

Unitary Plan online discussion forum: Key themes and results

Prepared for:



14 November 2012

Prepared by Ben Parsons

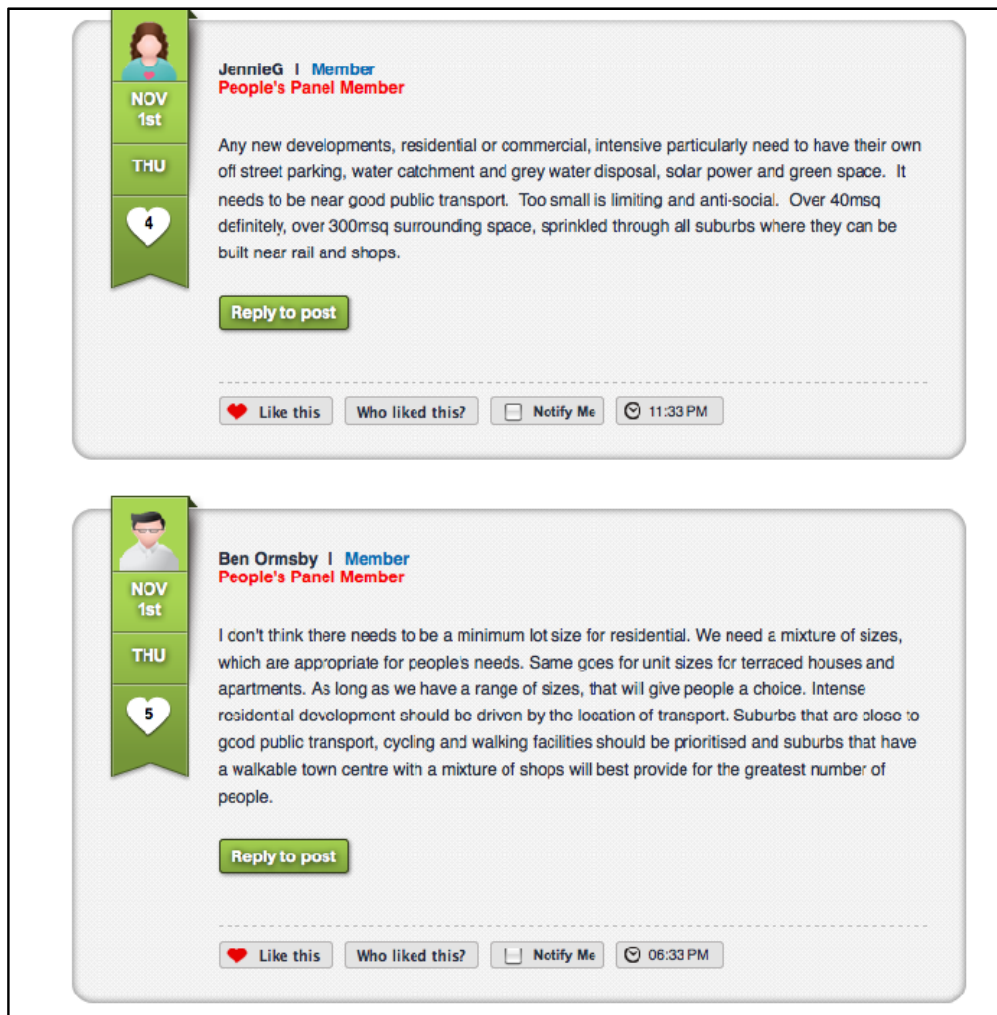
T: 09 445 0164

M: 021 810 445

benparsons@bpanda.co.nz

www.bpanda.co.nz

Image 1: Screen shot of the discussion



Executive summary

This online discussion forum formed part of the 'enhanced engagement' around the Auckland Unitary Plan. The online forum ran roughly in parallel with the civic forum process, and both were designed to provide initial guidance to the Unitary Plan team on some of the key issues and hot topics from Auckland's residents. Specifically, the purpose of the online forum was to provide an innovative, interactive way for a wide range of Aucklanders to engage on some of the key directions and proposals being considered early on in the development of the Unitary Plan.

All 10,559 People's Panel members were sent an email outlining the process and discussion topics and asking them to opt in to take part in the forum. This resulted in 1601 interested participants signed up to take part from a wide spread of locations across the region as well as a broad mix of demographic groups. Of these, 856 (53%) clicked on the link to read through the discussion. In addition, 1508 people came to the forum directly from the Auckland Council website. This means that a total of 1914 people saw the discussion. By the time the forum was closed we had received 864 posts from 172 participants over the three different discussion themes.

The conversation was wide ranging and covered a number of themes regarding people's attitudes to population growth, housing density, intensification, urban sprawl, section sizes, the need for good urban design and tight consenting processes, where businesses should best be located, the role of public transport, heritage protection, protecting the environment, view shafts and rural areas, and a host of other topics.

While there wasn't (and will never be) consensus on these topics, the opportunity to see and read other people's ideas and opinions provided a unique perspective for participants. Rather than simply submitting their ideas in a vacuum, through a feedback or submission form, participants were exposed to the full spectrum of views on these topics, and (hopefully) gained further understanding of the complexities and needs of different people in the community.

Where we live discussion summary

There was strong debate regarding the level of population growth that is appropriate, and whether Auckland can sustain the kind of growth currently predicted. Many participants called for Auckland's population growth to be capped or curbed in some way (e.g. through a population cap, limiting the

amount of development allowed, etc). A population cap would, in many peoples' eyes, prevent further eradication of greenfields and help preserve our natural environment. However, there was also a fair bit of support for intensification. Of those who felt intensification was acceptable, many called for stronger planning laws and controls to maintain the integrity of existing suburbs.

It was suggested that intensification should be in metropolitan areas that have good transport links and access to parks and green spaces. There was concern that development be 'well done' and incorporate good design. Some suggested building energy efficient homes, that are well insulated and with well designed stormwater drainage, and perhaps even incorporating solar generating capacity.

Housing affordability was a major topic - alternative forms of funding and building sufficient affordable homes such as social housing options were also mentioned. It was felt that new housing should include a range of building types and sizes to accommodate a variety of living situations including families, older people and people with disabilities, and that homes should be affordable to their target market. Types of buildings suggested included apartments and terraced housing. Generally panellists seemed open to the idea of including development above street level in suitable areas.

Where we work discussion summary

Again there was strong support for commercial intensification to be tied to mass transport along with better facilities to encourage cycling, walking and alternate modes of transport. Some questioned the need for more commercial development due to a perceived oversupply of commercial properties and a number of buildings currently sitting empty.

There was some discussion about large scale retail development with some panellists cautioning that malls can kill off local town centres if there are too many of them, or if they are built too close to local townships. Greater flexibility with regards to zoning laws was suggested as a way to encourage more local businesses into the community. Some felt that large retail developments should be separate from residential areas but near transport hubs, while others wanted business hubs nearer to residential areas.

Opinions on suitable building heights varied with some agreeing with a limit of 30m/ 8 storeys in larger town centres and up to 15m/ 4 storeys in other town centres. Others felt these heights were too high and that commercial activities must be compatible with the surrounding neighbourhood. There was a common view that commercial development should always require consents and again,

should have to fit the look and character of the local area. Desired design features included; green spaces, trees, good transport links, energy efficient buildings and green roofs.

What we value discussion summary

There was a lot of discussion about non-complying consents and the desire to see all non-complying consents notified as a way of upholding regulations designed to protect our environment and heritage. Some expressed the belief that council is not doing enough to protect the environment and that there are too many loopholes that enable developers to breach the letter or intent of the plan.

As with the 'Where we live' section, some felt that we should limit growth in order to protect our environment and heritage. Again, others felt that growth is desirable or inevitable and that we must combine high-density housing with good planning that enables the protection of our environment and heritage.

