutions, organisations, systems and processes (Warren, 1999; Offe, 1999; Swain & Tait, 2007; Giddens, 1990).

According to Swain and Tait (2007), modern society is increasingly fragmented and consists of citizens holding increasingly divergent interests, an outcome which leads to power struggles and the advancement of certain interests over others. Auckland's intensification process reflected closely the picture painted by Swain and Tait. This was evident from the interview data and media snapshot. Both depicted stakeholders clashing as they promoted often contrasting housing and development objectives. The Turing Building developer representative highlighted stakeholder conduct in the development process as problematic:

There are three parts to this debate. There is the regulator – the city council, there is the public, and there is the development community ... All parties have been quite immature in

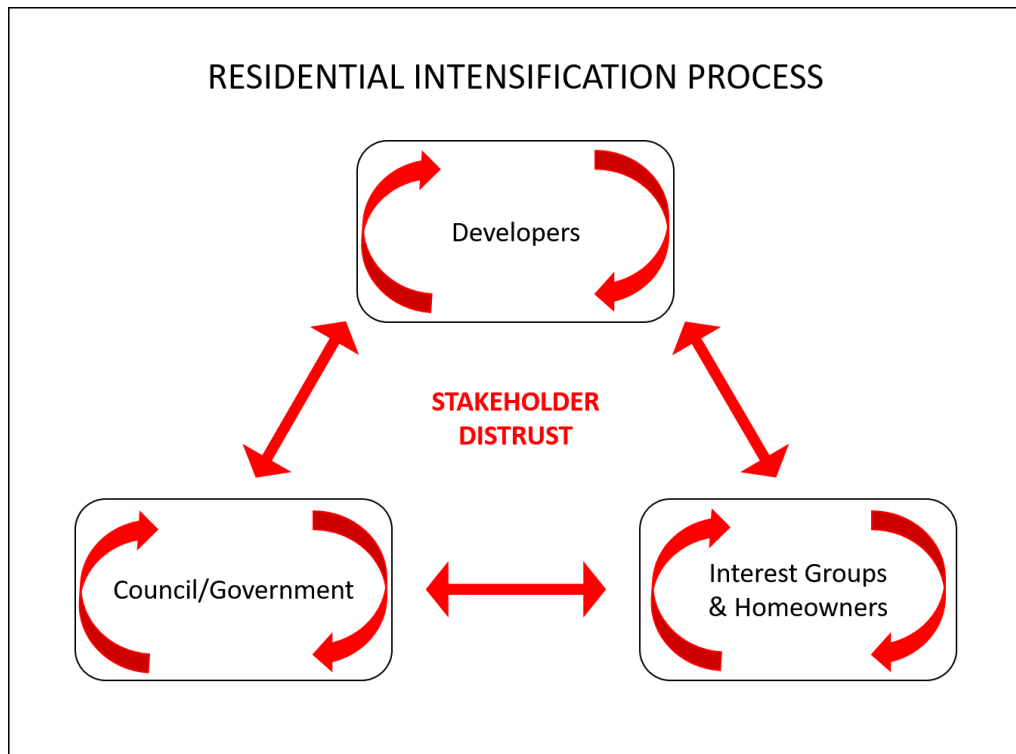
their approach. The development communities have very low expectations and have been spreadsheet-driven rather than outcome driven to a large extent. The city council has been sitting on the sideline as an adjudicator rather than looking for outcomes, and the public are ill-informed and not prepared to acknowledge that the city is going to need to change to meet our growing population.

The findings presented in this chapter closely reflect the above perspective that the challenges inherent in Auckland's intensification process can be attributed to certain behaviours and actions of stakeholder groups. The first section of this chapter discusses feelings of institutional distrust<sup>49</sup> related to Auckland Council and its planning system, including perceptions of developer bias, suggested resistance to meaningful public consultation, a tendency to be swayed by community lobby groups, and general perceptions of incompetence and inefficiency. The discussion then turns to distrust of community groups and existing homeowners, especially their oppositional agendas and 'unconstructive' NIMBY behaviour in the planning process. The next section contextualises these challenges through an examination of the problematic Powell Street development, where significant animosity and distrust was identified and articulated by the three different stakeholder groups: Auckland Council, the developer and existing residents. The final section outlines potential ways to improve the stakeholder relationships and address institutional distrust issues.

The stakeholder distrust identified by interview participants in this study pointed to distrust not only between stakeholders but also, as shown in Figure 28 below, distrust within stakeholder groups as well. These internal and external schisms will be expanded upon throughout this chapter.

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<sup>49</sup> In reference to Kumar and Paddison's (2010) classifications of trust, the type of distrust evident in this research was primarily cognitive, rather than affect-based, which is related to competence, capability and responsibility rather than emotional bonds.



**Figure 28. Stakeholder distrust in Auckland’s intensification process**

This chapter’s account is drawn from key informant interviews, focus groups with the Powell Himikera Residents Association (PHRA) and Grey Lynn Residents Association (GLRA), and the media snapshot.<sup>50</sup>

## **8.2 Perceived Shortcomings of Auckland Council in the Intensification Process**

Rawls (1999) asserts that institutional trust relies strongly on experts within organisations conducting affairs by following accepted procedures, including codes of ethics based on procedural justice. The viewpoints of diverse stakeholders suggest this is not happening to an adequate standard in Auckland’s intensification process. Findings revealed numerous criticisms of Auckland Council’s conduct and ability to perform effectively in Auckland’s intensification process, which contributed to perceptions of institutional distrust. Community interest-group and resident-

<sup>50</sup> See the glossary for brief descriptions of those interviewed in this chapter.

association representatives believed the Council to be biased in favour of developer interests and resistant to meaningful public engagement in the planning process. In contrast, some developers believed the Council to be overly influenced by community interest groups and resident associations and that they were too restrictive on developers. Perceptions of poor performance and incompetence were noted by both developers and community interest-group and resident-association members.

### **8.2.1 Developer bias and resistance to meaningful public engagement**

Fainstein (1999) states that, although many planners are proponents of equity and diversity, in public engagement activities they are hindered by normative biases that preclude the meaningful consideration of public opinions. Reflecting this statement, perceptions of developer bias were voiced strongly by Auckland 2040 and Character Coalition representatives in relation to Auckland Council's (mis)management of the Unitary Plan development process. The Auckland 2040 representative believed intensification was taking place in a "pro-development planning environment" in which planners often side with developers with little regard given to negative implications of the development. They also expressed frustration, believing that the Council approves developments that are "completely out of kilter with what the zones allow", often without notification or adequate public participation. A GLRA member similarly believed council planners to have a 'mindset' that their job is to support developers rather than look out for the public. In an emotive turn of phrase, the Auckland 2040 representative claimed that the Council's favourable dealings with developers meant that, "Auckland's residential areas are to be sacrificed on the altar of intensification". Such sentiments reflected the language used by opponents to intensification in the media.

Auckland Council was also perceived to be too lenient or unable to control developer actions to ensure quality development outcomes. According to the Character Coalition representative:

People look at the CBD and they look at Hobson Street, and they go “we’re leaving this to you? Look what you’ve done and look what you’ve allowed. You’ve enabled Auckland to become one of the ugliest cities in the world, not the most beautiful or liveable”.

This criticism is interesting, for although their frustration is based largely on aesthetics, the blame was attributed to the Council, not developers. This highlights the importance of quality control in the development process, a responsibility the Council is perceived by interviewees to have neglected. Rather than being a problem of council oversight or incompetence, one GLRA member suggested that the Council actively allows poor development to occur:

Developers are motivated by profit, and that is what they do, so they will propose whatever they can get away with to make a profit, so you can’t blame them because that is the economic incentive, so it is up to the Council to have rules to control them and rein them in, but the Council encourages them to do whatever they do, then the Council is where the problem is, not the developers.

This also suggests that the Council is held to greater scrutiny than developers, who are expected to push the boundaries. Reflecting on perceived biases in the planning system, one GLRA member claimed that, “We’ve [the GLRA] got no faith in council process”. Such an opinion may explain to some degree the prevalence of community interest groups opposed to Auckland Council’s intensification proposals in the Unitary Plan.

Another criticism of Auckland Council was that it does not meaningfully engage local communities in the planning process. While there was some discontent about engagement from resident association members about specific developments,<sup>51</sup> the greatest frustration came from the Auckland 2040 and Character Coalition representatives regarding the Unitary Plan process. There was criticism that

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<sup>51</sup> This point is discussed in detail in the case-study analysis of the challenges associated with the Powell Street development later in the chapter.

engagement opportunities, when possible (especially the hearings process), were overly complicated, unrealistically time-constrained and unreasonably favourable to pro-development interests. According to the Character Coalition representative:

They [Auckland Council] change it every day; you have to read the website, not just daily but hourly because they keep changing things, changing the dates of hearings and moving things, splitting things off. You have to have a PhD to understand it. One member said to me that they went to a hearing and there were 100 people in the room, 95 of whom were being paid handsomely to be there, and 5 were community people doing it for the love of their city. It is not fair, blatantly not fair.

This complaint was reminiscent of Hanssen's (2010) assertion that the planning industry deliberately, or otherwise, makes participation difficult for the public by adopting a policy-heavy, jargonistic approach. Such actions would suggest an uneven power dynamic with the Council being unwilling to allow meaningful community input. This reflects Stein and Harper's (2003) claim that power relations should be understood as a factor that influences the effectiveness of public engagement rather than a measurement of participation itself. Analysed in light of Arnstein's (1969) Ladder of Participation, the accounts above suggest that the public-engagement processes were experienced as largely tokenistic by resident groups. Given the pluralistic and contested nature of Auckland's intensification process, it was unsurprising that other interviewees held alternative views.

The Council were also accused of being defensive and insecure: "The planning department was extremely resistant to anything that we had and in fact was bordering on aggressive. They did not want to have an alternative point of view; they did not want to have a situation where they were being criticised" (Auckland 2040 representative). The Character Coalition representative was also critical of the Council's perceived top-down approach to planning:

It's just not fair that someone [referring to planners and politicians] who lives in a beautiful suburb gets to decide that these poor people over here are going to be surrounded by apartment buildings. It doesn't seem right to me; there is no social justice in that.

The reference to social justice in this assertion is interesting and somewhat ironic for a common criticism of groups like the Character Coalition, in that they represent the interests of the wealthy in society and, because of their opposition to change, it is often in the poorer areas that undesirable development takes place.

### **8.2.2 The Council is overly influenced by community groups and is too restrictive of developers**

Reflecting the highly contestable nature of intensification, the Council was also criticised for being too easily influenced by community interest groups at the same time as being too restrictive on developers. The Turing Building developer representative outlined the first component of this concern: "institutions are far too much influenced by special interest groups and lobbying." A similar view was given by the Generation Zero representative, who believed the Unitary Plan development was hindered by councillors who were "really worried about their streets and trying to save their seats", and thus were too heavily influenced by community group objections. As one of the few groups representing non-homeowner interests, the Generation Zero representative was frustrated by what they perceived to be a disproportionate degree of influence from homeowners on council decision-making. However, rather than this resulting in an erosion of trust in protectionist stakeholders,<sup>52</sup> it served to make the Council appear unable, or unwilling to incorporate the needs of all equally.

The Council was also criticised for being overly restrictive on what developers can and cannot do, in particular through what were perceived to be arbitrary rules and regulations. Such rules were identified as impeding good development outcomes by stifling creative approaches. Interestingly, this concern was most strongly vocalised

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<sup>52</sup> Although distrust in this group is strong, just not so much about their influence on the Council.

by the Auckland Council elected representative who voiced frustration with the current political and regulatory situation: “we certainly have a bunch of rules about stuff that you must ask yourself, ‘What is the bloody point of doing that?’ It just seems so arbitrary.” They were also concerned with what they saw as council hubris with “resistance and lack of political will to support our developers to be brave and pushing the boundaries”. Subsequently, they believed that the removal of rules, such as density restrictions would “enable good developers to do very cool and creative developments”. While such opinions are not strongly indicative of distrust in the Council, the fact that this criticism came from an Auckland Council elected representative highlights a lack of unity within the Council in terms of its vision for a change towards higher-densities. In many respects, it shows that distrust of council actions exists not only from the perspective of other stakeholders but also within their own members. As will be discussed later in this chapter, distrust within stakeholder groups was a common finding in this research. Expressing a similar opinion, the Hobsonville Point developer representative compared the current regulatory environment to life in the Soviet Union where the Council “believe that this is the type of bread you should eat so we’ll put that in the shops”. In their mind, such rules prevented the necessary range of housing types being built at an affordable price. However, other views ran contrary to this, most noticeably from the Powell Street developer representative who believed the Council to be unwise in giving developers too much freedom, given their recent poor track record on the quality of residential developments: “What scares me with the crap in the media at the moment with developers saying get rid of the rules and let us go for it. Because that’s basically going back to the way it used to work and that’s what got us in this mess in the first place.” Such conflicting perspectives highlight not only distrust in the Council’s agenda but also their ability to effectively manage an intensification process that will lead to high-quality and demand-sensitive housing outcomes.

### **8.2.3 Poor performance and competencies**

There was also distrust in Auckland Council based on perceived shortcomings in their operational performance and competency. In these cases, the Council’s

intensification vision was actually viewed positively, with distrust manifesting through concerns regarding delivery and implementation:

The ideas are fine, but when you look at the record of councils, they haven't done that well at following even their own plans (Turing Building resident).

When you look at the Auckland Plan, it is actually a really good document and the vision to make Auckland the world's most liveable city is a great vision ... but as always the devil is in the detail about how they are implementing it, and that's where I think they are falling down ... there is a disconnect between the vision and the actual planning reality (GLRA member).

The disconnect between vision and reality (implementation) has emerged as a common criticism of Auckland Council's approach to intensification, particularly throughout the Unitary Plan development process. Providing a more circumspect view of this outcome, various reasons can be attributed to this situation. One is that the Council has been poor at selling intensification to an already sceptical public. Thus when proposals have been presented, and people think "What does it mean for me?" (Hobsonville Point developer representative 1), the reaction has frequently been negative. However, such outcomes are not the fault of the Council alone. As will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter, some members of the public who supported the idea of intensification in principle (in the Auckland Plan), changed their mind once details emerged that it might affect them or their local neighbourhood.

There were, in fact, some examples provided by interviewees that identified distrust in the Council to deliver their vision, while not actually blaming the Council for this shortcoming. Quite circumspectly, the Hobsonville Point developer representative 2 said, "I don't think it is a lack of good intention from the Council, it is just the dysfunction of a bureaucracy of a certain size". This belief asserted a degree of inevitability in the situation. Another person more pointedly blamed central government restructuring on council failings to properly engage with communities in the planning process:

It [Auckland Council] feels like it was set up by the National Government with the intent purpose of isolating the communities from their representatives and the whole structure of the Supercity is served to isolate the communities and having any influence (GLRA member).

This perspective was unique, as it was the only direct statement of blame apportioned to central government direction, which led to the creation of the larger (and arguably more bureaucratic) Auckland Supercity Council in 2010.

A poignant quote from the Character Coalition representative summed up the current challenge facing Auckland Council, particularly in terms of the distrust shown towards it by many (at least vocal in the Unitary Plan consultation process) homeowners: “they [the public] have no faith, and that is what I used to say to some of the councillors in meetings, ‘there is no trust, and you’ve got to rebuild the trust before people will allow you to be in charge of this” Reflecting the significance of this perspective, ways in which public trust can be improved will be discussed in the final section of this chapter.

### **8.3 Exploring Community-led Opposition to Suburban Intensification**

This section expands on key points made about distrust by focusing on opposition specifically, with an emphasis on how ‘fear of change’ has affected Auckland’s intensification process. Within this discussion, the concept of NIMBYism is discussed, as well as the importance of character and heritage to the place protectionism exhibited by community interest and groups. When NIMBYism is discussed, normative (pejorative) perspectives are questioned, with the focus being on *why* NIMBYism occurs in this context and *how* it influences quality intensification outcomes. Views from all interviewees are considered in this section.

Much of the opposition observed in this study can be attributed, at least in part, to institutional distrust, particularly in relation to the development of the Unitary Plan. The problem of uncertainty was highlighted as an important part of this: “You could say the fear of change is driven by a lack of trust in what the built outcome might be” (Auckland Council policy representative). The Turing Building developer

representative sought to clarify what they thought the public tensions around intensification are about: “The battleground for that is not apartments ... but the redevelopment of our existing suburban neighbourhoods.” This was compounded by feelings of uncertainty about the end product and / or assumptions of poor outcomes. One PHRA member articulated their concern over quality:

I’m not against intensification of housing, but it’s how it’s done so it can be done well or it can be done badly. I just see currently all over Auckland it’s being done very poorly ... They are not going to be places people will want to live in by choice.

This fear of change was not surprising given the negative perceptions of intensification that permeate public discussions, as highlighted in the media analysis. There was some sympathy, from interviewees generally supportive of intensification, for people who are expected to accept potentially discordant new types of housing in their neighbourhood, for example:

I also understand that people out there have concerns, some of them are terrified. I can see where they are coming from because I did grow up here in suburbia and experienced the idea of looking overseas and seeing high-rises and thinking “god how do you live like that? What a disaster that must be!” It is a naive view and can [be] a problem (Turing Building resident).

A fear of change based on past outcomes needs to be differentiated from a fear of housing types based on personal preference, which in this case is a preference for detached housing coupled with an aversion to intensification. This preference and the opposition it creates is a significant obstacle for planners and developers who seek to incorporate mixed-density housing into traditionally low-density neighbourhoods. It is also the relatively ‘unknown’ factor of higher-density types of housing that unsettle many New Zealanders. As stated by a Turing Building resident, “if you haven’t lived that style you won’t understand why people would want to live

that way?” This obstacle was considered by many interviewees as largely temporary. In other words, as more high-quality intensification is undertaken, familiarity and acceptance will increase. The Auckland Council elected representative acknowledged they needed to promote good examples more proactively to overcome this resistance.

Acting on this fear of change, some of the strongest opposition to intensification during the Unitary Plan process came from the Character Coalition and Auckland 2040, both of whom formed in direct response to community and home-owner concerns about the effects of intensification on their local community and / or neighbourhoods. The Auckland 2040 representative remarked on how fast their group mobilised in response to Unitary Plan proposals:

[when] I saw the provisions in the plan I didn't believe what I was seeing ... I said, "this is ridiculous, if this proceeds it will destroy Auckland as we know it" ... it went from a small group of concerned people to addressing meetings of 500+ people within three weeks, and massive media attention, we were on television, radio and newspapers. It was unreal.

Such a response can be attributed to a strong sense of place attachment (discussed later in the section), which often led to acrimonious and emotive forms of place protectionism. Interestingly, the speed at which opposition groups rallied against the council in the Unitary Plan process came as no surprise to the Powell Street developer representative:

I think a big part of the problem is a lack of confidence in the Council and a lack of confidence in government. People just don't think that their interests will be well looked after so they feel that they have to get together and fight for it.

Again, stakeholder and institutional distrust were identified as triggers for opposition to intensification. It is in this context that NIMBY opposition and the rationale behind it is discussed.

### 8.3.1 Concerned citizenry or selfish NIMBYISM?

NIMBY is a pejorative and contentious label attached to the opposition to Auckland's intensification process and is a 'negative' form of public engagement (Dear, 1992; Meyer, 2010). From community groups representing largely homeowner interests, there was a sense of defensiveness, as representatives thought their groups were incorrectly and unfairly labelled as expressing NIMBY attitudes. The Auckland 2040 representative was particularly critical of what they believed was a smear campaign against them by the Council with the help of sensationalist media:

[it] was a deliberate policy by council PR people, they put it out in blogs, and they put it everywhere. We were "grey-haired NIMBYs" who didn't want development in their area and were anti-intensification ... [The] media want stories, they want people yelling and screaming ... We have to fight the Council's PR arm, and they have a lot of PR people, and their job is to discredit us.

This account reflects Burningham's (2000) belief that labelling community opposition as NIMBY is an effective way to discredit their arguments. When speaking about this situation, the Auckland 2040 representative's frustration was obvious as they expressed anger that they were being portrayed as anti-intensification: "We as an organisation are pro-intensification, but we want well-planned, well-coordinated focused development. Not haphazard, unplanned, put it where you like." Ellis (2004) was critical that using the term NIMBY pejoratively portrays oppositional activism as selfish and against the public interest. A similar discourse with respect to Auckland's intensification process came to the fore in the key informant interviews.

From Auckland 2040's perspective, intensification is favourable when it takes place in proximity to commercial centres and public transport links. While many planners agree with this thinking, the fact that most opposition consists of home-owners from leafy 'character' suburbs, suggesting intensification should only be around commercial centres, can easily be interpreted as NIMBYism. One vocal critic of these groups was Generation Zero, whose representative wanted the opposition to be

'more constructive', rather than simply saying, "we don't want it here because we don't want it here". They were also critical of New Zealanders being closed-minded to new ideas: "New Zealanders love to say 'no'. They want to do something ... No!" This is a poignant example of distrust in the public to act in a constructive and progressive manner, suggesting that New Zealanders are quite conservative in the housing environment.

The idea of the 'greater good' or 'public good' is an important component of the NIMBY debate, particularly in the way it contrasts to the importance of individual freedom. The Character Coalition representative highlighted this tension and the attitude of developers by criticising what they called New Zealand's frontier mentality, which promotes the "my home is my castle, and I can do whatever I like with that piece of dirt" view. They believed that individual freedoms and rights should be restricted if it is for the benefit of the wider community, and that, "there's always going to have to be compromise, and individual people are always going to be put out, that is just the way of the world as we live in communities". While this is a compelling perspective, it also appears somewhat contradictory, as it suggests that the individuals who should be 'put out' are those wanting to do something different as opposed to those who might be affected by the change. Subsequently, this argument falls down because it can just as easily be applied to undermine protectionist community opposition. Their use of the 'public good' argument was also problematic, as their position strongly favours the welfare of current over future residents.

Another interesting avenue of discussion was the frustration displayed by some opposition groups to the NIMBY behaviour of others, which they believed detracted from their more valid concerns. For example, one GLRA member felt their movement had been compromised because they were grouped with louder and less rational opposition:

There are two things, one is there are NIMBYs out there who are just totally resistant to any change, they want things to be as they are and then because of that if you come up with legitimate opposition to the way things are being done rather than just opposing it just for

the sake of opposing it, people automatically label you as NIMBYs ... minimising in their mind your stance ... The developers and the Council tend to hear more from the NIMBYs ... so they tend to be very dismissive of everybody because they think everybody is trying to oppose progress.

In this account, the interviewee was not critical of council dismissiveness, understanding why they were hesitant to engage if they expected unconstructive opposition. The Character Coalition representative was even wary of NIMBYism within their organisation, acknowledging that some members were much more concerned with their own backyards than the public interest. At the same time, they believed that in New Zealand's democratic system, their views must also be acknowledged and considered equally, whether NIMBY or not. This idea asserts that, while NIMBYism can be problematic, it must be treated equally in the planning system. While NIMBYism was generally perceived to be a negative outcome, there were also some suggestions made that NIMBYism actually has an important role to play in the planning system, for it can be an effective quality control tool. This idea is explored in section 8.5 about the Powell Street development.

### **8.3.2 Character protection**

Character protection was identified as a major motivation for community-led opposition to intensification plans, both at the development and city-wide scales. In particular, a recurring theme was the threat intensification poses to heritage values associated with specific neighbourhoods. It also highlights a rigid assumption that intensification degrades suburban character, and that unique suburban character will be lost if higher-density housing is constructed in existing low-density neighbourhoods. This character protectionist opposition is representative of strong place attachment. According to the Character Coalition representative, "Putting a design spin on it, suburbs have a look and feel and people want to protect that ... the look and feel of Auckland ... So, it's that that people want to protect, it is the essence of their suburb". This view was interesting because it suggests that character in this context is dependent on a homogenous built environment where a diversity of

building types, sizes, heights or ages will result in a lack or loss of said character. Views such as this contribute to the Council and developers being hesitant to engage too closely with the public. The idea that intensification compromises character by introducing discordant housing into a neighbourhood was an argument frequently used by the Auckland 2040 representative. Intensification in traditionally low-density areas was also described as “intrusive” and “parasitic”, and that “it affects amenity” and affects “the character of the area”.

A key component of the character debate is the importance of heritage and that historical elements of a neighbourhood’s built environment should be protected. All interviewees agreed that heritage buildings were important to the character of Auckland and should be protected, yet, as alluded to above, perceptions as to the degree to which this protection should exist differed. The value of heritage to the creation of character is high, yet, in older suburbs, opposition on such grounds effectively precludes development from taking place anywhere. This is a point of conjecture in the intensification debate, where protection of certain streets / buildings can be, and is negotiated, yet protection of whole ‘heritage’ suburbs is problematic and resisted by the Council. It is when this is the central argument that the arguments of community opposition voices tend to get side-lined, which in turn detracts from more realistic heritage protection discussions being taken seriously. Therefore, while a small number of interviewees desired whole-suburb heritage protection, the Auckland 2040 representative believed this to be untenable: “people get carried away with heritage ... just because it’s old doesn’t mean it’s good.” They believed that heritage protection should be specific and targeted, otherwise “you just start losing the thread”. In what appeared to be a rare convergence of opinion, the Auckland Council elected representative also shared these views, believing it is important to protect places only of the ‘highest value’, which are “the best and prime examples of beautiful heritage” – a protection that could be difficult to measure, given beauty is subjective. They also expressed caution about too much emphasis on heritage and, more broadly, character protection: “Can we protect it all? No, we can’t. Otherwise, there would be great bits of Auckland that are fantastically appropriate to redevelop that would be off-limits ... we can’t put a bell -jar over the

whole of Auckland.” The ‘bell-jar’ comment summed up effectively the perception of community groups opposed to all higher-density development. However, the Auckland 2040 representative’s comments challenged this assumption, suggesting that such generalisations based on extreme positions disproportionately influence the Council’s attitudes towards more moderate community groups. Accentuating this point, the Character Coalition representative summed up their position:

We are not anti-intensification. We recognise Auckland has to grow and also agree we don’t want to push out into the greenfields too much and we think there are masses of areas that could be intensified without any loss of character.

Claims such as this were questioned by the Auckland Council policy representative, who believed that character might, in fact, be used as an excuse for simply preventing change of any sort: “for me that is a little bit more about ‘this is how I’m going to stop change happening in my community?’ rather than a particular concern about character.” This suspicion essentially suggests that opposition based on character protection is a ‘straw man’ argument employed to maintain the status quo and restrict any neighbourhood change. This is a bold claim and one which appears to run contrary to the accounts given by opposition groups, as well as a wealth of writings on the importance of place attachment to urban residents.

### **8.3.3 Distrust of existing residents and community-led opposition**

Within Auckland’s intensification process there was also distrust directed at community interest groups. While distrust in the Council was often generalised to include the whole organisation (and planning system) often perceived homogeneously, the distrust directed at this stakeholder group varied considerably depending on the position they represented. Reflecting the notion that distrust cannot exist without trust elsewhere, groups representing homeowner interests received the most polarising interview feedback. On the one hand, opposition groups Auckland 2040 and the Character Coalition appeared marginalised and distrusted by

some stakeholders as a vocal minority of NIMBYs whose views are inherently selfish and against the public good. On the other hand, the pro-intensification lobby group Generation Zero was widely trusted and respected, even to a certain degree by the aforementioned opposition groups. As to why these groups were perceived differently could be attributed to the types of people spoken to in this study, with many interviewees favouring a change to the status quo as represented by Generation Zero rather protecting the status quo favoured by Auckland 2040, the Character Coalition and numerous neighbourhood opposition groups. Interestingly both sides claim to be representing people often ignored in the urban planning context and, depending on one's point of reference, both positions are seen as right. This situation highlights a significant challenge to participative planning, as it becomes a vehicle for competing interest groups which effectively create and reinforce 'us and them' schisms, thus worsening already lowered levels of inter-group distrust. Further research into how conservative / progressive positions are trusted differently in the planning system would be a useful area of inquiry in the future.

A commonly expressed criticism of community interest groups was their opposition to change, which for some interviewees was regarded as not only selfish but also sometimes irrational. Referring to Auckland 2040, one Turing Building resident said that groups like them, "don't want any change anywhere in the world" and that "they want to hold onto the past". The same resident also considered that protecting the status quo in the face of much-needed change was "ridiculous". Perhaps the strongest criticism of local opposition came from the Turing Building developer representative:

They just have to be more mature about it, I'm prepared to go and talk to neighbours that are reasonable and have sensible things to say, but the thing is how do you weed out those obvious screwballs, and I get them every time I have to do a notification. They are not even experts and just go "it's height, it's this or that", well it is just prejudice.

This reiterates the perception amongst some interviewees that opposition is frequently uninformed or not open to constructive dialogue.

Opposition interest group preferences were also criticised, with another Turing Building resident attributing resistance to the fact that many Aucklanders “worship the villa” and see “the quarter acre block as the only housing option”. That the above criticisms came from people who live in a new higher-density development suggests that they had either overcome such thinking themselves in order to make this transition or that they had never actually held such views. Many of the Turing Building residents had moved to their current location from detached housing, which highlighted a range of views existing in relation to housing preferences. Focusing on a perceived irrationality of opposition arguments, the Auckland Council policy representative reflected on one public consultation interaction:<sup>53</sup>

At a St Heliers public meeting on the Unitary Plan, everybody said we don’t want St Heliers to change ... a person stood up with a very distinctive foreign accent who made the comment that “me and my wife moved here in 1990 and moved into a townhouse, and we didn’t expect this area to change” ... the group wasn’t very happy when I pointed out that 10 years before 1990 there would have been no such thing as a townhouse.