There was discussion over what constitutes a heritage site with some suggesting that we don't really have much worth protecting. Others suggested regenerating heritage sites into new housing developments. Calls were also made to distinguish between 'character' and 'heritage' and that our built heritage cannot be replaced.

Participants generally agreed that there should be tight controls on building in flood plains.

Contents

Executive summary.....	3
Objectives and method.....	7
Findings	11
1. Overall results.....	11
2. Where we live discussion topic	14
3. Where we work discussion topic	25
4. What we value discussion topic	32
Appendix – the forum introductory page	40

Objectives and method

Background and objectives

This online discussion forum formed part of the 'enhanced engagement' around the Auckland Unitary Plan. The online forum ran roughly in parallel with the civic forum process, and both were designed to provide initial guidance to the Unitary Plan team on some of the key issues and hot topics from Auckland's residents.

Engagement and consultation on the Unitary Plan will take many forms and run for several months, including informal engagement and formal statutory consultation.

Specifically, the intended purpose of the online forum was to provide an innovative, interactive way for a wide range of Aucklanders to engage on some of the key directions and proposals being considered early on in the development of the Unitary Plan. By its nature the forum was intended to encourage people to share their views, interact with each other and engage in a fairly informal and interesting way (through commenting on each other's posts, developing their own discussion threads, reading other people's ideas and 'liking' them, plus engaging with the moderators etc). As distinct from the civic forum, the online forum was open to a large number of people, primarily recruited through the People's Panel, but also advertised through *OurAuckland*, a media release, and content on the Unitary Plan web page.

Methodology

Since this was a new technique for Auckland Council, some thought went into the best way to run the forum, and the following process was developed:

- Auckland Council sent an email to all 10,559 People's Panel members outlining the process and discussion topics and asking people to opt in to take part in the forum. This resulted in 1542 interested participants signed up to take part from a wide spread of locations across the region as well as a broad mix of demographic groups. In addition, a further 59 people who joined the panel after the invitation was sent also indicated they wanted to take part (in total 1601 people signed up).
- The council also put out a media release advertising the forum and inviting people to express their interest in taking part through the People's Panel website. There was also an article in *OurAuckland* part way through the discussion period, pointing people to the forum.

Research Analysis Insight

- Participants were sent an email invitation with a link to a landing page within the forum, which provided contextual information on how the forum worked, housekeeping and ground rules (we encourage active debate but not abuse, etc) as well as some context about the Unitary Plan and the topics under discussion.
- There were three discussion pages - “Where you live”, “Where you work” and “Protecting our natural environment, character and heritage”. These were in line with the civic forum topics. Each page included some brief context and discussion questions and prompts to encourage discussion.
- Participants were able to read the discussion and see other people’s comments without logging in or creating a profile. However, if they wanted to comment and contribute to the discussion, they had to create a profile.
- As the discussion got under way it was necessary to moderate the debate. This was not about censorship or restricting comments, but more around clarifying the topics, answering questions, posing new questions and discussion threads, responding to specific points and generally keeping the discussion moving and on topic (similar to the way a focus group moderator guides the conversation). If necessary abusive or otherwise inappropriate comments were removed, but only if they break the ground rules laid out on the landing page (in the end only two comments were removed).
- In addition, the moderators were able to respond to specific questions posed by participants. In some cases these were referred to subject matter experts within the Unitary Plan team.
- As the discussion evolved, participants themselves also posed new questions and created their own discussions. In fact this ‘self moderation’ was a really useful aspect of the forum and there were a number of occasions where two or three people had an ongoing discussion over the course of a few days about a particular topic (density on Waiheke was one example).
- Given the importance of the moderator in keeping the discussion going, we involved a team of five moderators working on a schedule throughout the day, including evenings and weekends, to spread the workload between them. In addition, several subject matter experts were on hand to provide answers to some questions that were raised by participants
- The discussion was live online from 26 October until 7 November.

- The online forum ran roughly in parallel with the civic forum process, and both were designed to provide initial guidance to the Unitary Plan team on some of the key issues and hot topics from Auckland's residents. It was clear from some of the comments that a couple of civic forum participants also took part in the online discussion, which demonstrates the level of interest some people have in these topics, as per this quote¹:

"I attended the "People's Forum" introductory evening on Tuesday 23rd Oct and the full day event yesterday Saturday 27th Oct 2012. It is heartening to know that there are residents of this city who are passionate about the city they live in, and care enough about its future to make their views known in a constructive way. There did not appear to be a person in the room who was under the illusion that the rapid growth of Auckland city is either a myth or can be contained. It is happening. We need to deal with it..."

- While there wasn't (and will never be) consensus on the topics under discussion, the opportunity to see and read other people's ideas and opinions provided a unique perspective for participants. Rather than simply submitting their ideas in a vacuum, through a feedback or submission form, participants were exposed to the full spectrum of views on these topics, and (hopefully) gained further understanding of the complexities and needs of different people in the community, as per these quotes:

"From this forum, I am grateful that I am neither a Councillor, or Council employee. It is a thankless task to undertake, as it is clear there is no 'one size fits all' answer."

"Yeeha! My reading is that communities would love to have a say in their future but the process is So Difficult (in the past at least) they quickly become disillusioned...so how about the UP being a catalyst for the development of some proper, sensible method of us lot, who end up paying for all of it, having a constructive, useful dialogue with AC and getting listened to! Wow, we could really do some great stuff if we could find a way to get the ideas in this forum sensibly discussed...why not?"

- Unfortunately, there were a few teething and technical issues with the forum technology, that sometimes made it difficult for people to find what they were looking for. These issues will be investigated for future forums:

¹ Throughout this document verbatim quotes have been selected to illustrate common themes

“Next time Ak Council decides to consult via online forum at least design the interface so that all posts and replies come out in the same font/style in a space saving manner that does not require endless scrolling. I suggest the Council looks at TradeMe message boards for some ideas for next time.”

“This forum is difficult to negotiate though - is it possible to change some of the settings to make it easier to find posts and follow threads? It would also be good to have thread title page which contains the first line of the threads when you enter the three different topics.”

- However, there were also a number of comments from people who obviously found the process valuable and rewarding:

“The point of this very good forum shouldn't be to argue about whether we want population growth or not, but how we are going to step up and manage it.”

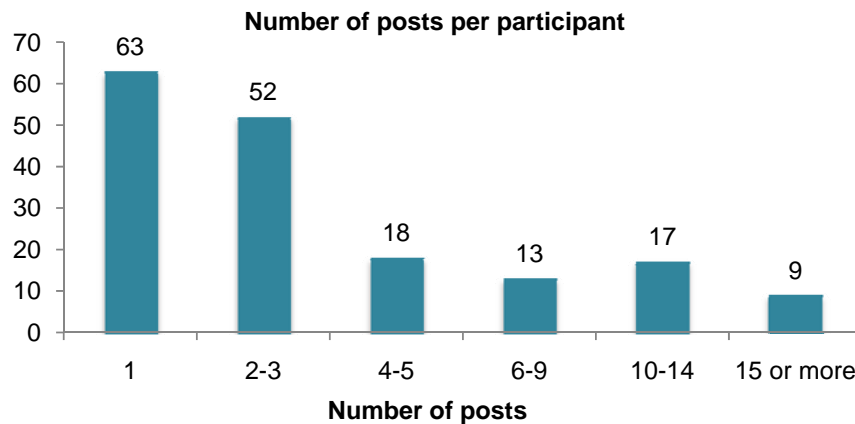
“What a great pleasure it was to read the introduction to this forum. Auckland will grow by 1 million people over the next 30 years. Auckland will be a city of 2.5 million. Auckland must build 13,000 homes a year. So, where to put them? It's so refreshing in Auckland to hear this kind of determination and optimism for the future.”