This suggests that the concept of change is itself perceived inconsistently, depending on whether the change in question is discussed in the past, present or future tense. More specifically, the objection above highlights an appreciation of past intensification efforts while simultaneously opposing future plans. In the consultation arena, such inconsistent arguments strengthen the positions of those seeking to undermine the validity and trustworthiness of community opposition perspectives. Significantly, this was also picked up on by a GLRA member who believed much public participation to be counter-productive, as it is not well-considered or thought out: “A lot of the time, to be honest, people from communities are not well-read, they don’t understand the process, their submissions are

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<sup>53</sup> This refers to the same interaction described in an *East & Bays Courier* news story (12 / 04 / 2013) presented in Chapter Four (section 4.6.1).

emotional and not factual.” However, this represents a false binary and infers that emotions are neither valid nor important (Kearns & Collins, 2012). This view also contradicts the centrality of emotion to place attachment and place-protectionism.

Another reason for distrust in opposition community interest groups is that they display undemocratic behaviour in the intensification process. This was highlighted by the Auckland Council policy representative in relation to Auckland 2040:

Auckland 2040 always go “it is undemocratic – our community wishes are being overridden”, whereas actually, it was the community through a year-long public consultation produced the Auckland Plan and collectively decided we wanted a quality compact city ... I firmly believe that 2040 are the ones who have been anti-democratic because all their proposals are for the status quo which is the exact antithesis of the Auckland Plan which was a publicly formed document, so they are trying to bully rules through that are in total opposition to the Auckland Plan which is a public and democratic document.

This account contests arguments presented by Auckland 2040 that community interest groups are unable to participate fully in the planning process. This position is unsurprising, given the opposing positions that these stakeholders held in the Unitary Plan development process. It also questions the representativeness of their opposition in the wider public sphere, for a much broader public submission process favoured the city adopting a higher-density housing approach. The resistance of Auckland 2040 also highlights the importance of place and geography in urban planning, with ideas like intensification supported in principle, but when plans become spatialised, they are met with scepticism. In this sense, the approach Auckland 2040 is perceived to have taken represents NIMBY behaviour, as will be discussed in the following section.

The final reason for distrust of community interest groups is that their position is not perceived to be representative of the wider community. Referring to the development-specific opposition, one Turing Building resident said, “I never see a photo of a protest with more than 8 or 10 people ... does that really represent the community?” Such perceptions suggest that local opposition groups only represent

a fraction of the community and that the community subsets whose concerns are vocalised are unlikely to represent those of the 'silent' majority. Another criticism of 'unrepresentativeness' focused on demographic homogeneity, with people in opposition to change consisting primarily of well-resourced (in terms of time and money) European / Pākehā people over the age of 50 – interestingly a similar point was made by the Character Coalition representative as well. While a lack of representativeness was not identified by anybody as a reason to dismiss opposition, it did appear to compromise the validity of opposition groups who claim to be fighting for their community's best interests. One problem with criticisms focused on representativeness is that the reasons for the lack of representation are not always made clear. Is the often-mentioned silent majority not engaged out of apathy or are there real barriers to participation? If Auckland's planning process is truly democratic, then anybody should be able to voice their concerns. Therefore, if there is a lack of representativeness, this is not necessarily the fault of those engaged (as is alluded to) but rather those not engaging in the process and countering opposition ideas.

Perhaps the strongest sense of distrust was evident between community interest (lobby) groups who held quite different views on intensification. Generation Zero and groups including Auckland 2040 and the Character Coalition are perceived to represent opposite interests in Auckland's housing debate. Often it is characterised in terms of the generational divide (millennials vs baby boomers) and housing tenure (renters vs homeowners). Auckland 2040 distrusts Generation Zero due to their apparent good relationship with Auckland Council, believing them to possibly be an overly sympathetic voice representing council interests: "Generation Zero, we're a little bit unsure about because they seem to be very close to council, we believe they are probably funded by council, but we just don't know, but it seems likely." However, it was the conduct of both groups that was identified by representatives as inappropriate. The Character Coalition representative said about Generation Zero:

There was a lot of very unkind things said about my members by Generation Zero ... It was awful, really nasty stuff about all those “geriatrics”. I thought they would have known better. “Geriatrics!” Some really nasty stuff went down, they were fiery times.

Conversely, the Generation Zero representative recounted their experience of community meetings:

There is a lot of mob mentality; there are some very nasty people in some of the meetings ... After the first one, we said we can’t send people in on their own because some of the moods were very nasty.

Such perceptions appeared to reflect an environment in which neither side felt comfortable engaging with the other. Criticism of opposition groups by Generation Zero again drew upon a perception of a lack of representativeness: “There are a handful of resident groups who are especially notorious, but they often claim to be larger than they are but actually they only have quite a small representation.” One point of difference in the perceptions of these groups was that while the conduct of Generation Zero was questioned their motivations were not. On the other hand, Generation Zero criticised both the conduct *and* motivations of opposition groups, with accusations of NIMBYism ever-present.

Some interest-group representatives believed that these inter-group tensions were largely avoidable and that differences between the groups were not as significant as often portrayed (by the media). According to the Character Coalition representative, “It shouldn’t be them and us ... I thought they really responded to what we said and we should have sort of picked them up and got a bit closer to them”. This conciliatory sentiment suggested that in many cases they actually sought similar outcomes; yet, due to a prevailing sense of distrust and fear-mongering, constructive conversations had not taken place. In this account, as well as others, there were notable feelings of regret about the sometimes vitriolic nature of interactions between opposing parties in the debates related to intensification.

## 8.4 Distrust in Developers

Reflecting negative perceptions surrounding developers identified in Chapter Four's media snapshot, a distrust of developers was also evident from the stakeholder interviews. While references to 'trust' or 'distrust' were not often made directly, the perspectives of some interviewees, through a variety of criticisms, suggested that developers (like the council) suffer from a lack both internal and external trust. The most noticeable difference in perceptions of trust surrounding the council and developers is the type of distrust displayed. While Council's competency and agenda both came under scrutiny, for developers, it was their (moral and ethical) character and motivations that were the focus on much enmity here. Interestingly, this was reflected most strongly in developer distrust of other developers, and the development industry generally.

An example of this internal developer distrust was evident in comments made by the Powell Street developer representative, who explained how he did not trust other developers because they "always lie" and "don't do what they say they are going to do". These are strong allegations, and ones which this interviewee believed reflected a system which both allowed for, if not encouraged, poor development outcomes:

The problem is the entire system, and the way that the world works is engineered to developers that are self-centred, ego-narcissistic, kind of risk-taking, sort of money-focused people who may or may not deliver a good product or may not deliver the product at all ... All they are focused on is how much money they can make and how quickly ... They are not design led; they don't care what they are building!

Following suit, the Turing Building developer representative also thought poorly of many contemporaries describing them as "insincere", "shallow" and "short-sighted" in their development approach where their focus is on profit rather than outcome:

There are too many guys that come into development from a finance background and say “I can make this much money if I do this” ... The guys that build them don’t give a fuck about the outcome; they seriously don’t. They just think “shit I can make \$10 million doing this”.

The perception of profit over quality and short-term thinking provided by these two interviewees matches the common media narrative and public discourse that identifies developers as untrustworthy. It was also a narrative and stereotype that these developer representatives tried to distance themselves from. The Turing Building developer representative, in particular, provided an interesting account of how his attempts to change the status quo and constructively engage with the council antagonised some of his contemporaries: “I’ve had literally letters telling me to piss off from quite big players, to stop agitating ... They don’t want to communicate or have any dialogue with council.” Such behaviour suggests that, as with some other stakeholder groups, certain developers prefer the status quo development environment whereby changes to this could threaten their interests.

As touched on above, a major reason for distrust in developers was the perceived poor quality and design of past developments, a factor that was stated to have contributed to considerable opposition to intensification proposals. One Turing Building resident shared their insights on this situation:

Definitely, the inner-city apartment buildings being built are ugly, small, I haven’t been in many of them, I’ve been in some of them, so some of it is hearsay, but these are the things that we hear, so that becomes the perception, therefore that becomes something to protest against.

The reason this quote was chosen was the emphasis placed on the idea of perception, that, even though outcomes are not necessarily as bad as claimed or negative ideas may not be due to actual experience, the legacy of poor developments in the past is so ingrained that moving away from this discourse is difficult. Accordingly, even

though in recent years there have been many high-quality developments, this nagging doubt and distrust still exist for many Aucklanders.

An interesting finding to emerge from this research is that distrust shown towards the council and developers cannot always be interpreted independently, that a relationship and interconnectedness exists between the way both stakeholder groups are perceived in the intensification (and planning) system. A poignant example of this was provided earlier (section 8.2.1. about developer bias) when distrust of the council was outlined based on their inability to effectively control developer outputs. In other words, poorly built / designed developments were considered to be the fault of the Council rather than the developer, for it is the job of the Council to allow (or not) what can or cannot be built. Such blurred lines in the triumvirate of stakeholder distrust (the other being community interest groups) point to distrust in the intensification process being perhaps less related to the actions of individual stakeholders but to rather a planning and political system that allows for, if not perpetuates, processes and outcomes that, amongst other shortcomings, are perceived to be undemocratic, poor quality and biased. These views strongly contradict those given by many residents in the previous chapter, who identified strong developer trust as a key reason for the decision to buy off the plan. In this section, unsurprisingly, many of the views are from existing community members who are not favourable towards change.

Putting these themes presented above into a real context, the next section focuses on the challenges experienced in the development of the Powell Street townhouses. Community opposition and stakeholder distrust are illustrated through analyses of interviews conducted at two points in time, pre and post construction, with residents living in streets adjacent to the new development. Residents of the new development and representatives of the Council and developer were also interviewed.

## **8.5 The Powell Street Development – A Cauldron of Challenges**

Of the three case-study developments, the Powell Street townhouses received the most public opposition. This section analyses key planning and development

challenges, with significant attention given to the concerns of existing residents living in proximity to the site. It also contextualises many of the ideas discussed in this chapter and in doing so provides a detailed account of the diversity of challenges facing stakeholders in Auckland’s intensification process. Three key factors were found to contribute to consenting delays and stakeholder distrust: council inefficiencies, developer conduct and community opposition.

The findings below are derived from the two Powell Himikera Residents Association<sup>54</sup> focus groups (pre and post construction), and interviews with the Powell Street developer representative and Auckland Council consents representative.

### Factors that Affected the Powell Street Development

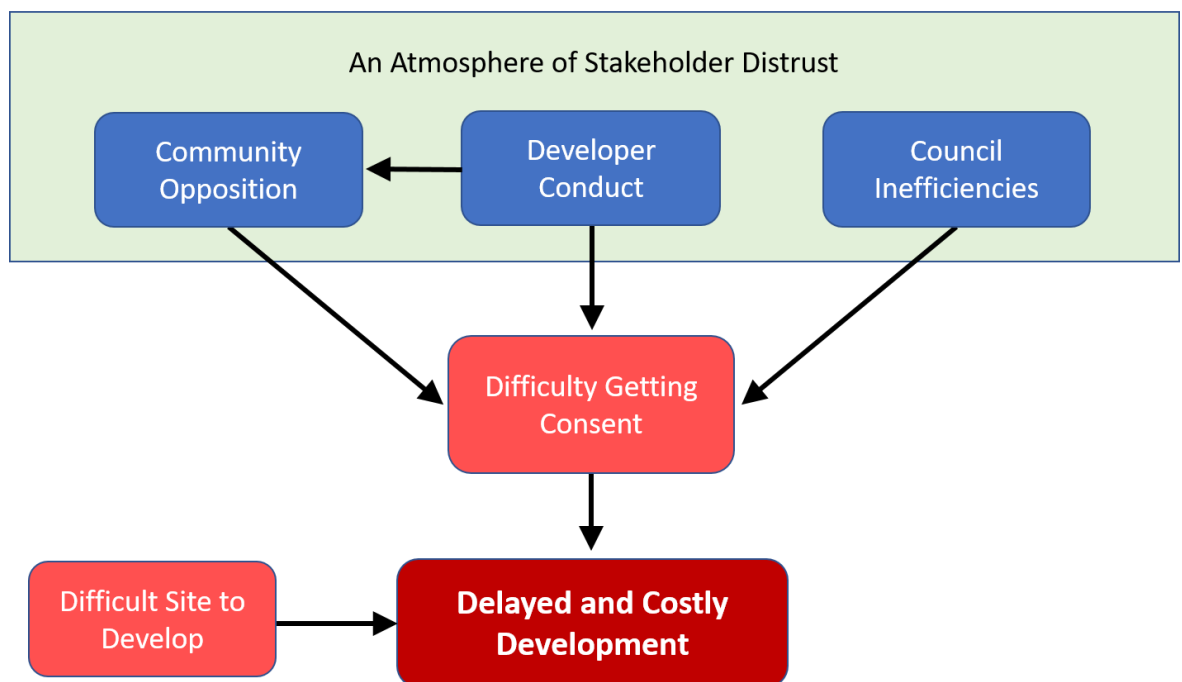


Figure 29. Factors that affected progress at the Powell Street development

<sup>54</sup> To reiterate, this group did not exist before the development was proposed and so was formed to fight this development.

### **8.5.1 Perceived Auckland Council inefficiency and Environment Court bias**

The Powell Street developer representative described Auckland Council's conduct in the development process as plagued by inconsistencies and suggested that "the council itself isn't a coordinated organisation" but rather "a whole lot of fiefdoms" each with their own interests. Distrust began during the consents process, when the developer sought permission to build 27 units; however, based on council planner recommendations they increased the units to 35, a decision which led to the Council declining consent after receiving recommendations from independent commissioners. Such mixed messages led the developer to suspect that councillors or other council staff had held up the development due to community discontent, rather than actual non-compliance issues. At the Environment Court, the judge sided with the developer, yet after reapplying, consent was again declined, this time due to design concerns (even though they had followed the Council's Urban Design Panel design recommendations). The developer again went to the Environment Court:

We absolutely annihilated them the second time round to the extent that the judge wanted to use it as a test case ... So basically, the Environment Court issued our resource consent, not the council ... It was just a classic example of council completely ballsing up.<sup>55</sup>

While consent to develop was eventually attained, it had cost the developer \$650,000–\$700,000 to get a resource consent, which they claimed destroyed the economics of development at that site. They were particularly angry because they perceived the Council were unaccountable for their actions:

We can't go sue the council for incompetence; you can't do that, you just got to wear it on the chin. So it's like a one-way system, we've just got to go "thank you for the consent" and move on. "You've just cost us an extra \$300,000 – how about we sue you for cost, for all of the environment court costs." You can't do that; it's not the done thing so you just basically lump it and move on.

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<sup>55</sup> After the second Environment Court appearance the judge suggested using this development as a test-case to improve the process; however, the developer did not want to because they believed it would only create further delays.

This situation highlighted the challenge faced by smaller developers, who unlike larger players in the market may be unable to absorb such extra costs. The unpredictability of gaining resource consent made the developer representative hesitant to develop in Auckland again:

Imagine, we're half a million bucks in and we haven't got a consent yet, and you're trying to judge whether or not the law is going to fall on your side or their side ... it makes it a very risky process. We probably won't do another development. It's seriously not worth it ... It is a horrible process.

This experience instilled a strong sense of distrust in Auckland Council and their planning processes: "The council was useless, you can't rely on the council to manage that process, they simply can't, they're incapable of managing that process, so we had to go to court." In particular, the developer representative singled out the political side of the Council as having "no spine" in the face of community pressure. This criticism contrasted with their praise of council planners: "They're a fantastic bunch of people, and very design led and have got great ideas. They've got a vision for the future of the city." However, while admiring the Council planners, the developer representative also believed their efforts and vision of a more compact Auckland to be compromised by bureaucracy and politics.

The same events were perceived differently by the PHRA, in particular, the dynamic between independent commissioners and the Environment Court. Concerned with density, design and transport aspects of the proposal, the PHRA was initially satisfied that through the independent commissioners their concerns were heard; however, when the decision was referred to the Environment Court, this belief changed:

It unravelled when they appealed, and it went to the court you see. It is quite a different sort of forum of judgement at the appeal court than the commissioners ... The commissioners were really ... we thought evaluating the value and the qualities; amenity values and all those

things, whereas the appeal [environment] court was really just looking at the book (PHRA member).

This criticism highlights a conflict between subjective and objective positions, with the PHRA holding concerns based on values and perceived liveability, while the developer was focused on meeting specific regulatory requirements. The PHRA also accused Environment Court officials of being “utterly biased” and having an “agenda”. This account again was in contrast to that of the developer representative, who praised the Environment Court for its pragmatism, objectivity and lack of emotion in the face of considerable community exaggeration and misinformation.

Offering a more tempered analysis of what happened at Powell Street, the Auckland Council consents representative acknowledged that while the consent process was drawn out and overly litigious, they rejected the idea of conflicting agendas within the Council and biases on the part of any stakeholders. Responding to developer suggestions that the Council is disjointed and contradictory, they emphasised their (planning) independence within the wider council organisation:

We always maintain our separation ... we always see ourselves just purely as a consenting team, and we're not really part of council. We operate a function of council but for us whatever goes on with council goes on with council, and we have to still follow the RMA.

While acknowledging their independence, the consents representative was surprised by the consent ruling, calling it “left-field”, stating that it had actually led to an internal debate that revealed uncertainty from team leaders about the best way forward. This uncertainty suggests that decision-making in the Council can be unpredictable, even according to the consents representative: “Every resource consent is a gamble, you put your best foot forward, and hopefully that's enough. But sometimes you get a difference of opinion ...”

One conclusion that can be drawn from this case is the importance of clarity in expectation, and confidence that outcomes should be predictable if expectations are

met. A corresponding benefit would likely be greater institutional trust in the planning system and those administering it.

### **8.5.2 Perceived unconstructive developer conduct**

The conduct of the developer was also called into question in this development process, with the PHRA particularly critical of their conduct in relation to local residents before and during construction.<sup>56</sup> The PHRA believed their relationship with the developer was combative from the outset, and while they acknowledged some responsibility due to their opposition, they strongly blamed developer behaviour. According to one PHRA member, just belonging to the PHRA initiated communication avoidance:

If you were known to belong to the PHRA, then they stopped bothering to communicate with you ... “Oh, you are with them”. Hang-up! It would have been nice to be able to communicate directly with someone that would be willing rather than protective or defensive.

Providing an alternative perspective, the consents representative thought the developer was well-engaged and entered into discussions in the manner expected of them.

From the PHRA perspective, there was also a lack of respect shown towards residents by development staff. In addition to being dismissive with respect to information provision and communication, instances of trespassing and property damage were outlined:

We have had workers walk onto our property with no ‘by your leave’ or anything like, they came to put a safety fence up, and they just walked down and helped themselves to some

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<sup>56</sup> It is important to note that the developer was not involved directly in much of the development process with many responsibilities contracted out. Subsequently, much of the criticism was not directed at the developer personally but rather at the people they employed, most noticeably the development consultant who was responsible for community engagement and the construction project managers.

bricks to stabilise the fence. But they are not at all polite; they don't come and say "excuse me can I do some work on your property", they just wander down.

Not only have they damaged the fence but they've actually got the piping, and they've put it all the way along my fence, and nobody has asked me ... They are also storing things on my section. There's been no contact of any kind, and one of my trees has been killed because a very early contractor chopped the trunk to get down the driveway.

Such instances further soured an already acrimonious relationship. While the developer was not the direct perpetrator of these actions, their apparent hands-off approach may have resulted in contractors taking liberties during construction.

### **8.5.3 Community opposition to the development**

There was considerable opposition to the development from local residents, mostly through the PHRA. While ultimately unsuccessful, PHRA members thought their actions did result in a better-quality development outcome, for incoming and neighbouring residents alike. Opposition appeared to be varied in its underpinning. For some residents, smaller and higher-density housing was perceived to be inferior (both in quality and quality-of-life) to the detached housing that typified the existing Powell Street environment and so was not welcomed. For two PHRA members the idea was totally unacceptable:

I don't want to look at a concrete jungle; I don't care about anyone else. Whether there are 36 other families down there or whatever, it's disgusting. And how it even got through, I still find that shocking.

There's going to be a lot more of these really intensive areas, and I think that it's something which is going to be very sad for the city ... Why would you want to live so close to other people if you had a choice?

This position, in particular, reflected a common narrative that intensified housing is something people may settle for rather than actively want to live in. A specific

concern was that it was considered unsuitable for children. PHRA members believed that “It’s not a family location”, “there is absolutely nowhere for children to play and they are not family homes”, and “it’s not creating a safe environment”. This reflected the findings of Dixon and Dupuis (2003), whose research in Auckland also found people to believe medium-density housing was a poor option for children. At various times during the two focus groups, PHRA members reiterated that their opposition was mostly out of concern for those who would live in the development: “So it wasn’t just a gut reaction even, a NIMBY sort of reaction. We looked at it and thought even for the sake of the people who are going to be living there; there are just not good qualities about it.” The authenticity of this concern was questioned by the developer representative.

The other main reason given by the PHRA for opposing the development was the loss of amenities. According to one resident, “I think it is resisted here because that is why people came here. I chose this house because it had space and greenery around it. I would have chosen a different house otherwise”. Another PHRA member shared a similar sentiment: “When I bought my house, I was under the impression that there was a reserve down there and I imagined that it would always stay green because it was a reserve ... I didn’t even know how gorgeous it was until it was too late.” The final part of this statement is telling, for it confirmed the developer representative’s belief that the site was not as well-used as the local community claimed. This view is backed up by the feedback from the consents representative: “The community didn’t use it despite what they say”; the place attachment related to this site was for many latent. This contributed to the developer’s distrust of the local community, believing their opposition to be disingenuous, exaggerated and underpinned by misinformation.

According to the developer representative, examples of misinformation (and misguided assumptions) circulating amongst residents included a belief that higher-density housing would lower existing house prices and that much of the development would be social housing. Both of these were also mentioned by PHRA members and appeared to contribute to their opposition to the development:

Sarah<sup>57</sup> said to me on Sunday that she has a fairly strong feeling that the housing corporation will be buying some of those places and putting tenants in.

I'm suspecting that it may, in fact, deteriorate my property value. I haven't tested that, I really don't want to think too much, but I suspect it may do, so that is a direct impact as well.

While the developer representative acknowledged the validity and role of opposition based on facts, their frustration was because they thought that opposition was not evidence-based. Another assumption highlighted by the developer representative was that the higher-density character of this development would lead to ghettoisation:

Some people when they used to come to the meetings here were also concerned about the effects on the house prices on the street and the concern that it would be low standard housing with tenants and would, in essence, be a ghetto type scenario.

This clearly frustrated the developer representative: "On day one we said we're going to develop a mid to high-end product to try and get owner-occupiers in there ... they didn't hear that at all. Basically translated, what they heard was we're putting housing corp. in there." This frustration was compounded by resident assumptions that the development would 'drag down' the neighbourhood: "Isn't that ironic? When all along we've been trying to lift things. They are completely blind to it, completely and utterly blind to it!" For the consents representative, the problem was clear: "They [the PHRA] don't believe the evidence that is in front of them."

The developer representative also identified community engagement as highly difficult, claiming to have encountered significant NIMBY behaviour, saying that from the outset they "came straight up against a brick wall and massive resistance", with local residents unwilling to deviate from often unfounded assumptions. They believed that the situation was exacerbated by the often emotional nature of discussions with local residents: "I've always been open to having an objective

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<sup>57</sup> Pseudonym.

debate, always been open to it, [however], you turn up and it just goes emotional in two seconds flat. It's the way it is."

In a more empathetic turn, the developer representative also suggested that NIMBY behaviour is unavoidable: "The reality is in any intensification when you're doing like an integrated housing development inside an existing community, you're always going to get the NIMBYs." This belief of inevitability suggests that NIMBYism is not necessarily negative behaviour but an expression of protective human nature that planners and developers must factor in when "dealing with people's lives, [and] their houses" in a setting where "everyone is driven by self-interest". Sounding almost defeatist in their account of community interactions, the developer representative believed that for suburban brownfield developments such as this, "you cannot sit down and have a cup of tea and agree on something, it's not like that. It's an acrimonious battle, and I don't think there's any way you'll ever change that".

In a frank admission one PHRA member acknowledged that their actions may, in fact, represent NIMBY behaviour: "I wouldn't want three stories next to me and yet I am saying I am pro-intensification because I think it is needed, but I am being very much a NIMBY in that way as I don't want it next to me." This statement does not suggest irrational or misinformed thinking on their behalf, but rather a considered rejection of a housing type that they believe may be necessary in the wider context but will not easily be accepted in lower-density neighbourhoods. In contrast to the developer representative's accusations of irrational opposition, the consents representative thought the PHRA, despite some inaccuracies, were overall well-organised and well-informed:

They had an architect to comment on the development, and they got legal representation. They were making informed and rational decisions on things, and they discussed it as a community and put it forward as one voice which is great.

This acknowledgement differs significantly to what the developer representative and PHRA members said, revealing a point in difference when interpreting the same

situation. Auckland Council corroboration does suggest the developer accusations of unconstructive and emotional community participation could be exaggerated. At the same time, the Auckland Council consents representative had little issue with NIMBY behaviour from the PHRA: “It’s not a bad thing to be a NIMBY; they are just exercising their democratic rights which are absolutely fine.” The caveat they presented was that a community’s position has to be informed and well-considered – criteria which they (but not the developer) believed the PHRA met.

Because the development was planned within an established neighbourhood, the developer expected some opposition. Understood as a microcosm within a wider intensification narrative, the Powell Street example may highlight potentially common challenges associated with infill suburban development. At the same time, the sometimes-inconsistent accounts and perceptions surrounding the problematic Powell Street development process highlight the difficulty in interpreting processes in a context of diverse views and multiple truths.

#### **8.5.4 Stakeholder reflections after the fact**

This section outlines stakeholder reflections on development after completion, including impressions of the finished development and whether opposition was really justified. Attention is also given to positive outcomes, including ‘silver linings’ which resulted from the development whereby trust appears to have made a positive difference.

From the post-construction and occupation PHRA focus group, a common feeling was that the development exceeded their expectations and was not the poor-quality outcome they feared (or assumed) it would be:

It is not as bad as I expected that it would be.

I thought they are going to be darker and colder than they are ... it is a better living situation than I expected.

I think it is a little bit better than I expected, in terms of visual appearance ... all in all the fears that we all talked about, the traffic jams at the head of the road, while they may well be there, I haven't experienced them.

Our fear of it being like a ghetto has not happened.

While such statements could be understood as confirming the developer representative's assertions of misinformation and exaggerated assumptions, PHRA members maintained that their original concerns were valid, for at that time the outcome was uncertain. Furthermore, some PHRA members claimed the 'better than expected' outcome was attributed, at least in part, to their efforts, as they "kept the developer on his toes" and ensured a sub-standard development could not be constructed.

When reflecting on their opposition to the development, PHRA members had mixed feelings. For some there was a defeatist response, that regardless of what they said or did, the outcome was predictable: "Basically it's just the old story. Somebody is going in, making some money and bugger everyone else, and that's how it is really", and "the lesson I have learned from this is that we were going to lose. End of story." Others stated that although their opposition was mostly unsuccessful, it was important that they tried, for example:

It is good to have a feeling that you are participating in something, even if you don't get what you want at the end of it. It is a satisfying feeling. I am very aware that I am accepting this because I have felt we did what we could and we didn't just sit around doing nothing.

This statement suggests that, despite the outcome, there existed some degree of institutional trust in the planning process. Trust was also evident from the buyers of the townhouses towards the developer. Reflecting on the distrust evident in this development process, the consents representative believed that, "Trust was not totally missing here, it was present in trust of the purchasers of the developer". Incoming resident feedback highlighted that their trust and patience with the

developer was well-placed, as they displayed high levels of satisfaction after moving in, despite the delays and extra costs experienced.

PHRA members stated clearly that although they were unsuccessful in their resistance to the development, this in no way created a sense of ill-feeling towards those who had and would later move into the new development.

## **8.6 The Challenge of Improving Democratic Processes and Improving Trust**

This final section takes a more optimistic stance and examines what, based on stakeholder interview feedback, can and should be done to address the perceived democratic deficit in Auckland's intensification and planning process. The first point is to acknowledge that, given the nature of the work, some degree of conflict will always exist. Therefore the area for improvement is not to remove all conflict and tension, but to improve perceptions of fairness in public engagement and decision making. For this to happen, the onus is not just on Auckland Council to operate differently, but also Auckland residents and developers.

Community interest group and resident association representatives frequently talked about the need for more meaningful public consultation in the planning process. A big part of this was for greater bottom-up / local planning, instead of what they perceived to be largely top-down planning as undertaken by Auckland Council to date. Both proponents of bottom-up / local planning, the Auckland 2040 representative said, "Bottom-up is all about doing the necessary studies at the grassroots level to make good decisions further up ... Auckland has done top-down", and the Character Coalition representative said, "The core things that the Character Coalition are about are residents or citizens' rights to determine their own space ... so what drives me is the democratic principle". However, while the Auckland Council representatives generally supported the idea of greater local planning, they also expressed reticence about allowing too much:

What we experienced with the Unitary Plan, things can come from the bottom up, but that is not necessarily a good thing for the greater good ... If we left that to all the bottom-up stuff, certain parts of Auckland would have accommodated a lot of the future growth, other parts of Auckland wouldn't have a bar of it ... nothing. And that creates a really unfair society, and so to some extent, there needs to be at that sense, top-down planning that looks at the greater good of everybody.

This position suggests that too much bottom-up / local planning will promote inequitable outcomes throughout the city. The references to the Unitary Plan highlight the strong push-back the Council received from relatively affluent (and central) suburbs whose residents did not want change (intensification).

As part of more local level planning, community interest group representatives also asserted that frequently highlighted the process of meaningful consultation is more important than the development outcomes. For example:

It has to be a council decision in the end, and some of the decisions may not be popular with certain people, but at least if you have aired the community's concerns, you're going to get a certain degree of buy-in from the community, whereas this present plan there is no buy-in (Auckland 2040 representative).

The process is more important than even the outcome and to gain the trust, it would have to be a process that people felt genuinely able to take part in ... [it is important] "people don't feel disempowered (Character Coalition representative).