Findings

1. Overall results

Of the 1601 people who had signed up to participate, 856 (53%) clicked on the link to read through the discussion. In addition, 1508 people came to the forum from the Auckland Council website. This means that a total of 1914 people saw the discussion. By the time the forum was closed for further comment we had received 864 posts from 172 separate participants over the three different discussion themes. Of the participants, 159 (92%) were People’s Panel members and the remaining 13 came directly from the website.

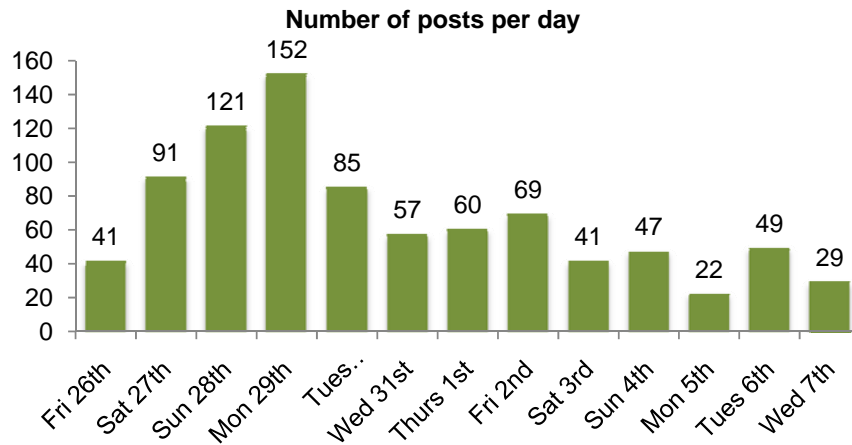
1.1: Number of posts per participant



Base: 864 posts by 172 participants

Some people contributed once only (37% of participants), while others made a dozen or more posts (four people made more than 20 posts each). On average, people posted 5 different comments. As below, people came back to the discussion over several days.

1.2: Number of posts per day



Base: 864 posts by 172 participants

1.3: Participant demographics

Of the 172 participants, 159 were members of the People's Panel, and their comments were tagged with their demographic profile, as below.

Participant demographics	Number of participants (159)	Proportion of participants	Statistics NZ Percentages 2006 census
Gender			
Female	81	51%	51%
Male	78	49%	49%
Age			
15-24 years	5	3%	20%
25-34 years	9	6%	19%
35-44 years	18	12%	21%
45-54 years	28	18%	17%
55-64 years	47	31%	12%
65-74 years	37	24%	7%
75+ years	9	6%	6%
Ethnicity (Multiple response)			
European	145	91%	55%
Maori	4	3%	11%
Pacific Peoples	2	1%	15%
Asian	5	3%	18%
Latin American, African	2	1%	1%
Other	0	0%	8%
Unknown	6	4%	

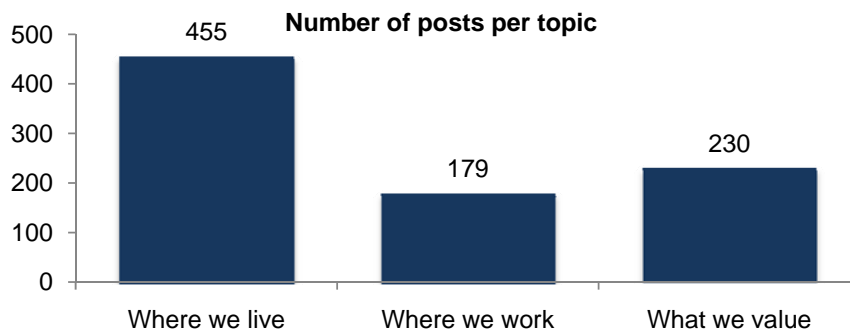
As above, forum participant demographics were skewed towards older people (especially those aged 55-75 years) and Europeans. Interestingly, the forum

attracted an equal number of men and women, whereas online surveys (such as other People’s Panel surveys) usually attract more women than men.

Local Board			
Albert-Eden	11	7%	7%
Devonport-Takapuna	11	7%	4%
Franklin	5	3%	4%
Great Barrier	0	0%	0.1%
Henderson-Massey	9	6%	8%
Hibiscus and Bays	9	6%	6%
Howick	8	5%	9%
Kaipatiki	13	8%	6%
Mangere-Otahuhu	3	2%	5%
Manurewa	5	3%	6%
Maungakiekie-Tamaki	10	6%	5%
Orakei	16	10%	6%
Otara-Papatoetoe	3	2%	6%
Papakura	2	1%	3%
Puketapapa	2	1%	4%
Rodney	12	8%	4%
Upper Harbour	5	3%	3%
Waiheke	2	1%	1%
Waitakere Ranges	8	5%	3%
Waitemata	17	11%	5%
Whau	7	4%	5%

The forum attracted a relatively high proportion of participants from central and north Auckland, and fewer from South Auckland, similar to other Peoples Panel surveys.

1.4: Number of posts across each of the discussion topics



Base: 864 posts by 172 participants

Over half of the posts related to the ‘where we live topic’.

2. Where we live discussion topic

Discussion and follow up questions asked on this page:

- what type of residential development would be appropriate in your local neighbourhood (for example building height, types of houses/apartments, etc)?
- what do you think about allowing/encouraging intensive residential development (e.g. terraced housing, medium or low-rise apartments) to occur in metropolitan, town and local centres?
- what do you think about allowing/encouraging intensive residential development above street level within metropolitan, town and local centres?
- what do you think should be the minimum section size in residential areas?
- what should we set as the minimum sizes for units in terraced houses and apartments? The following is being considered, are these unit sizes appropriate - Studio apartment minimum of 40m², 1 bedroom apartment minimum of 50m², 2 bedroom apartment minimum of 75m², 3 bedroom apartment minimum of 90m²?
- in which suburbs / places in Auckland do you think the most intense residential development should occur?

As per figure 1.4, this was the most popular topic and received 455 of the 864 posts (53%).

2.1: Discussion summary

There was strong debate regarding the level of population growth that is appropriate, and whether Auckland can sustain the kind of growth currently predicted. Many participants called for Auckland's population growth to be capped or curbed in some way (e.g. through a population cap, limiting the amount of development allowed, etc). A population cap would, in many peoples' eyes, prevent further eradication of greenfields and help preserve our natural environment. However, there was also a fair bit of support for intensification. Of those who felt intensification was acceptable, many called for stronger planning laws and controls to maintain the integrity of existing suburbs.

It was suggested that intensification should be in metropolitan areas that have good transport links and access to parks and green spaces. There was concern that development be 'well done' and incorporate good design. Some suggested building energy efficient homes, that are well insulated and with well designed stormwater drainage, and perhaps even incorporating solar generating capacity.

Housing affordability was a major topic - alternative forms of funding and building sufficient affordable homes such as social housing options were also mentioned. It was felt that new housing should include a range of building types and sizes to accommodate a variety of living situations including families, older people and people with disabilities, and that homes should be affordable to their target market. Types of buildings suggested included apartments and terraced housing. Generally panellists seemed open to the idea of including development above street level in suitable areas.

2.2: Main themes and examples

- There was a widespread view (particularly early in the debate) that further population growth in Auckland is neither sustainable nor desirable. Many people asked ‘why is growth necessary’, ‘how can we limit it’, ‘why do we assume its good’, etc. People wanted to see population targets that were adhered to, to reduce the effects of over-crowding on the transport system, social and other infrastructure:

“What strikes me after reading through a number of posts is that people understand that massive growth is imminent, but they want to ensure that certain aspects of the current Auckland are preserved. This could be the sense of community within certain areas, green spaces or heritage buildings. Underpinning the Auckland Plan and therefore the unitary plan is an assumption that growth is inevitable. Since travelling, and also studying issues related to growth I am of the opinion that the Auckland Plan needs to be radically different from any other global plan. If all the things that people want protected are to be protected, and if the council really wants to achieve its goals of zero waste and CO2 reductions there is one very simple solution - it is a solution that would require great political courage, however. That is, a POPULATION CAP. Auckland could be a pioneer in ‘real’ planning - not just accommodating perpetual, exponential growth. Having a stable, steady, secure and sustainable Auckland, as opposed to a congested, crowded and sprawling Auckland is surely more desirable. I am not one to say what the cap should be, however, I hope this is the start of a conversation that Auckland, NZ and the rest of the world desperately needs to start having.”