The Auckland Council consents representative largely agreed with this point and acknowledged that the Council would benefit from engaging with the public earlier in the development process (in relation to specific developments):

I think we could save, as a council or any consent authority will save so much time by getting people involved in the consent process ... Of course, you're going to get a handful of

people that are still unhappy at the outcome, but you've given them the right to have their say. Excluding people doesn't really help us in the long run.

However, from a wider policy, not development-specific context, claims of a democratic deficit and poor consultation were denied by the Auckland Council policy representative who stated that, "the RMA has actually been set up to allow for a democratic engagement process, so the way it has been set up is for the community to have an opportunity to voice their issues and concerns and they must be considered". Such divergent interpretations suggest subjectivity about what is appropriate and meaningful in the planning process, and that it differs significantly amongst stakeholders.

Focusing on institutional trust in the planning process, interview feedback revealed not only a lack of trust in Auckland Council, but also community interest groups and resident associations. The result of this distrust was that if community groups desire more meaningful engagement, they need to prove that they can be trusted to participate in a constructive manner. The criticised binary relationship between emotional and factual rational input (Kearns & Collins, 2012) was again cited as an issue to overcome: "It's just making informed decisions I think and people doing it on a rational basis, taking the emotion out of it which is difficult for NIMBYs" (Auckland Council consents representative). There were also claims made that some members of the public act dishonestly in the planning process and this is why Council is reticent about engaging with them at times.

A lack of representativeness in public consultation was also highlighted as another challenge that needs to be addressed, for this not only provides a skewed view of community concerns / priorities but can characterise power imbalances as well (Bedford, 2002; Ellis, 2004; Bond & Thompson-Fawcett, 2008; Christensen, 2015; Scalley & Tighe, 2015). This was acknowledged by many interviewees as problematic. According to the Auckland Council elected representative:

We need as a council to listen to a much wider range of voices. We need to stop only listening to the voices that are well resourced, that are the same voices that we have always listened to ... we need to be talking to the people for who we are planning this city, the people who will be paying rates for the next 50 years.

The challenge, as noted by several interviewees, however, is how to make this a reality. In particular, the importance of getting young people and renters engaged in planning processes was highlighted by some. The lack of discussion about representativeness beyond age was a notable absence in these interviews, with scant mention of ethnic or socioeconomic representativeness being an issue needing to be addressed. This was similarly reflected in media coverage that tended to focus on the generational divide.

Positive reinforcement and education were also cited as a way to improve public trust in the planning process and acceptance of intensification outside the CBD. According to one PHRA member, “to improve the relationship, some education as a group for understanding between each could be helpful. Because to deal with this level of mistrust it is going to get in the way of everything between council and communities”. Part of the solution outlined by Auckland Council representatives is to change the way intensification is discussed:

So local government has to be very careful about how we talk about things, and I don't know if we always talk in the way people get what you are talking about, so it is not about trying to pull the wool over people's faces, they understand things will change, but it doesn't sound as scary because it is more about them choosing rather than something being forced on them (policy representative).

The biggest challenge has been we've not sold the story well ... so I think we've got that wrong and the thing that has probably been the biggest challenge is people's lack of understanding and fear of urban intensification (elected representative).

Alongside this, the policy representative believed the public need to change their thinking about the development industry, and in particular developers themselves:

I think the challenge is to convince people that developers aren't necessarily really evil people ... so we do have a little bit of a mindset with some communities that developers are evil people who are going to build monstrosities and move away, and yes we did have some examples of that in the past but the global downturn has certainly weeded out the bad ones.

Many interviewees believed public concern would decrease as intensification outcomes become more visible. This is a shift predicated on the delivery of high-quality outcomes that are not reminiscent of many maligned developments in the past. Overcoming public opposition or inertia this way was considered the most likely to succeed by the Auckland Council policy representative: "That to me is just about how we can get good examples in neighbourhoods and that we can point to and say that these are more recent ones, look at how they have been designed and how they fit into the neighbourhood."

## **8.7 Conclusion**

A major challenge for Auckland Council is to balance the sense of urgency in delivering houses quickly and cheaply with fostering public inclusion and meaningful participation in the planning process. Reflecting findings from the earlier media snapshot analysis, as well as this chapter's interview data, in the intensification arena the Council is criticised for both not listening enough and for listening to community concerns too much. This paradox highlights the subjective nature of urban development, where proposed changes to the physical environment invoke a range of differing opinions and reactions. It also reflects the fact that multiple knowledges exist in relation to the same process, that 'truth' as understood by stakeholders differs considerably. In line with the position of Wagner and Hayes (2005), these knowledges appear to be constructed through interactions between members of each stakeholder group and serve to reinforce selective value sets, priorities and

objectives related to intensification. Each of the three stakeholder groups was distrusted in different ways and for different reasons. Distrust in Auckland Council was often attributed to organisational inefficiencies and resistance to engage meaningfully with the public. Trust in the public was compromised by perceptions of NIMBYism and misinformed / misguided opposition, while developers were perceived to be arrogant and focused only on profit. These outcomes were evident at both local-development and city-wide policy scales.

Having identified distrust at the urban policy and site-specific levels, it is worth discussing the veracity of Tait's (2011) claim that trust in a planning system may be impossible due to competing interests each vying for their concerns to take precedence over those of others. While compelling, the absolutism of Tait's claim that essentially rejects even the possibility of trust in the planning system and those that promulgate it is too extreme. In Auckland's intensification process, distrust was clearly prevalent, yet it was not total, as trust was also identified and was found to play a key role in successful development outcomes. These findings, therefore, fit within Hardin's (1999) alternative claim that while 'total trust' is not possible, more realistic forms of 'critical' or 'limited' trust can and should be developed.

# CHAPTER NINE: Conclusions

This thesis seeks to address the question: *How is 'community' understood, valued, formed and protected by stakeholders in Auckland's intensification process?* This question yielded two objectives: first, to better understand the concept of community and the process of community formation in Auckland's intensification process; and second, to identify and analyse instances and reasons behind community-led opposition to this intensification. In the thesis, I have sought to challenge normative beliefs associated with community formation and community protectionism in New Zealand's residential planning system. Adopting a social constructionist approach, I revealed a diverse range of themes, interpretations and 'truths'. Given the subjective and sometimes ambiguous nature of key concepts, including 'community' and 'trust', this approach allowed me to interrogate these concepts and the links between them.

Chapters Two and Three explored key concepts, themes and arguments from existing academic literature sources. Chapter Two highlighted the diversity, and complexity of community as a construct. Three interpretations were outlined: a group of people bound by some form of commonality; a personal feeling of belonging in relation to other people; and a product with utility value that people consume for their benefit. I also explored factors contributing to community formation outcomes. Inspired by Soja's (1996) 'Dialectics of Being', these included: *physical factors* (e.g. neighbourhood, building design, and density); *social factors* (e.g. shared interests, values, and trust); and *temporal factors* (e.g. shared histories and future objectives). These factors were then discussed in the context of community formation initiated by a developer. Chapter Three explored the concept of trust and its importance in the planning and development industries. Variations between types of trust were examined, for example, differences between interpersonal and institutional trust, and affect-based / cognitive-based trust. Distrust in planning was also explored, with an emphasis on place and community-protectionism and NIMBY behaviour.

Chapter Four provided the contextual and methodological basis for the primary research. Chapter Four focused on the development of Auckland from a 19<sup>th</sup>-Century colonial outpost to a large and sprawling 21<sup>st</sup>-Century colonial city. Recent challenges related to housing were also outlined, including Auckland's housing crisis, the creation of the Auckland 'SuperCity' and the development of Auckland Council's Unitary Plan, an aspirational and contentious blueprint for future residential intensification. This chapter also provided a snapshot of media coverage pertaining to Auckland housing, intensification and the development of the Unitary Plan. Included were common narratives associated with the positions and actions of stakeholder groups (positively and negatively) in the intensification process. These positions and actions included distrust of, and poor regard for, Auckland Council, home-owners (baby-boomers) and developers, while expressing sympathy for young people and renters who were often identified as victims in the housing market.

Chapter Five outlined the project's theoretical framework – a social constructionist epistemological and ontological approach incorporating three distinct lenses (social, spatial and temporal). Also presented was the study design, including an introduction to the case-study developments (Hobsonville Point, the Turing Building and the Powell Street townhouses) and key informants involved in Auckland's intensification process. I then explained my research methods, outlining the combination of semi-structured interviews and focus groups, including longitudinal elements where this was possible or beneficial. Finally, the thematic analysis process was outlined.

Chapters Six, Seven and Eight reported on empirical findings. Chapter Six revisited the conceptual ideas of community explored in Chapter Two, considering interviewees' perceptions and experiences. The diverse range of interpretations held by interviewees was discussed, as were the key factors believed to contribute to 'community' as understood by those interviewed. Chapter Seven examined community formation outcomes described by residents living within the case-study developments, and, in the case of the Powell Street, residents living adjacent to the new development. Findings revealed that community formation occurred differently at each development, with community outcomes differing in terms of both contributing factors and manifestation. Key factors found to contribute to this

included life-stage commonalities, a shared desire for a sense of community, physical design, amenities, and trust / distrust. Finally, Chapter Eight explored tensions in the intensification process, with a focus on community-led opposition to new development and tensions between (and within) Auckland Council, local communities and developers. Institutional distrust was identified as a problem in the intensification process, with distrust evident not only between (and within) stakeholder groups, but in the planning process itself. Outcomes and accusations of NIMBYism were also discussed, with findings suggesting that while NIMBY behaviour can be problematic for development-side stakeholders, the use of the term is unconstructive and can be counter-productive to long-term intensification objectives. Findings also indicated that local opposition sometimes stems from perceptions of the planning process as undemocratic and biased towards developers. These concerns were explored most thoroughly in relation to the Powell Street townhouses, where opposition led to delays and additional costs to all parties involved.

This final chapter provides conclusions derived from the primary research and reflects on the findings in light of the reviewed literature and planning policy. As well as addressing the central research question, this chapter also seeks to draw conclusions, where possible, in relation to the secondary research questions:

- How has community formation taken place in relation to selected medium / high-density developments?
- What is, can, and should be the developer's role in creating community?
- What drives community-led resistance to intensification in Auckland?

The first section briefly draws conclusions about how community was interpreted by research participants, both stated directly by them and by inference. Following this, conclusions are drawn about the way different factors contribute to and / or influence community outcomes both within and in close proximity to the case-study developments. The second section digs deeper into findings related to the commodification of community as it was identified throughout this study. In particular, findings indicate this commodification process is an important factor underpinning new-build master-planned developments for middle-high socio-

economic segments of the housing market. Conclusions are drawn about why this process is taking place, and associated benefits / disbenefits. The final section reflects on different forms of opposition identified in this study, with special attention given to distrust in the planning system and how it is compromising the objectives of all stakeholders. Within this discussion, conclusions are made about instances and accusations of NIMBY behaviour in Auckland's intensification process, with attention given to why it exists, how it affects residential development and inherent problems associated with the label NIMBY itself. The chapter finishes by outlining potential future research that could be undertaken in light of this study's findings.

Before drawing my conclusions, I briefly outline the contributions and limitations of this research, including a short evaluation of the theoretical approach taken.

## **9.1 Contributions and Limitations of this Research**

At the outset, I wanted this research to not only add to academic knowledge but also to make a practical contribution to the housing and urban development sector. I believe the findings and conclusions drawn meet these criteria. Three key contributions of this research are:

1. An understanding of the motivations of people moving into higher-density housing in what is traditionally a low-density suburban city. By undertaking this research longitudinally, I was able to determine the degree to which new residents' expectations of higher density housing were met, or in some cases exceeded, as well as trace a community's concerns about a new development planned for and then constructed in their midst.
2. Insights into the way people interpret, value and desire community in current urban settings. In particular, conclusions regarding the commodification of community suggest that certain (higher socio-economic) groups in society treat community as a product that can be bought and consumed for specific benefits. This also challenged the common belief that individualism and community are contrasting outcomes, that rational self-interest can also be a driver for community formation.

3. The importance of institutional trust in the planning process, particularly when disrupting (higher-density) typologies are planned for construction within existing neighbourhoods. Distrust was evident between Auckland Council, developers and existing residents / community groups, and findings indicated that this distrust was a factor underpinning some groups' opposition to intensification.

This research also experienced some limitations, including the lack of socio-economic diversity in the case studies (the originally chosen Springpark development was affordable relative to Hobsonville Point and the Turing Building); difficulty at times in comparing findings between developments due to contextual differences between them (e.g. size, typology, price points, location); the inability to effectively undertake longitudinal research at all sites; and the inability to interview the numbers of residents desired, due to factors including a reliance on external cooperation and construction delays.

## **9.2 The Effectiveness of My Theoretical Approach**

It is worth briefly reflecting on the theoretical approach adopted for this study. To recap briefly, a 'dual' social constructionist epistemology was chosen to guide this research, in conjunction with a triple ontological perspective.

This 'dual' social constructionism was chosen because it enables the distinctions and interconnections between objective reality (tangible and observable) and subjective realities to be taken into account when investigating the lived experience of, in this instance, people who are developing, regulating, living in and resisting urban intensification. Given the focus on specific residential developments, being able to make this distinction was useful, although the boundaries between physical (objective) and subjective realities were often blurred, as illustrated in the discussion of place attachment and character protection. Central to this approach was that, when habitualised, socially constructed ideas become realities for certain people or groups in society. Such habitualised realities were evident in this study, such as beliefs that low-density housing is superior to higher-density alternatives – the 'Kiwi way' – which are now being challenged by the emergence of new realities.

This approach was strengthened by the incorporation of Soja's (1996) 'Trialectics of Being', an ontological model that identifies all phenomena as having of social, spatial and temporal components. As well as complementing social constructionism's recognition of multiple 'truths' and 'knowledges', this approach helped the analysis of findings, including those related to sense of community, place attachment, community formation and community protectionism. For example, opposition to development: spatially, it is rooted in localism with community resistance from people proximate to an undesirable development; socially, it consists of a group of individuals coming together out of shared concern for their community and / or neighbourhoods; and temporally, with residents preferring past and present land uses and fearing how new developments might change their neighbourhood.

The depth of analysis required for thematic analysis having adopted a social constructionist approach was challenging. This challenge was compounded by the ontological method of interpreting all data through social, spatial and temporal lenses. However, the robustness of this approach allowed me to identify a range of findings with multiple interpretations related to community, trust and residential intensification, such as NIMBYism and place attachment / protectionism.

While I do not suggest the theoretical framework of this thesis is unique or ground-breaking, the adoption of a triple-lens ontology alongside the dual social constructionist epistemology helped ensure that analysis incorporated the diversity of influences and interpretations.

### **9.3 Community in Auckland is Diverse, Evolving and Increasingly**

#### **Commodified**

I identified three different, yet often overlapping interpretations of 'community' (Figure 30 below): a group of people who share some form of commonality; a feeling of belonging in relation to others; and a product that people seek out (join) and consume (participate in) for benefits.

Commonality between people	A feeling in relation to others	A product that can be bought and sold
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Groups formed by shared interest or circumstance</li> <li>• <b>Observable and measurable</b></li> <li>• <b>Clear in-group / out-group dynamic</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One's 'sense of community' and belonging</li> <li>• <b>Affective and emotional in nature</b></li> <li>• <b>Personal and highly subjective</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A consumable product with desirable benefits</li> <li>• <b>Deliberate and idealised</b></li> <li>• <b>Motivation for buyers off the plan</b></li> </ul>

**Figure 30. Interpretations of 'community' identified in this research**

Based on interview data, the most common interpretation of community was that it is simply a set of *people with something in common*. This reflected a common understanding in the academic literature that collectivism occurs due to commonality (Howarth & Andreouli, 2015; Stein & Harper, 2012; Syme et al., 2005; Gans, 1961; Panzetta, 1971; Talen, 2002). The types of commonality most frequently observed were: affinity based around life stage (e.g. empty-nesters in the Turing Building or young families in the Powell Street townhouses and at Hobsonville Point); community-mindedness (e.g. many Hobsonville residents actively pursuing social interaction with neighbours); a shared agenda or objective (e.g. members of the Powell Himikera Residents Association in opposition to development); and place attachment (e.g. shared value of a specific neighbourhood / amenity). Community outcomes identified exhibited clear demarcations between in-group (with commonality) and out-group members, making them easy to distinguish amongst wider population groups.

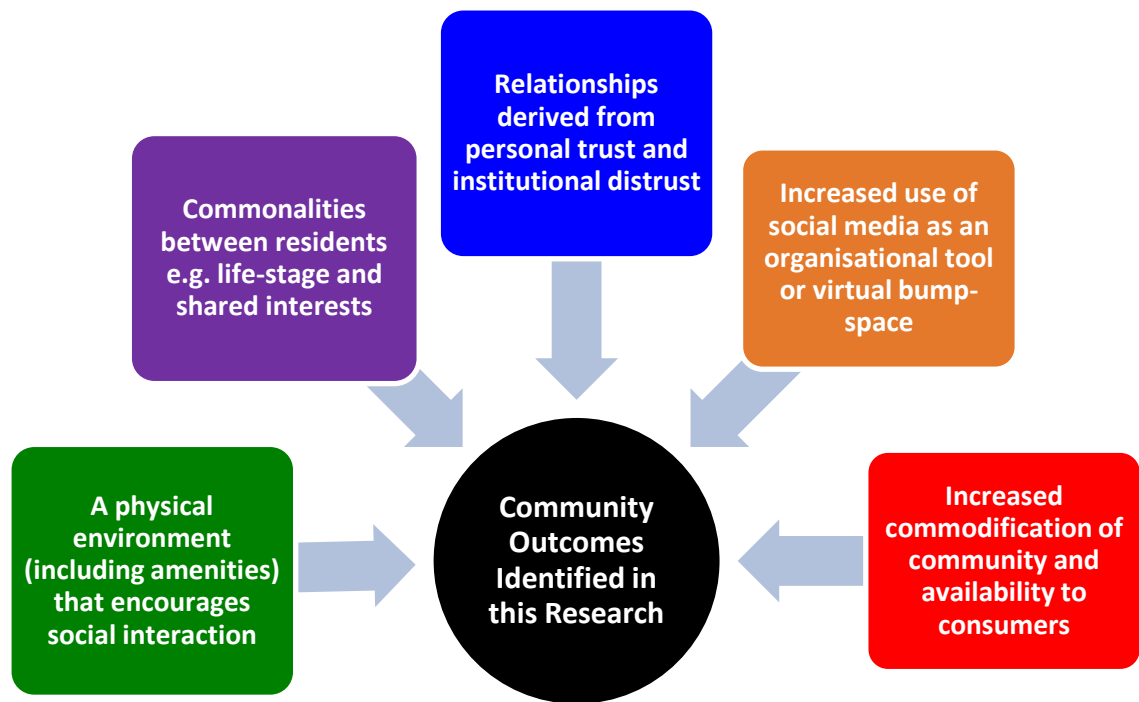
Although often implied by interviewees through references to a 'sense of community', the second interpretation of community was *a feeling of belonging in relation to others*. Unlike examples of community resulting from commonalities, this subjective interpretation was more difficult to discern. In fact, such feelings were often linked to the commonalities outlined above, for example, the sense of community some residents felt due to the proximity and prevalence of residents of a similar life-stage, or a sense of belonging to a group with mutual concerns related

to intensification in existing neighbourhoods. Referring back to McMillan and Chavis' (1986) theoretical basis for 'sense of community', group membership, fulfilment of needs and a shared emotional connection all contributed to this community outcome, whereas the influence individuals have within their community (and the community has on them) was less evident.

The final interpretation was community as *a product or resource that can be experienced by members for specific benefits*, such as social capital or sense of community. Underpinning this interpretation is intentionality on the part of actors and utility value in community outcomes. The value and influence of utility in the community context have been varied in the past. Etzioni (1996) says that community is characterised by utility, as well as normative and coercive relationships. In keeping with Opit and Kearns' (2014) findings, Hobsonville Point's community product appeared highly idealised (almost utopian in its advertising) and shored up by promises of a better life due to benefits derived from physical and social environments created by the developer.

#### **9.4 Key Factors that Contributed to Identified Community Outcomes**

As outlined in Figure 31 (below), this study identified a diverse range of factors contributing to community outcomes.



**Figure 31. Key factors contributing to community formation outcomes as observed in this study**

Reflecting my ontological position, these factors all had physical, social and temporal elements, supporting my initial conjecture that community formation requires physical, social and temporal factors to varying degrees.

#### **9.4.1 The influence of location, the physical environment, design and amenities on community outcomes**

This first factor focuses specifically on community outcomes within and in relation to the three case-study developments of Hobsonville Point, the Turing Building and the Powell Street townhouses. Physical influences on the community, both natural and constructed, were evident at each development. As highlighted in Chapter Two, some scholars argue against physical determinism (Wellman, 1979; Black & Hughes, 2001; Moss & Grunkmeyer, 2010), arguing that ‘community’ is now a post-propinquity construct, characterised by a delocalisation of social life and manifesting in ‘communities of interest’. In the age of the internet and growing individualism, this is a compelling argument; however, the findings of this study do not support this

assertion, where even communities based on shared interests are frequently rooted in place, or the interest itself is spatial in nature, such as community through place protectionism amongst existing Powell Street residents. Instead, community outcomes identified in this research revealed communities of interest that were highly localised, and that spatial factors often underpinned much of the social interaction between members. In line with scholars including Talen (2002) and Tayebi (2013), I found that physical influences on community formation were evident on a spectrum between strong and weak (but seldom had no influence at all). The ways in which physical and design factors contributed to community outcomes in the three case studies are outlined in Table 4 below.

<b>DEVELOPMENT</b>	<b>PHYSICAL/DESIGN FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO COMMUNITY</b>
Hobsonville Point	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The close proximity between residents (density)</li> <li>- Quality walking infrastructure / pedestrian environment</li> <li>- Amenities including schools, playground and cafés</li> <li>- Natural, architectural and heritage attributes contributing to a sense of place</li> </ul>
The Turing Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The close proximity between residents (density)</li> <li>- Contained living and separation from the street</li> <li>- Shared rooftop lounge as a focal point for social interaction</li> </ul>
Powell Street Townhouses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The close proximity between residents (density)</li> <li>- Contained living and separation from the street</li> </ul>

At all developments, density and proximity to neighbours contributed to the residents' sense of community. However, density and proximity were influential in conjunction with other factors including shared amenities / spaces and, in the cases

of Powell Street and the Turing Building, demarcation and relative isolation from the surrounding neighbourhood.

At the Turing Building and Powell Street, physical / spatial influences on community outcomes were comparable due to both developments consisting of only a small number of dwellings (27–35 units) and both being located on brownfield sites within existing neighbourhoods. This locational context provided an opportunity to determine whether community outcomes existed not only within the new development but between these new residents and residents already living in the surrounding neighbourhood. Based on interview findings, at both locations, there was a burgeoning sense of community within the development; however, this sense of community did not include residents outside but living near the developments. This lack of integration led to an 'us and them' dynamic that was perceived negatively by new and existing residents alike.

In the Turing Building, the lack of resident / non-resident integration was largely attributed to the design of the building, as gated security and underground parking reduced opportunities for chance encounters with neighbours not living within the complex. In fact, when asked about interaction with neighbouring residents, some interviewees admitted they had not even considered the population outside the building in social or community terms. Evidence suggests that the isolation of Turing Building residents strengthened their internal-to-the-complex sense of community. This resulted in strong in-group / out-group dynamics (Allport, 1954) and high levels of bonding social capital (Putman, 2007). The high-quality shared (for residents) rooftop also contributed to the internalised sense of community within the building. This space was very popular amongst residents and was the focal point for much of their social interaction. While a positive outcome, this may have also contributed to the isolation from the surrounding neighbourhood. From the perspective of the developer, evidence suggests that the design of the development has been successful in terms of enabling community outcomes. At the same time, these outcomes were highly exclusionary and appeared to add little to the wider neighbourhood sense of community.

A comparable outcome occurred in the Powell Street development, where topography rather than design formed a barrier and diminished opportunities for serendipitous encounters between new and existing residents. Although existing residents said they were curious about the new development and those living within it, the gully location was offputting. This hesitance was exacerbated by a feeling among existing residents that they would not feel comfortable walking around what felt like a private space. The design of the development with houses forming a ring around a central space, a panopticon-like design, had the effect of making me feel like I was under surveillance. According to existing residents, those living in the new development rarely walked at street level; rather they drove in and out of the development, limiting any opportunity for chance encounters. Akin to the Turing Building, residents inside the development stated that a sense of community was forming, yet one which appears to be internal to the development with no outreach to the wider neighbourhood. Although it was not discussed explicitly with the new residents, evidence indicates that their separation from the street has provided a boundary and created a spatial commons that is helping to nurture a sense of community amongst them.

At Hobsonville Point, the design of the development fostered resident social interaction, and according to resident interviews has yielded positive community outcomes. Resident interviews highlighted the walkability of the development, both in terms of quality infrastructure and accessibility to key amenities, as a key factor contributing to the interaction between residents. The schools (including pre-school) were found to be focal points for those with children, highlighting a clear crossover between planning and commonalities (life-stage in this case) as factors influencing community formation. In fact, even people without children cited the schools as a strong component of the Hobsonville Point sense of community, giving it a friendly and family-focused feeling.

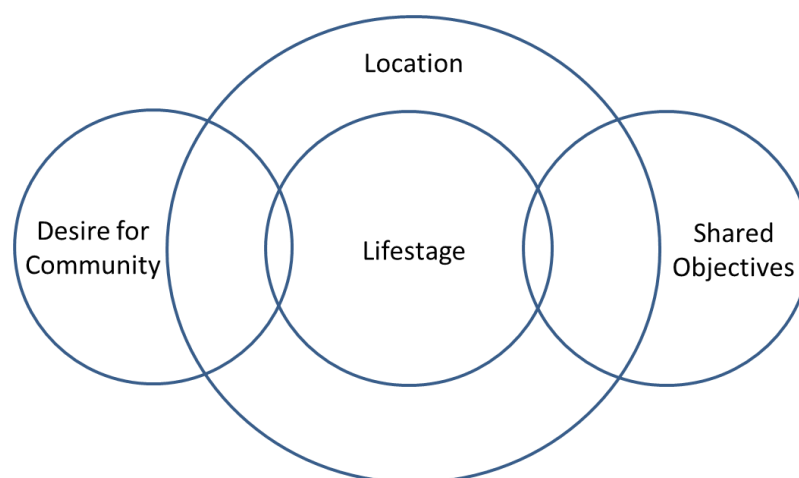
At all three developments, design features to encourage social interaction centred on relationships within the development rather than beyond. As a larger development on a greenfields site, there was more scope at Hobsonville Point, than at either the Turing Building or Powell Street, to plan and provide infrastructure for

community outcomes. I can conclude with confidence that careful master-planning of Hobsonville Point has contributed positively to community formation. The designs of Powell Street and the Turing Building also contributed to social interaction between residents. However, findings from the Turing Building and Powell Street suggest that greater thought could be given to a design that allows for better integration with the existing neighbourhood and better opportunities for wider community interaction.

Reflecting the physical determinist position of Jacobs (1961), neighbourhood / building design was found to be a strong factor influencing neighbourhood social interaction. However, it was just one of many influences and the degree to which it affected interaction differed depending on other factors, such as the characteristics of the people living in the development and their motivations for living there.

#### **9.4.2 Commonalities between people were central to social interaction**

Of all the factors contributing to community formation, commonalities between people were the most influential. Unlike physical / design factors, which were limited to specific geographic locations, communities of interest were found to have a wider focus (often pan-Auckland). Four commonalities contributed to community outcomes: location; life-stage; desire for community; and shared objectives. As shown in Figure 32 below, there is considerable overlap or interdependency between certain commonalities.



**Figure 32. Commonalities contributing to community outcomes (and overlaps and links)**

The first and simplest commonality was *location*, where people came together by virtue of living in the same building, street or neighbourhood. Representing the most spatialised type of commonality, this encouraged a relatively weak bond that in turn provided the context for more specific and intentional community outcomes to develop. Shared locations provided a common setting for locals to meet each other and, through this initial meeting, identify social or temporal commonalities (e.g. a desire for neighbourliness, or life-stage), which in turn led to further engagement and stronger community formation. Where individuals formed an attachment to aspects of their neighbourhood, their shared location could also be experienced as a shared attachment to place. This was most evident in Powell Street, with existing residents coming together in opposition to plans for the new development situated on a valued (to varying degrees) local greenspace.

A shared life-stage was an influential commonality underpinning social interaction at each development. At Powell Street, there were many young couples and families, who had chosen the development because of its relative affordability for first-home buyers, a deliberate objective of the developer. In the Turing Building, according to interviewees, a high proportion of residents were 'empty-nesters' who were either retired or planning for retirement by downsizing from larger suburban dwellings. For some people, proximity to services such as the hospital factored into this decision-making process. At Hobsonville Point, the scale and diversity of amenities, dwelling-types and price-points attracted people from a range of life-stages. However, interviews revealed a strong sense of community amongst families with children, owing largely to the early establishment of a preschool, primary school and secondary school in the development.<sup>58</sup>

A third commonality was a desire amongst residents to join and experience or develop a close sense of community with others in the development. This motivation was apparent amongst the many residents spoken to at Hobsonville Point and the Turing Building. At Hobsonville Point, some individuals cited the sense of community

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<sup>58</sup> Since this research was undertaken, a retirement village has also been completed, which would likely provide a stronger sense of community within the retired life-stage group.

(or potential for a sense of community) within the development as a major, if not key reason for deciding to move there.