- The counter view to this, offered by a number of people, was either A) Auckland/NZ needs to grow to achieve a certain critical mass, or B) Auckland is going to grow whether we want it to or not, so we had better ensure we are prepared for it through good planning.

- There was a fair bit of support for intensification of residential development, as an alternative to urban sprawl:

“Residential intensification is necessary and a positive step forward for Auckland. Continuing to sprawl out into greenfield areas is only likely to clog up motorways and reduce quality agricultural land that feeds the city. In order to encourage intensification we obviously need to up zone centres, especially those which already have good public transport links. I live in Balmoral and would welcome intensification, with some sites already 4-5 storeys on Dominion Road I think this could be a good height indication.”

“Future living in a city will be more in apartments than in free standing houses. If you look for example to European cities it is rather common there. But the planning has to be good –we don't need more apartment blocks with shoe box sized rooms. Good design, ecological building materials, good insulation, efficient way of heating, combined with sustainable landscaping for meeting places and easy access to public transport is the way to go.”

- Likewise, there was some support for intensification through building up, above street level:

“The only places left to develop extra housing are; on old industrial sites like the Takapuna Quarry and Hobsonville aerodrome and on new green field sites like in Albany. These are good but fairly limited and expensive to develop. I think the council's policy of intensive residential development in metropolitan areas at and especially above street level (i.e. over malls and shops) is an essential option for the future of housing here. I think of our local town centre, Birkenhead. Such development there would be great. It would give the town a core residential community that would use the centre and grow the town centre economy.”

- However, there was also disagreement with this, with some saying that intensive developments and apartments are often nasty, slummy, poorly designed etc – with the counter argument from panellists that A) they're not all like that, and B) If you don't like them, don't live there.
- There was widespread agreement about the need for good urban design and a feeling that this hasn't been managed very successfully in the past. Similar to above some feel that developers will build whatever they can to make a profit, and do not have a good record in terms of quality, attractiveness, noise levels, insulation etc:

“I think the idea of well designed intensive residential development is a good one - but I stress well-designed. On the whole, developers have done this type of housing very poorly up until now - low quality, poor workmanship, ugly exterior look. I have lived in an apartment in Takapuna in the past, where there was no insulation between floors/ceilings. It meant that I could barely walk around my apartment without the neighbours below banging on my floor/their ceiling complaining about the noise.”

- Therefore, some felt the Unitary Plan needed to incorporate Universal Design Standards.
- Similarly, others felt it was important to have tight requirements and controls to maintain environmental amenity and liveability – that ensured things like neighbourhood green space, attractive footpaths, trees, urban art, bike paths etc:

“We must avoid a widespread loosening of the requirements for landscaping and height in relation to boundary controls. One new development can ruin the ambience of not just the neighbours on either side and at the rear boundary but also part of the street. The first few developers gain the benefit of the amenity provided by the less developed surroundings. Any encouragement of high density must be over small areas close to transport links. Current proposals for wide-ranging reduction in environmental amenity across much of the city will destroy the ambience that makes Auckland a liveable city. The city should be allowed to grow along the transport links much more than is currently allowed (e.g. to Pukekohe) but gaps between the transport links should be kept green. More residential close to the city should be encouraged by road tolling at peak hours and a higher differential rate on commuter parking supplied by companies.”

- Some feel that good quality terrace style housing is preferable to ‘McMansion’ style developments, and/or subdivisions – that well designed small spaces are ideal, but that they need to be designed to include sufficient attractive public green space:

“By all means increase housing density where appropriate. Flats in the centre for singles and couples of all ages are great. But you have to recognise that one of the things we value as a people is a house with a garden for the kids to play in. That is why as we have families, we move out to the suburbs. You are never going to get away from that. Immigrants to NZ from abroad are often coming here from very intensified urban

environments because that is not what they want any more. You can, however make better use of land to give more people the opportunity to have that dream of a house with a garden. Terraces and semi-detached dwellings offer this in a much more efficient way than house with a strip of garden all the way round. Often the same land area can give a much more use-able bit of garden if it is concentrated at the back of the house. Why do people want a big useless space at the front of a house anyway - it just has to be mowed, and there's no privacy so you don't use it. Terraces don't have to be nasty little boxes either. There are some examples even around Auckland of nice, offset terraces which give quite a bit of privacy. It's just that the developers don't want to build these because they get more money out of the big, nasty mansions, which are often sold to overseas buyers. I worry that my children will never be able to own a house. There needs to be some really strong planning rules, to put a complete stop on the mansions, in favour of houses for ordinary people, and possibly a ban on non-residents buying property, to get prices down over time."

- As with the 'what we value' discussion, people are asking for strict adherence to the zone regulations/rules – no loop holes or private deals with developers:

"I value the increased density and diversity of Auckland. We have lived in apartments in larger cities overseas and noted the advantages of frequent and easy transport to places of work, entertainment, parks, and shopping. In such places there is no need to own a car (or a lawnmower) while it is always possible to rent a car for holidays."

"A major factor necessary in making such living pleasant is strict adherence to zoning regulations. Whether or not it is accurate there is a perception in Auckland that a developer can get around regulations in various devious ways. Poor quality and poorly spaced developments in some Auckland areas suggest that this may be the case. Whatever the truth is we need to have confidence that zoning laws will take the benefit of all into consideration and then be strictly enforced."

- Some said it is OK to have subdivision in outer suburbs (e.g. Henderson) but that people do still want the choice of owning a garden if they can (and if they can afford it):

"I live in Te Atatu South where there are many large houses sitting on reasonably sized sections. Many have been subdivided but there are still a lot of big houses with only one or two people living in them. Often the owner

is getting older and finding the upkeep a bit of a struggle but they stay as they cannot get another house that suits them better for the price. Why can't the council help people in this situation sub divide their house into two living spaces or extend the house to create 2 living spaces. The owner can stay in the house and the new living space could be let out."

- A few people pointed out that there is an under utilisation of housing stock in some of the inner city suburbs of Auckland, and that existing houses should be modified to accommodate more people or co-housing;

"I would be very happy to see intensification of the existing housing stock in Auckland by focussing development on minimum unit sizes rather than section sizes. This would mean for instance that a villa or bungalow could be modified on its existing site to accommodate three or four dwellings without destroying the nature of the existing neighbourhood and with minimum additional expenditure on expensive infrastructure."

- This was also part of a wider debate about minimum section sizes with some saying sections could be smaller, but others suggesting a mixture would be best:

"I don't think there needs to be a minimum lot size for residential. We need a mixture of sizes, which are appropriate for people's needs. Same goes for unit sizes for terraced houses and apartments. As long as we have a range of sizes, that will give people a choice. Intense residential development should be driven by the location of transport. Suburbs that are close to good public transport, cycling and walking facilities should be prioritised and suburbs that have a walkable town centre with a mixture of shops will best provide for the greatest number of people."

- Some suggested more development in brownfield sites, with existing infrastructure:

"I also think we need to examine inventories on brownfield developments to try to determine what existing structures/land areas are disused that could be converted to provide housing. It seems to me in my limited knowledge and experience, that there are empty tracts of warehousing and land within semi-industrial/commercial areas that may have potential, if suitably redesigned, to provide higher density housing. Considering the uncounted cost of infrastructural needs in developing greenfields - drainage, power, communications, roading, schooling, retailing etc; find what is already in existence should be first priority."