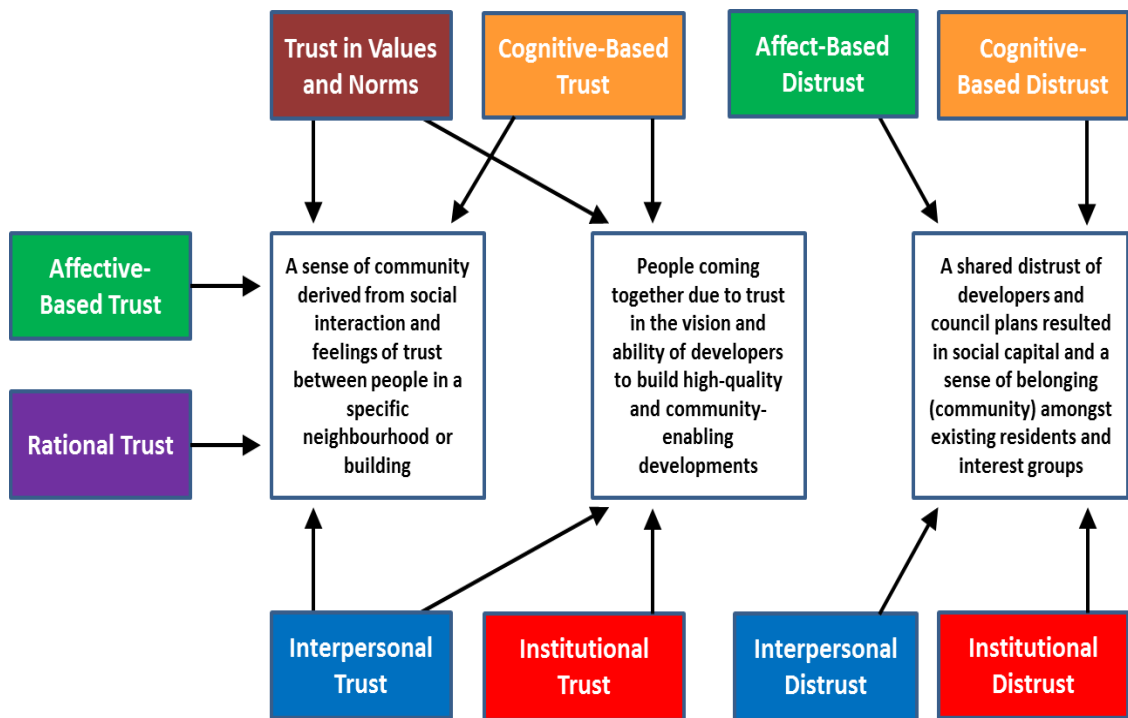
Finally, shared viewpoints on intensification, both development-specific and more widely in the policy and strategy setting, helped forge place-based social relations. This was most evident with residents living adjacent or close to the Powell Street development. Before the development was proposed, there was (according to residents) limited social interaction between people in their neighbourhood; however, after it was announced and throughout the planning process, shared opposition to the development (either in part or outright) created a bond between many residents. According to interviewees, while this sense of community weakened post-construction, a bond endured amongst some people, providing a silver lining to their opposition to the ultimately unsuccessful development. At a wider-scale, intensification, as proposed by Auckland Council in the development of the Unitary Plan, brought many interest groups together, uniting people in a common cause against the effects that higher-density housing may have on specific streets, neighbourhoods or suburbs, such as loss of character. A sense of place-based community was not as evident amongst proponents of intensification. Such groups have attributes more in keeping with the description of delocalised communities of interest, as discussed earlier, a phenomenon that would benefit from further research attention.

#### **9.4.3 Resident trust and distrust of intensification stakeholders and processes were both a uniting influence**

Trust and distrust of developers were both found to contribute to three key community outcomes (see Figure 33 below). Drawing on the conceptual thinking around trust of Tait (2011) and Kumar and Paddison (2010), these community outcomes were influenced by combinations of *rational trust*; *interpersonal trust*; *institutional trust*; and *a trust in values and norms* (Tait, 2011); and *affect-based trust* and *cognitive-based trust* (Kumar & Paddison, 2010), as outlined in Chapter Three.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> *Rational trust* is a utilitarian commodity that people use in a calculated and intentional way to achieve specific positive outcomes. *Interpersonal trust* is derived from personal contact and social relations with other individuals.



**Figure 33. How different types of trust contributed to particular community outcomes**

At Hobsonville Point, and to a degree the Turing Building, trust between residents contributed to the establishment of interpersonal relationships and a sense of community. Interviewee data showed that feelings of trust with others were built over time between residents in the development. This was attributed to commonalities between them (e.g. life-stage), or a mindset when they moved in to develop trusting relationships and through this establish or experience a sense of community.

Trust in the developer also contributed to community outcomes, albeit in a more circumstantial manner. At each development, residents trusted the developer, not only in terms of their competency and reliability to deliver the product as advertised but also in their community vision. For Hobsonville Point and Turing Building residents, trust in the developer was strengthened by the design approaches they

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*Institutional trust* is based on trust of institutions or abstract expert systems *Trust in values and norms* is based on the ideology of individuals and institutions and their place within social, discursive structures. *Affect-based trust* is tied closely to emotional bonds and relationships. *Cognition-based trust* which is centred on competence, responsibility, reliability and dependability.

took, where the quality of life and opportunities for social interaction were central components of the development plans. Whether this design approach was motivated by altruistic intent and / or commercial gain is hard to determine. Given the distrust often associated with the development industry, such positive consumer experiences suggest this developer approach could be a positive disruptor in the industry. Further research into developer motivations and behaviour in New Zealand's development industry could yield valuable information.

As the Powell Street case study illustrated, distrust is not necessarily a negative influence in the community formation process. Where it engenders a commonality between people, mutual distrust of someone or something can bring people together, in this case, to oppose higher-density housing within an existing low-density neighbourhood. In the Powell Street context, individuals who were previously only bound by proximity mobilised through a shared distrust of the developer to oppose the development. Their shared distrust and fear of change was a significant catalyst for their neighbourhood's sense of community.

#### **9.4.4 Community outcomes are strengthened by social media and the internet**

This study found social media to be an important tool for neighbourhood interaction and the creation and maintenance of place-based communities. At Hobsonville Point in particular, but also for new Powell Street residents and community-led interest (opposition) groups, Facebook operated as both a virtual bump-space for unplanned social interaction and also as a mechanism for organising more formalised or planned interactions. At Hobsonville Point, the residents' page was used by residents to promote and encourage a sense of community within the development, as evident from the frequent postings about community spirit and community safety. One potential conclusion is that these interactions represent a composite spatial / virtual community, where, although much interaction takes place online, it is also rooted in place and sometimes leads to face-to-face interactions. This virtual space, like physical space, was also bound by social conventions where behaviour is monitored and reprimanded if deemed inappropriate by other members.

The internet more generally also contributed to community outcomes, particularly through its application as a research and promotional tool for developers, real estate agents and consumers. For developers and their agents, having a strong online presence enabled potential buyers to see the key characteristics of the development, including those related to community. The Turing Building developer's website featured different developments, completed or underway, and described the community features and characteristics of each development. More explicitly, Hobsonville Point's website promotes community events, relationships and activities as a central component of the development – an approach that further commodifies the sense of community within the development.

#### **9.4.5 'Sense of community' is becoming commodified**

In Auckland's residential development industry, there may be a transformation starting to take place. The three case-study developers are moving beyond marketing houses and are increasingly incorporating 'sense of community' into the product they sell. In the coming years, it will be interesting to observe the degree to which this approach is adopted across the development sector. This shift is also evident in the demand side, with potential buyers considering not only design, quality and price factors, but also social elements.

This dual physical / soft planning approach has provided Auckland house-hunters with a new product in the housing market – an established and essentially prepackaged community with social benefits that can be accessed by purchasing a dwelling. While the findings do not suggest this is a perfect approach, they also do not identify major problems either. From interviews with individuals who have self-selected to live in this development, personal observations of life in the development, and observing the residents' Facebook page, the sense of community amongst residents is clearly evident and clearly valued by them.

I propose that intentionality underpins this commodified form of community. Both the developer and many residents have identified the value of community and accordingly set community formation as an objective in their respective housing

processes. There is, however, a ‘chicken and egg’ question to this community commodification process. Are developers actively responding to a public yearning (vis-à-vis consumer demand) for ‘sense of community’ or are members of the public positively responding to developers taking a more community-oriented approach to planning and design? It is difficult to pinpoint how this shift began in Auckland, yet findings suggest that – alongside price, quality, design and location – the (at least perceived) stronger sense of community offered in new-build, medium-density developments is becoming an important factor for some people.

## **9.5 Expanding on the Significance of the ‘Community Commodified’**

### **Outcome**

Simply defined, commodification means to treat something, or turn something into a product (or commodity) that can be bought and sold. As touched upon above, evidence indicates that community, as both an idea and social outcome, is perceived, promoted and sought out in at least some of Auckland’s new-build housing market. Exploration of this interpretation has identified differences between academic perspectives critical of planned communities (Gwynther, 2005; Gleeson, 2006; Kenna, 2007; Walters & Rosenblatt, 2008) and positive outcomes reported by those who live in planned developments. I identified four key findings related to commodified community in this research:

1. It is driven by intentional and deliberate stakeholder actions
2. It represents a (selectively available) version of Schmalenich’s ‘Bund’
3. Its success is underpinned by trust in the developer and positive resident experiences
4. If done well it could help overcome public inertia and opposition to intensification

#### **9.5.1 It is driven by intentional and deliberate stakeholder actions**

Findings suggest that the deliberate actions of four stakeholder groups underpin a commodified form of community. Recognising (or even manufacturing) public

demand for a return to closer neighbourhood communities, developers design, market and promote a development with characteristics conducive to or enabling of social interaction and community formation. Consumers (home-buyers) seek community outcomes, either an existing sense of community or the potential to establish one when buying off the plan. Auckland Council prioritises a requirement for community considerations be incorporated into the design of new developments. Of these, stakeholders, consumers and developers were the key players, with local government and potentially central government playing more of a supportive and / or directional role.

### **9.5.2 Revisiting Schmalenbach's 'Bund'**

Parallels were found to exist between the commodified forms of community identified in the case-study sites and Schmalenbach's (1922) concept of the 'Bund', a social outcome centred on elective sociation amongst individuals within defined spatial areas (Hetherington, 1994). The 'Bund' can be interpreted as either a bridge between or a composite of *Gemeinschaft* (traditional forms of close-community) and *Gesellschaft* (individualised society) (Tönnies & Loomis, 1957 [1887]). This interpretation aligns well with the intentional and rationally considered decisions of individuals to form relationships and establish, or actively participate in, an existing sense of community with those living in proximity to them. This suggests that individualism does not necessarily diminish outcomes of a geographically rooted sense of community, that it may actually be a key component of an alternative community outcome. Evidence indicated that this form of community is opt-in / opt-out in nature, that people want to be part of the community to the degree that it fits within their individual lifestyles.

Drawing on the work of Bourdieu (1986), Loury (1992) and Putman (1996, 2000), Portes (1998) strongly promotes the idea that group belonging improves one's access to benefits. This position reflects the nature of this 'Bund'-like product, which enables people to come together and, with a degree of mutual trust, enjoy the benefits of community without losing their privacy or ability to act individually outside the

group. At Hobsonville Point, in particular, some people's decisions to move there involved careful consideration of the potential community benefits, against potential disbenefits related to this lifestyle choice. Amongst some Hobsonville Point and the Turing Building residents interviewed, this desire for community-within-reason was important, as it enabled residents with a common objective to belong to a supportive community, while still being able to retain their autonomy – meaning members 'do not live in each other's pockets'. This correlates to Winstanley et al.'s (2003, p. 179) research, which found that residents interviewed in a Christchurch development "described a desire to know their neighbours but to maintain a degree of social distance". Such community outcomes suggest Auckland has a diverse housing marketplace, where individuals, at least in the higher end of that, preclude exposure to undesirable elements.

The characteristics of this form of commodified community suggest it will exist primarily within populations who are reasonably well-resourced, financially and in time. Therefore, such community outcomes may differ from forms of community established amongst lower socio-economic populations where bonds could be based on different factors (e.g. survival and necessity, rather than a lifestyle choice). This is not a suggestion that commodified community is shallow or has less value to members, rather that it serves a different purpose for a different subset of the population.

### **9.5.3 Trust in the product, and positive resident experiences are important**

As with any product, to be successful, it must deliver benefits in line with what is advertised and / or promised. At each of the case-study developments, the overall impression of residents regarding the sense of community was positive. For residents not motivated by community, this was unimportant or an unexpected bonus; however, for those with community-motivations, their positive experiences vindicated their decision. For some, these experiences also confirmed that one's sense of community could be stronger in new medium-density developments than in the low-density neighbourhoods where they had previously lived.

Key informant interviews and media analysis identified a belief that many Auckland developers care little about quality housing / community outcomes, that they only care about profit margins – as if the two are mutually exclusive. While the outputs and behaviour of only three developers were analysed, and so broader conclusions cannot be articulated, evidence indicates that (at least some) developers may be taking a more holistic approach than often thought. At both Hobsonville Point and the Turing Building, residents were impressed by the developer's existing works, where attention went beyond expectation into community enabling design features. At both developments, opportunities for neighbourliness and community were considered in some buyers' decisions. The sense of trust afforded to these developers indicates that at least some Auckland developers have a reputation for designing to achieve social and sustainability outcomes with an emphasis on creating a positive legacy and reliable reputation. The clearest example of this was the young mother whose decision to move to Hobsonville Point was strongly influenced by the sense of community experienced when first visiting the development, an experience that backed up what could otherwise be considered questionable or exaggerated community claims by the developer's marketing materials. By delivering on its community claims, the developer has established a largely self-fulfilling community product where success breeds success.

One shortcoming of this approach by developers is that some residents were somewhat uncomfortable with their relationships with others being used as a promotional tool. A small number of Hobsonville Point residents commented that the developer was essentially using their lives and interactions as a profit-generating tool. This did not appear to diminish the sense of community enjoyed by these residents; however, it does reveal a potential point of future conflict between developers and residents.