Research Analysis Insight

- Others felt it would be appropriate to develop new suburbs on outer suburban / semi rural land that is not suitable for growing/grazing – however there were people who disagreed with this, and in particular there was a view that we need to protect rural land and areas of bush
- There was concern over developers breaking up large, productive rural land into smaller lifestyle blocks
- Several people felt it was important to encourage a wide and diverse mix of apartments (and other housing more broadly) to cater for diverse needs – including affordable housing, family housing/apartments, different sizes, people that own dogs etc.
- Concern was expressed over the need to continue to provide green space for children, either within new developments, or very close by.
- Affordability was a common theme, with several comments along the lines of ‘how are our children going to afford housing’. Some suggested having a set ratio of low-cost housing such as in an ‘inclusionary zone’ to ensure developers built affordable homes, others wanted to limit growth (as below):

“It is apparent that our current government is not going to address housing affordability. Perhaps the very least Auckland Council can do is investigate and support social housing, non-profit developers where the economic benefits are judged against social, cultural and environmental ones. How? Allow social housing providers (which have to be created) to negotiate the purchase of poor quality HNZ stock, and provide planning and regulatory support/zoning to allow these areas to be redeveloped with communities in mind. Percentages of the new development can be returned to HNZ, others can be sold and others privately rented to aid the next development. This model is working with some success in other countries, CHC (Creating Homes and Communities) Affordable Housing in Canberra is an example.”

- One respondent pointed out that apartment dwelling is more expensive than low density living: *“High-density living incurs unexpected expenses and tests residents’ social skills e.g. special facilities for rubbish collection, lift replacement, secure car parking, secure access at night to that parking, on-site property managers or security staff because blocks are impossible for police to patrol and, of course, disposable income to get out of the flat more often (particularly for children). So... those on low incomes should never be expected to occupy high-density housing.”*

- There was also a suggestion to make the planning of new development equitable across suburbs, i.e. include the wealthier suburbs like Remuera and Herne Bay in plans for intensification and development.
- There were many comments about the need for better public transport, and the feeling that growth/intensification cannot happen until public transport access improves. People feel that as long as public transport access remains limited, commuters will need to use cars and that therefore development is unsustainable.
- Likewise, there were comments on the need to improve other infrastructure such as water and sewerage supply – before development can occur.
- Some comments about people with rainwater tanks / grey water systems not paying as much for water costs and having simpler/fewer consents:

“Improvements in energy efficiency - much more incentivisation of use of solar panels for both residential and commercial properties, promotion of energy efficient products- improvements in water efficiency - incentivise installation of rainwater tanks - don't give with one hand and take away with the other e.g. a \$200 rebate but a \$1000 consent is required. Isn't it beneficial to everyone if we encourage those with suitable properties to use rainwater? If so, then make the process of obtaining consent cheap and easy!”
- Likewise there were some comments about the benefits of on-site stormwater management and filtration:

“We can apply new technology to new houses and decrease our energy requirements at the same time. This is an opportunity to enhance the building regulations to call for higher levels of thermal and sound insulation and water detention to reduce the load on the sewer and storm water systems. It is now possible to install solar electric panels on a roof which will put electricity INTO the grid at peak times and the user can draw electricity in the evenings at off-peak times. It is an expensive exercise initially but cost-effective over the long term. The cost could come down a lot if there is enough demand and Council has the ability to create that demand by requiring or subsidising it.”
- Several panellists wanted to ensure that building up would incorporate facilities for disabled access and access for older people – rather than requiring people to walk up stairs.

2.3: Most liked posts

Participants were able to 'like' other's posts. Below are the posts that received the most likes under the Where we live topic:

Comment	Number of Likes
<p>I value the increased density and diversity of Auckland. We have lived in apartments in larger cities overseas and noted the advantages of frequent and easy transport to places of work, entertainment, parks, and shopping. In such places there is no need to own a car (or a lawnmower) while it is always possible to rent a car for holidays. A major factor necessary in making such living pleasant is strict adherence to zoning regulations. Whether or not it is accurate there is a perception in Auckland that a developer can get around regulations in various devious ways. Poor quality and poorly spaced developments in some Auckland areas suggest that this may be the case. Whatever the truth is we need to have confidence that zoning laws will take the benefit of all into consideration and then be strictly enforced.</p>	10
<p>Population planning - I dispute the assumption that Auckland will continue to grow. It can only continue if we allow it. Planning for a better Auckland means deciding on a population target and sticking to it, no matter how awkward that may be.</p>	8
<p>What matters is that the housing built is of a high quality so that people want to live there. There is no point building poor quality housing that will not last and that is not suitable for the intended residents.</p>	8
<p>Where I live the first thing that must be implemented before any thought of type of housing etc. is that of public transport. Living in a rural town within Auckland City without any public transport and having to travel at least 20km to a town within Auckland City that has public transport connection to Auckland is a most significant drawback to growth.</p>	8
<p>The council commissioned a study (sorry I can't remember the name but I think it was 'central access study' or something) that showed that we simply cannot accommodate all the people coming into the city in the future on busses. The City Rail Link will unlock the potential of the rail network and improve journey times across the whole network. Of course if you don't use the rail network to make journeys it will not impact you directly, but the increase in services and attractiveness will reduce the number of people driving and free up the roads for busses and people who must drive.</p>	7
<p>All this talk of what sort of buildings would be best and where are great BUT really we need to know that the Council have got the amenities right e.g. our water supply updated! Our sewerage pipes and infrastructure up to date. All roads and public transport and CARPARKS brought up to date so that all this stuff can accommodate all these extra people expected to live in Auckland. Then we can look at where to put all these new buildings. After the Council has all the infrastructure right or on the right track then we look at what would best suit each area they want to build in e.g. Takapuna, there is no way that can be built up anymore without another bridge, lots more ferries, and lots more buses or plenty of businesses actually in the area. In my area Mt Albert, there is room for development but you would need to do something that was in keeping with its older style housing and really think about the roads and the impact of more people living here, it is so busy now.</p>	6
<p>How much of the new housing currently being built is being bought by owner occupiers? I believe that most of it is being bought by investors, often</p>	6

<p>offshore investors who are also buying up existing housing stocks. I doubt the average person or first home buyer could afford to pay current property prices in Auckland. With the current govt land grab and privatisation going on of Auckland's social housing, why is there no discussion of building affordable housing in existing suburbs, where people do not have to travel long distances to reach amenities?</p>	
<p>I accept that to make the best use of land we need to go up but there needs to be a balance within these apartment blocks. Block after block of new apartments seem to be based on the premise that only couples or renters live in them. Where are the family friendly 3 and 4 bedroom apartments with large balconies and facilities provided for children?</p>	6
<p>I live in a seaside suburb which has been zoned for little or no change on the grounds that it is already as intensively developed as its available commercial zone can accommodate and as its amenity value would not be improved by further development. Having lived in North America and Europe, I am in favour of well-designed and people-friendly intensification. Our current inner city is seriously inappropriate for family living. Many of the shoe-box apartments of recent years may well need to be bowled (how many are leaky anyway?) and then replaced by intelligently-designed living for the range of people who will need to be accommodated there. Parks need to be developed to meet the needs of inner city dwellers and provide an integrated "green belt". As overseas, a rail network will rapidly become a hub for intensification of both commercial and residential building. This will help relieve congestion on our roads and will enable people to live in more intensive situations but have easy access to recreational facilities. Schools could become a real focus for "all-of-life" recreational and cultural activities. While the radical restructuring of education in Christchurch post-earthquake has been appallingly presented, it is, in fact, a concept that has real merit and has been highly successful in Scandinavia: having a school campus to be the focus of early childhood, primary and secondary schooling with access to health clinics and good nutrition facilities could well be a way of dealing with many of our inequalities and other issues apparent in the Southern Initiative areas. Residential development above street level (moderate multi-storey) may well be acceptable but needs to be well-designed and well-supported so as to meet the needs of residents for a good life.</p>	6
<p>I question whether it is possible to have "the worlds most liveable city" - in which housing is affordable for everyone - without having a capital gains tax on second homes and investment property. As the value of the property increases with increased housing demand and housing is treated as a lucrative investment free of capital gains tax, rather than as a home where families can feel secure, fewer people (especially young families) will be able to afford their own home.</p>	6
<p>If you don't want to live in a big city, then leave. Auckland is growing whether people like it or not and we should be properly accommodating everyone who lives here. Mid-rise apartments of 3 to 5 stories are a perfectly good option for most residential neighbourhoods in Auckland. We can have apartment towers in the metropolitan centres as well, but the days of single detached housing in the suburbs is over. Petrol prices are rising, the cost of maintaining all those roads, and water services is rising rapidly, so we need to use the infrastructure we have more efficiently, and that means intensification.</p>	6

<p>The disappointing aspect of the density issue in Auckland is the very poor standard of design overall, Design cannot be regulated with clumsy minimum sizes for land or dwellings. If we want significant progress we need to lead by example and build some superb buildings that inspire people to want to live in them. We give cars and appliances star ratings we need the same with all developments and have beefed up urban design panels who take the lead and promote and support good developments .A new urban design panel could receive funding to buy a site commission a design and get it built and then get the public to visit it and keep a permanent open home available. The public are very interested in urban living but cannot find anything half decent to buy. Just about all of it is poor design, uniform sizes, poor materials, leaks, nonexistent facilities, boring, antisocial and has too high body corp fees. The market is not stupid and knows it is getting warehouse quality products. The result is values drop and competition heats up for conventional housing because the apartments are rubbish. Then the apartments turn into social ghettos for the poorer quality apartments while the so called better apartment buildings become elitist If council actively built and promoted good model urban design in one part of Auckland then Aucklanders would catch on. Leave it to the regulations and developers and you will get a poor result. The point again you cannot regulate good design, Council get in there and make sure it happens properly. You have the power and the resources so get on with it.</p>	5
<p>By all means increase housing density where appropriate. Flats in the centre for singles and couples of all ages are great. But you have to recognise that one of the things we value as a people is a house with a garden for the kids to play in. That is why as we have families, we move out to the suburbs. You are never going to get away from that. Immigrants to NZ from abroad are often coming here from very intensified urban environments because that is not what they want any more. You can, however make better use of land to give more people the opportunity to have that dream of a house with a garden. Terraces and semi-detached dwellings offer this in a much more efficient way than house with a strip of garden all the way round. Often the same land area can give a much more use-able bit of garden if it is concentrated at the back of the house. Why do people want a big useless space at the front of a house anyway - it just has to be mowed, and there's no privacy so you don't use it. Terraces don't have to be nasty little boxes either. There are some examples even around Auckland of nice, off-set terraces which give quite a bit of privacy. It's just that the developers don't want to build these because they get more money out of the big, nasty mansions, which are often sold to overseas buyers. I worry that my children will never be able to own a house. There needs to be some really strong planning rules, to put a complete stop on the mansions, in favour of houses for ordinary people.</p>	5

3. Where we work discussion topic

Discussion and follow up questions asked on this page:

- what do you think about the potential building heights for town centres – up to 30m and 8 storeys in the commercial core of larger town centres and up to 15m and 4 storeys for the commercial core of all other town centres?
- should all commercial development require a consent for design, or just those in certain locations? What design features (if any) are must-haves?
- how else can we encourage businesses to develop in the most appropriate areas?
- in the past commercial buildings outside the Auckland city centre have usually been required to provide parking. A different approach is being considered for areas with good access to frequent public transport. In these areas commercial buildings would be permitted, rather than required, to provide a certain amount of parking. This allows businesses to decide how much on site parking they need, up to a specified maximum amount. It also supports more intensive development and efficient use of land in areas with good access to public transport. What do you think of this idea?
- where should large format retail businesses be located relative to residential areas and other businesses?

As per figure 1.4, this topic received 179 of the 864 posts (21%).

3.1: Discussion summary

Again there was strong support for commercial intensification to be tied to mass transport along with better facilities to encourage cycling, walking and alternate modes of transport. Some questioned the need for more commercial development due to a perceived oversupply of commercial properties and a number of buildings currently sitting empty.

There was some discussion about large scale retail development with some panellists cautioning that malls can kill off local town centres if there are too many of them, or if they are built too close to local townships. Greater flexibility with regards to zoning laws was suggested as a way to encourage more local businesses into the community. Some felt that large retail developments should be separate from residential areas but near transport hubs, while others wanted business hubs nearer to residential areas.

Opinions on suitable building heights varied with some agreeing with a limit of 30m/ 8 storeys in larger town centres and up to 15m/ 4 storeys in other town

centres. Others felt these heights were too high and that commercial activities must be compatible with the surrounding neighbourhood. There was a common view that commercial development should always require consents and again, should have to fit the look and character of the local area. Desired design features included; green spaces, trees, good transport links, energy efficient buildings and green roofs.

3.2: Main themes and examples

- There was a fair bit of comment about the need for better public transport infrastructure and to encourage development to occur along PT corridors / rail corridors etc, with some calling for 'intensified land use integrated with public transport'.
- Likewise there were several comments about the need for more cycling infrastructure – cycle lanes and end point cycling facilities.
- There were also calls for a focus on more pedestrian friendly areas, particularly in commercial areas:

“There are so many places in Auckland where you are virtually forced into your car for ridiculously short distances. A task force to remove these barriers to pedestrians would be a really good use of rate payer's money. Unlike V8s at Pukekohe. I'm not a car-hater, by the way, I just think Auckland has the balance totally wrong.”

- Some panellists commented on the need for disability parking to be maintained in commercial developments, as most public transport is inadequate for mobility impaired users. Another point on the need for sufficient car parks was that larger commercial developments often sell more bulky items that would require a car to transport.
- Several panellists felt there was too much commercial property already, and that since vacancy rates are currently high it would be inappropriate to consider any new developments while existing buildings are poorly used.
- Some felt that that big box retail and shopping malls had killed a number of smaller businesses and that vacancy rates were high in suburban town centres.
- Others felt there was a place for both types of retail, but that more large format retail businesses shouldn't be encouraged at the expense of local shops:

“The Mall vs High Street argument is a tricky one. Personally, I suppose I mainly go to the Mall, but I prefer Botany (to Sylvia Park) because it is open air, and more compact for walking around in. I do use Howick though, because it is often more pleasant to stroll along a street. If I lived within 10 minutes walk of Howick, I would use it more than Botany. I think we are at saturation point with shopping malls, and if there are more opened up, the high streets will not survive, which would be detrimental to the community as a whole. Definitely all Malls and larger High Streets such as Howick should be bus hubs. They should be at the centre of webs of bus routes (and trains if possible and cycle routes). At the moment, only one or two of the main corridors into each retail hub are served. If you don't live on the right corridor, you're stuffed.”

- To combat this, some felt that developments for smaller businesses could be afforded more design flexibility than bigger developments. Some wanted to see small business encouraged in local communities:

“I was thinking about how the much referred to "Mum and Dad" small business owner is reliant on obtaining resource consents or appropriate zoning to run small businesses from their home. Some flexibility around zoning should allow this to happen, which will have the effect of reducing commuting, encouraging and supporting small business, and increasing the daytime vitality of residential communities. Obviously, this needs to be done with some restrictions or community impact guidelines - but any Unitary Plan regulations should ensure that these types of businesses do not have to jump through unnecessary hoops to get started.”

- Part of the call to revitalise village centres and main streets centred on the types of stores that might encourage this. Liquor stores and \$2 stores were two types of businesses that some panellists said they would like to see less of.
- Some felt it was less important to encourage businesses to develop in certain areas, and more important to focus on getting residential development right – so that there would be areas with a number of customers which would by default attract businesses to those areas.
- Others believed commercial or industrial areas should be separate from residential areas unless compatible with those areas - but should be close to transport hubs.