#### **9.5.4 It could help overcome public inertia and opposition towards intensification**

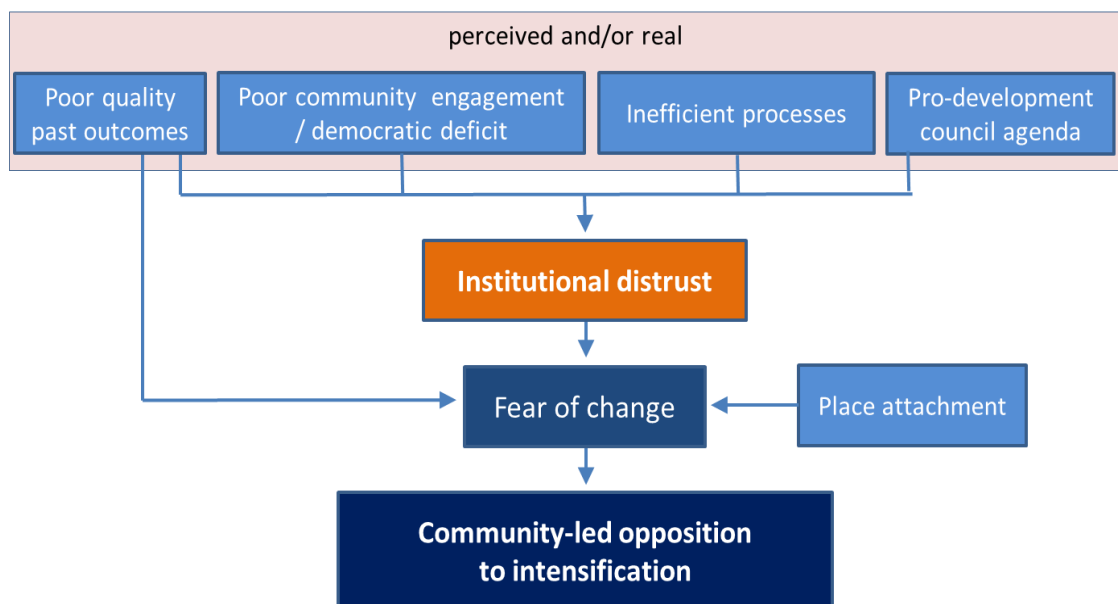
One of the greatest challenges in Auckland's intensification process is public acceptance, in particular overcoming preconceptions and prejudices related to livability and lifestyle, and the legacy of poor quality developments in the past. Critics often decry that dwellings with small or no gardens, in close proximity, will result in ghetto or slum outcomes and that they are not in keeping with the New Zealand way of life where privacy and greenspace are important. It is in this context that I contend that the commodified forms of community that exist in Hobsonville Point, and, to a degree, the Turing Building could help overcome inertia and opposition to intensification from middle-upper income groups. First, it provides a point of difference in the housing market, where the focus is predominantly on the house and section, rather the community within which it is situated. Second, this community outcome can be a positive trade-off for potential buyers who may be concerned about the loss of privacy and space in higher-density housing. As acknowledged by Auckland Council interviewees, intensification has been sold poorly to the public, therefore having positive examples with strong and observable community outcomes to refer to could make community consultation easier and the Council's intensification objectives better received.

#### **9.6 Final Reflections on Community-led Opposition and Distrust in Auckland's Intensification Process**

Attention now shifts away from community formation to community-led opposition in Auckland's intensification process. This opposition occurred at two levels, first with regard to specific developments within existing neighbourhoods (Powell Street and to a lesser degree the Turing Building), and second at a policy level regarding proposed zoning changes to allow more higher-density housing in low-density 'character' suburbs. Both examples highlighted degrees of institutional distrust in the planning process, and distrust between stakeholders (community / existing resident groups, the Council and developers) participating in it. Reflecting themes identified

in media coverage pertaining to Auckland housing, many existing residents believed the Council to be either incompetent or undemocratic in their approach to community engagement and planning. The overall feeling of existing residents was one of cynicism towards developers, claiming them to be profit (not quality design outcome) focused and generally dismissive of neighbouring resident concerns. Finally, the community / existing resident groups were themselves criticised for purportedly selfish and short-sighted NIMBY behaviour, who campaign against change in a manner that is unrepresentative of wider community views and the public good.

Institutional distrust was most evident in the opposition by community / existing resident groups to intensification. Many interviewees believed that the planning system is inefficient, undemocratic, does not lead to quality development outcomes, and favours the interests of developers and, by proxy, future residents over existing residents and communities. Subsequently, there was a strong feeling of distrust in Auckland’s planning process, and, by proxy, in Auckland Council as the overseeing party. As shown in Figure 34, this distrust, alongside strong feelings of place attachment made residents fearful of change, which in turn led to significant opposition to intensification.



**Figure 34. Factors contributing to community-led opposition to intensification**

Three of the factors highlighted in Figure 34 focus on shortcomings related to *process*, while one relates to *outcomes*. The latter (poor quality past outcomes) reflects conclusions identified in past research surrounding intensification about poor quality construction (Syme et al., 2005; Waghorn, 2011), and design which is either uninspiring or discordant in existing neighbourhoods (Woodcock et al., 2012). However, the most common criticism was that higher-density developments would become slums or ghettos, a perception also found by Dixon and Dupuis (2003). Such perceptions were found to be based partly on personal experience (e.g. leaky buildings) and partly by observation (e.g. small 'shoebox' apartments). While scepticism based on construction quality is to be expected, many examples of 'good' or 'poor' outcomes are subjective and based on personal preference, not quality.<sup>60</sup>

Evidence indicates that negative perceptions of Auckland's intensification (and more widely planning and policy development) processes have contributed to a strong sense of institutional distrust amongst some portions of the population. Both the media coverage of Auckland housing and community group interviews identified poor public consultation as particularly problematic, with claims that the Council's public consultation efforts were unsatisfactory, tokenistic and represented a democratic deficit in the planning system. As claimed by Bond and Thompson-Fawcett (2008), there were also suggestions made of power imbalances and complexities in the process that effectively restricted much public involvement. Such assertions were most commonly made in reference to the Unitary Plan process, where anger was expressed at the perceived pro-development / developer bias. These claims were denied by planners, including the Auckland Council planning representative, who believed considerable and meaningful consultation did take place and that the Council had been open and transparent in their dealings with the public. This suggests a diverse range of stakeholders interpretations about what 'meaningful' means in the consultation context.

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<sup>60</sup> In terms of construction quality, poorly perceived outcomes (e.g. leaky buildings) are difficult to dispute, yet in terms of design and typology, subjectivity is high, such as 'shoebox' apartments frequently being identified as a poor outcome in terms of liveability, even though such units are not designed for the largely suburban home-owner population who are so critical of them.

Such challenges in participatory planning were described by researchers in different ways. Tait (2011) focuses on the outcome, suggesting that because planning produces contested outcomes between often polarised groups, there are invariably winners and losers, whereby the loser may subsequently distrust the decision-maker and planning system that produced an unfavourable result. Fainstein (1999), on the other hand, focuses on the process, both acknowledging the positive intent of many planners to achieve a fair outcome, while also attributing failures of the participatory planning process to (often-unrecognised) normative biases in the planning system, which effectively preclude public opinions from being considered.

Evidence suggests that both these scenarios are consistent with Auckland Council's participatory planning process. From the perspective of Auckland Council representatives, there was a strong feeling that the Council was trying hard to engage meaningfully with local communities, yet recognised that outcomes can never please everyone. At the same time, the Council was sometimes dismissive of public involvement in the planning process. From the perspective of community / residents' group members, the distrust of the planning system was less about intensification outcomes and more about the process which they believed to favour development at all costs over the concerns and priorities of existing communities. Laurian (2009) asserts that in the planning context, perception and trust are important, as they are positioned at the nexus of public and private interests. It is at this nexus where clarity and transparency in decision making need to be explicit.

However, evidence suggests that overcoming distrust in the planning system is not as simple as the Council and developers improving relations and engagement practices with the public. This distrust was found to be a two-way challenge, with developers and council representatives at times distrusting the actions and intentions of community interest groups in the planning process. A major complaint by representatives, as well as by the pro-intensification lobby group Generation Zero, was that many community groups conducted themselves poorly in consultation activities, with arguments based on self-interest and misinformation. Such accusations were levelled at community opposition at the development scale in relation to the Powell Street development and more widely during the Unitary plan

development process. A perceived lack of representativeness was a common criticism (both in the media and through interviews) levelled at opposition groups. According to the Powell Street developer, due to this distrust in local community members to act constructively in the planning process, developers are hesitant or even resentful at having to engage with neighbouring residents, believing that such engagement yields few benefits while adding time, cost and uncertainty to the development, thus compromising its economic viability.

In Auckland's intensification process, community-led opposition is frequently labelled NIMBY – a pejorative term that suggests localised opposition to be selfish, parochial and obstructionist. In the interviews and in the media, homeowners (often of the baby-boomer generation) were singled out for criticism and cast as the agitators in a generational conflict with younger people who are seeking greater housing choice in the market – both in terms of price-points and typology. Key informant interview and media evidence suggests that local opposition has been an impediment to greater intensification and needs to be addressed, and that the way this opposition has been responded to (discrediting opposition by pejoratively labelling it NIMBY) is not only patronising to those participating in the planning process but counter-productive to the Council's own objectives of having a more politically engaged population. While dismissing local opposition as NIMBY *may* result in short-term benefits, in the medium–long-term, adopting such an approach will likely further erode the limited institutional trust that remains. NIMBYism is a well-documented phenomenon, but I question whether the use of the term, given its pejorative associations, is useful in the planning process. The participation of local people is essential to local democracy, irrespective of the arguments they bring to the table. Is the preferred alternative public apathy, with local communities unwilling or unable to engage in planning?

Freudenberg and Pastor (1992) identify NIMBYism as a complex phenomenon that can consist of three quite different responses. The first two (an *ignorant* or *irrational* response, and a *selfish* response) are pejorative, while the third (a *prudent* response) removes pejorative connotations, which unlike the first type of response is well-grounded. Findings suggest that the first and second types of response characterise

most people's perceptions of NIMBY behaviour, while the third was not frequently acknowledged except by those who are themselves opposing change. Such pejorative associations especially frustrated Powell Street Residents Association members who sought to differentiate their "well-informed" and "considered" actions from anti-development NIMBY groups, which they themselves identified as problematic in the planning process. In particular, they were frustrated that everyone who opposed or even questioned intensification plans were grouped together as selfish, uninformed and obstructionist. In many respects, NIMBY behaviour should always be expected within a changing urban environment, for, at a core level, it is a manifestation of place attachment expressed as place protectionism. It can also be interpreted as a community outcome (and generative of social capital) in its own right, as it often requires cooperation between individuals united by a common cause.

I believe that participatory planning has real potential to improve institutional trust in planners and the planning process. However, to date, this approach has been undertaken poorly (Swain & Tait, 2007; Laurian, 2009; Ellis, 2004) due to factors such as power imbalances and a lack of representation (Bond & Thompson-Fawcett, 2008; Ellis, 2004; Christensen, 2015). A perspective shared by most community / resident group members was that in order to improve trust and reduce opposition, community engagement by planners and developers must be meaningful instead of a tokenistic or tick-box exercise. While such improved consultation has the potential to improve institutional trust, it would likely also slow down the development processes. This presents a challenge for planners and politicians who want to build housing at scale and pace, while also seeking public approval for doing so. This means they will have to try to accommodate faster outcomes with a better democratic process.

As argued by Petts (2008), findings in this research suggest that total trust is neither possible nor desirable in Auckland's planning process. Therefore the best approach may be to instil in the public a greater a sense of 'critical trust'. This would combine public scepticism and engagement with institutional trust that, even if the outcome is unfavourable, the processes by which decisions are made are considered fair.

Findings also suggest that for planners and developers to conduct more meaningful engagement, resident and community groups must show they can participate in a constructive and informed manner. This is a wicked problem and one which requires reflection on conduct and objectives from all parties in the planning process.

## **9.7 Potential Future Research**

Throughout this research, a few areas were identified that could benefit from further attention. Some of these reflect the limitations of this study's findings, and others are topics which emerged during this research but could not be covered in significant detail. I have included a series of potential research questions that could guide future study:

1. What are the experiences of expectations of renters in relation to life in higher-density developments, and as participants in the planning process?
2. How can residents of new brownfield developments integrate into existing communities to prevent the establishment of disconnected 'island' community groups?
3. How are New Zealander's housing and lifestyle preferences compromised in order to secure housing tenure?
4. How do community outcomes differ between low, medium and high socio-economic developments?
5. How does the increasing use of and dependence on social media and the internet influence localised community development?

I also believe it would be worthwhile to continue research on the communities and intensification processes detailed in this study, with the findings here forming the basis for further longitudinal study. I think such an endeavour could contribute valuable findings to academia and planning practitioners alike.



# EPILOGUE

In October 2017 the Labour Party formed a new government to replace the National Party which had been in power since 2008. With a strong emphasis on Auckland, Labour campaigned heavily on fixing the housing crisis they claimed was largely the result of prior government negligence. Labour, along with its coalition partner New Zealand First, with support from the Greens have outlined a strong housing and urban development agenda, which includes significant state-led construction through the 'KiwiBuild' initiative. Through KiwiBuild, the Government has promised to deliver 100,000 'affordable' dwellings over 10 years, half of which will be built in Auckland. A key feature of the KiwiBuild programme is that it is only available to low-medium earning first-home buyers. To help achieve this objective, a Housing and Urban Development Authority is being established, an entity that will partner with councils, iwi and the private sector to deliver large-scale development projects at scale pace. Alongside demand-side measures, such as banning foreigners (non-citizens) from purchasing existing housing stock and reducing immigration numbers, major changes to the rental markets are also being planned. This includes ensuring rentals adhere to stricter quality requirements (e.g. insulation and heating) and more secure tenure conditions for renters.

If successful, the Government's initiatives could have a profound effect on Auckland's housing market. They would provide significantly more diversity in housing choice, both in terms of price-points and type. A significant component of their housing agenda is a greater intensification of housing. Labour's agenda is generally welcomed by Auckland Council, which, since its inception in 2010, has often disagreed with central government about housing. However, some of the Government's policies and priorities threaten to undermine Auckland Council's newly implemented Unitary Plan, particularly Labour's desire to remove Auckland's Rural Urban Boundary, which could lead to greater urban sprawl. The degree to which this change in direction will successfully address Auckland's housing challenges is difficult to predict but will be fascinating to observe.



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# APPENDIX 1. Sample of Interview Information Sheet



## ***Intensification in Suburban Auckland: Investigating the Social Impacts of New Developments***

### INFORMATION SHEET

Incoming Residents / Year 1 Interview

#### Background

My name is Eddie Dolan and I am a PhD student with Massey University through the SHORE and Whariki Research Centre. I am undertaking a research project to better understand the viewpoints and experiences of incoming residents who are moving into a new medium density development built within an existing neighbourhood. The study will identify incoming resident concerns or expectations with regard to higher density living, and investigate experiences of community relations before / after the new development is occupied.

You are invited to take part in the first part of this research project which will focus on pre-occupation experiences of the new development. You have been invited because you have purchased a dwelling off the plan from the new [case study] medium density housing development. Due to privacy considerations, initial contact with you has been made by a representative of the developer or the real estate agent to determine whether you would be happy to participate in this study. If you would like to take part, you can tell whoever made first contact with you and they will pass on your details to me, or you can just contact me directly.

#### Participant involvement

You will be one of 10 interview participants from the new development. The interview will be conducted either by me, one of my supervisors, or a fellow researcher associated with SHORE and Whariki. It is anticipated that the interview will take approximately 30 minutes and will be located at a place chosen by you. With your agreement the interview will be audiotaped and later transcribed.

It is important to note, we will also be conducting a follow up interview a year later which we would also like you to participate in if possible.

#### What will happen to the information gathered

The data and results will be included in the researcher's doctoral thesis, published papers and in a summary of findings, which can be requested via the consent form. Digital tapes and transcripts of interviews and focus groups will be stored in password protected computer files at SHORE and Whariki's premises 90 Symonds St, Auckland. Data will be kept for 10 years, after which it will be destroyed by Karen Witten or a nominated support staff member.

Participant names will not be used in any form of publication, report or presentation. Confidentiality will be adhered to at all times.



# APPENDIX 2. Sample of Interview Consent Form



## *Intensification in Suburban Auckland: Investigating the Social Impacts of New Developments*

### CONSENT FORM

Interview Participant

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I agree/do not agree to the interview being sound recorded.

I wish/do not wish to have my recordings returned to me.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Full Name - printed \_\_\_\_\_