“To encourage business to develop in the most appropriate areas, create industrial parks well away from where people live and near motorways and rail lines. Yes, all commercial development should require publically notified consent and not just for design. Commercial activities must be compatible with the surrounding neighbourhood. Building heights in town centres should be limited to 3 stories unless they are well away from any residential properties.”

- Some wanted to ensure that business zones were tightly managed (especially for manufacturing), while others wanted to see business hubs nearer to residential areas.
- There was a common view that commercial developments should always require consents, and that the buildings should have to fit in with the look and character of the local area.
- Some essential design features (as per the ‘Where we live’ section) were: green space, trees, good transport links. Some also wanted to ensure buildings were future proofed with a greater emphasis on solar power, energy efficiency, green roofs etc:

“Also agree. And would like to see an initiative about including in new buildings - green roofs. They can result in multiple benefits - not just the environmental one, as they cool buildings down as reduce stormwater runoff. "Local governments in Germany have put in place regulatory incentives for building green roofs, including a “rain tax” which charges property owners for impervious surfaces that lead to rainwater runoff and fill up local storm sewers - Cityscape blog, Chicago Tribune "As stormwater is a big infrastructure consideration and cost - this is a good use of regulatory practice that will encourage adoption of ecological and environmental design. It would be great to see Auckland lead the way on sustainable design for our buildings.”

“Future retail and commercial businesses should be designed using universal design principles. Too many shops and businesses are inaccessible to walking frames, prams, wheelchairs. People are getting bigger and a place that everyone to get to for work, study, shopping or community participation is an attractive likeable liveable community. Universal design principles includes-wider doorways and aisles, space to allow people to move-no stairs to upper levels including offices, without a lift

as an alternative-more dropped kerbs around road crossings and parking areas-sliding doors as much as possible in retail environments. Cluster health centres/doctors, public facilities like libraries and pools, schools and food shopping in a hub serviced by public transport. Precincts for university education and health need to be stand alone so that they are easy to travel to and from. Using zoning regulation to encourage intensive residential areas in commercial areas that are in decline like Highland Park makes sense, as the infrastructure for building is already established.”

- Regarding building height, there were a couple of comments in agreement with the proposal “New buildings in larger town centres could be limited to 30m/ 8 storeys and in other town centres up to 15m/ 4 storeys.” But others felt that these building heights would destroy local centres’ ambience.

3.3: Most liked posts

Below are the posts that received the most likes under the Where we work topic:

Comment	Number of Likes
Saw an interesting documentary on the Netherlands, which had a mixed use development in the planning stage. The planners recognised that until the development had residents, it was unlikely that businesses would take up any business development and creating the business area in the centre would create a community without a "heart". Their (ultimately successful) solution was to propose a set of objectives and guidelines for the central area (most likely to be utilised for business and commercial in the future). Buildings were to be three to four stories in height, with the ground floor ceiling height to be four metres. Separate access to the upper floors had to be provided along with green building specifications and performance - i.e. passive solar. Otherwise, building form shape and materials could be determined by the owner. This resulted in satisfyingly diverse built forms - but with common size and impact, that served as family homes and attached residential spaces until such time as businesses started up and took over the ground floors. This also meant that the main street was a mixture of business and upper floor residential which improved the vitality of the community, which functioned at all hours - not just nine to five.	7
Well I don't want any more liquor stores :(There are too many. We have mainly \$2 type shops and cheap takeaways. I would love to see more of a range of shops - I would even have thought outlet stores would revitalise our area get more people in. Perhaps an actual sit-down restaurant, our supermarkets have been reduced to one - (that one brought the other out and did not renew the lease on it a few years ago) - consumers got less local choice and prices seemed to go up in the remaining one.	7
I think consent for design for new buildings is necessary and all buildings built should be a bit future proofed- by that I mean things like solar power and other energy minimising technologies should be required and encouraged (not discouraged by additional consent fees etc on top of the design). I also	6

<p>agree if we can have people work closer to where they live that is a bonus for everyone - as someone who commutes each day it's one of the things I would love to be able to do have an employer for my field close to where I live (since I cannot afford to live close to the city where I work). But despite the ability to do a lot of things by remote nowadays I think ultimately people like to meet and greet the others they might work alongside - so businesses get business from other businesses they work near. Therefore for business to be dotted around the supercity - there has to be a critical mass of them in each case. For example a firm I know based in South Auckland moved to central Auckland - they could not get enough work or recruit enough staff where they were - now in a cluster of other businesses things have improved for them. But that's pretty sad for South Auckland. Another subject is this - WHY are new shopping complexes etc being built as old ones are left to go to ruin - I have noticed this a lot - new complexes pop up and the older places then loose customers and cannot fill their shops etc - it seems an incredible waste. My area is rife with shops carrying almost permanent to lease signs - yet the area is full of people who seem to now shop elsewhere. Yet with a bit of TLC and investment it could be a thriving community centre again like it was. And think of the land going to waste when that happens - in Auckland where houses are so unaffordable for so many (although we are not talking the top dollar areas here still). Is there any way we can encourage efficient use of the land currently zoned commercial/industrial?</p>	
<p>Regarding the height restrictions, please have both a metre value and storey value for height restrictions! Currently the metre values lead to the prevalence of condensed floored, flat roofed development, which homogenises development and reduced variety, not to mention the implications for leaky buildings.</p>	6
<p>To encourage businesses to develop in the most appropriate areas, create industrial parks well away from where people live and near motorways and rail lines. Yes, all commercial development should require publically notified consent and not just for design. Commercial activities must be compatible with the surrounding neighbourhood. Building heights in town centres should be limited to 3 stories unless they are well away from any residential properties.</p>	5
<p>I would like the planners to think carefully about sea level rise. If we are going to have urban centres best not to put them in low-lying areas - the same goes with major roads. It seems much better to go up rather than out, but I don't know if I could live in a high-rise without lots of accessible open space nearby. Up to 30m and 8 storeys is OK, and I like the max of 4 storeys in small town centres. But please don't make the urban walking space looking into parking garages for the high rises! The idea of green space to the south of high rises wouldn't shade the rest of the area and provide nearby open space.... Consents for design, Big-Box stores should always have consents for their designs! So should cell-phone towers. It seems if there were some "good design" parameters and the architects met these there could be less onerous consenting. Good design features would be safe but interesting side walks and streetscapes, street trees, good urban art, urban areas linked with rural or open space via bike lanes and walking paths. The walking/cycling path around the Orewa Estuary is a fantastic model that could be emulated in other places.</p>	4

Research

Analysis

Insight



4. What we value discussion topic

Discussion and follow up questions asked on this page:

- how do we get the right balance between protecting our environment and heritage, while ensuring that we have enough affordable and quality housing?
- what are your ideas on the best ways we can protect our historic character areas?
- what are your ideas on the best ways to protect our natural environment (e.g. streams, native habitat, landscapes)?
- should there be tough controls on building in flood plains? (and if so, what kind of controls?)

As per figure 1.4, this topic received 230 of the 864 posts (27%).

4.1: Discussion summary

There was a lot of discussion about non-complying consents and the desire to see all non-complying consents notified as a way of upholding regulations designed to protect our environment and heritage. Some expressed the belief that council is not doing enough to protect the environment and that there are too many loopholes that enable developers to breach the letter or intent of the plan.

As with the 'Where we live' section, some felt that we should limit growth in order to protect our environment and heritage. Again, others felt that growth is desirable or inevitable and that we must combine high-density housing with good planning that enables the protection of our environment and heritage.

There was discussion over what constitutes a heritage site with some suggesting that we don't really have much worth protecting. Others suggested regenerating heritage sites into new housing developments. Calls were also made to distinguish between 'character' and 'heritage' and that our built heritage cannot be replaced.

Participants generally agreed that there should be tight controls on building in flood plains.

4.2: Main themes and examples

- A large number of comments referred to non-complying consents that were 'pushed through in secret' without public notification, and did not want to see this situation continue – they want to see all non-complying consents publically notified:

“An essential reform is that all consent applications that contain substantial breaches of the code requirements must be notified widely. There is nothing wrong with nimbyism when it involves opposition to the destruction of the amenities of our area. If a change is needed it should be done by a proper planning change - not by giving selected developers a golden handshake.The Auckland Plan may be giving more protection to individual historic buildings but it is proposing to destroy swathes of its built heritage.”

“If the District Plans are the current rule book, why are so many (often non-notified) consents granted which are in breach of these rules? And how can we be assured the same will not happen with the Unitary Plan?”

- Several people feel that the Unitary Plan should not allow loopholes that enable developers to breach the letter or intent of the plan – especially without public notification.
- In line with this, one commentator called for the Unitary Plan to be ‘simple, understandable, enforceable and enforced’.
- Several people expressed a lack of trust in the council planning departments and their ability/intent to ensure the regulations in the district plan were adhered to consistently.
- Words like “environmental creep” and “retrospective consent” were used to describe a situation where laws designed to protect our foreshore and coastlines have not been adhered to. Another aspect of Environmental protection discussed was the need to keep Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO) out of the country.
- A stronger stance against all forms of pollution was also called for.
- As with the ‘Where we live’ section, several people felt that growth was not desirable, and that we can protect our valued environment and character areas by limiting growth. People felt that Auckland can only grow if we allow it to, and we don’t have to – we can prevent development and apply a population cap, or encourage people to live in other parts of the country.
- There were also the counter arguments to this – namely that growth is desirable, and/or that it will happen whether we like it or not. Planning for this growth, while protecting the environment was, to some, the key to finding a balance.

“One way to mitigate against damage to our environment is to encourage high density development in appropriate situations so we don't have to spill

into heritage and natural areas. Residential, business and shopping developments should be encouraged along our rail corridors (within easy walking distance of a station), so that workers can feel able to live, shop and work within easy distance of a rail stop and feel able to live without ownership of a private motor vehicle. The cost of housing is less of an issue if the owner or tenant isn't forced into the costs of car ownership as well. A huge proportion of our city seems to be devoted to ever wider motorways and the parking of private vehicles; what are the indirect costs, to everybody and our environment. I am rather bemused by council turning Westgate into what seems like a "pet project" that people will feel encouraged to drive to. Yes, we are told there will be major bus links with other parts of Auckland but wouldn't it have been better to have slowly converted Henderson into a higher-density living / shopping / business / industrial centre? After all, it already has council facilities and a major rail station right there. It's all very well to promote centres that are linked by bus, but buses also pump diesel fumes into our atmosphere and compete for space on our grid-locked roads."

- Some suggested the key to properly managed growth is to provide improved infrastructure in advance of new development - so existing systems can handle the extra pressure more people will bring:

"We protect our natural (and reclaim recently lost) environment by getting high quality infrastructure in place. Major parts of that infrastructure - energy (electricity, gas), communications (telephone, broadband, mobile) and, to a large extent, water, are supplied by private enterprise. The Auckland Plan needs to be more specific in its need for partnership between big business and Council to make Auckland the most liveable city and that means (progressively) getting rid of overhead power lines - at business expense, not from council rates."
- Others felt that if new developments were somehow connected to environmental and heritage sites they would be more appealing and require less land of their own.
- Further ideas on how to protect our natural environment included; maintaining good access to parks and reserves; maintaining green belts; and an end to encroachment into greenfields.

Research Analysis Insight

- The need to protect our waterways through effective stormwater management was also expressed several times.
- There was some debate about the merits of heritage protection – with some strongly in favour, and others saying things like ‘just because its old does not necessarily make it good’
- There were comments about the need maintain view shafts, especially of the harbour and volcanoes, with one person wanting to see development on Tamaki Drive limited to 2 storeys.
- Improvements to public transport, specifically trains, were also called for to service people in commuter suburbs. This included making the public transport much more user friendly i.e. universal ticketing. There was quite a bit of discussion about the need to get rid of cars in the city vs an individual’s ‘right’ to own and drive a car.
- A couple of panellists wrote on behalf of Auckland Recreational Airparks Trust seeking a replacement site for their air park that was taken back by ports of Auckland 7 years ago:
- *“All that is needed is a replacement for Pikes Point Airpark. As the provision of land for an airpark is a regional matter rather than one for local boards the Trust has been advised to submit that such a provision be included in the Unitary Plan.”*
- There was some discussion about Waiheke Island being filled with large holiday homes that sit empty a lot of the year while there is a shortage of housing for people who want a place to live and to be part of the community. Some debate focused on how to deal with second dwellings and whether there was a way of limiting the size of a second dwelling. Others felt that Waiheke shouldn’t be developed any further. There was also debate around maintaining access to waterfront areas and keeping this open to all.
- As in the other sections several people called for any new housing areas to be affordable, and for there to be a range of options for all types of people/families/situations.
- Most panellists agreed there should be tight controls on building on flood plains, with some suggestions to not allow insurance for any homes built on flood plains:

“Yes, there definitely should be tight controls on building on flood plains. We need to also allow for the regeneration of wetlands for the purpose of both mitigating flood and clean water flow, plus to address the environmental needs for such areas in our ecosystem. This is a crucial thing. Waitakere City has previously begun to address this by moving houses on flood plain zones and planting bush, and much of our region needs this to be done still.”

4.3: Most liked posts

Below are the posts that received the most likes under the ‘What we value’ topic:

Comment	Number of Likes
I am totally opposed to having any non-notified consents. I have seen too many secret council deals allowing things the community does not want. We need more community consultation not less.	15
We do have a serious problem with staff making decisions on consents and very few are ever notified these days. This needs to change radically so that all consents which do not comply with the plan must be available for public scrutiny. Rodney used to list all consent application on line but this has disappeared with the Auckland Council takeover. This should be reinstated for the whole of Auckland - no problem in this computer age. Sadly environmental protection, which features prominently in the Auckland Plan, simply does not have the allocation of funding it needs. Funding a racetrack at Pukekohe with its carbon emissions is more important than protecting and restoring our polluted harbours!	11
More money needs to be invested in our natural areas. Weeds are everywhere and there are too many exotic trees. We need to plant more native trees and plants and link the ecological corridors together as best we can. We should also look at daylighting some of the piped streams so that natural waterways can be restored for fish and other aquatic life.	8
My community, a small coastal settlement of 230 homes most on large 8,00 m2 sections zoned low density or landscape protection is a great example of how good subdivision design, now 30 years old, can integrate relatively easily into a native bush environment with minimal environmental impact. It could be a model for the 'Rural Living zone' proposed on the "Planning Rodney" policy back in 2009. We have no water services and do not need them. Our streams are in good health and our native bird population has increased with a community based predator control programme supported by Auckland Council Biosecurity people. Our community values in order of priority, our wildlife, the reserves and beaches, rural and bush lifestyle, peace and quiet, our foreshore amenity privacy and security. Lower on the list are boating activities and moorings. This community wants the Unitary plan to avoid loopholes that allow developers to breach the letter and intent of the present district plan through private negotiations with council, and without notification to neighbours or the public. We rely on the council to enforce the plan effectively thereby preserving our interests and those of future generations. As a community we welcome those who adopt a 'stewardship' role in their occupation of this beautiful environment. We are increasingly subjected to	8

<p>development pressures for intensification and commercialisation despite the certainty that this will destroy what we enjoy daily and our streams of visitors seek. If too many people crowd into our coastal environment they will destroy what our visitors value. Once it is gone it cannot be recovered. In summary we expect the Unitary Plan to be simple, understandable, and above all, enforceable and enforced. We would strongly support the adoption of the Planning Rodney policy as a model for areas outside the urban limits.</p>	
<p>Population planning- I dispute the assumption that Auckland will continue to grow. It can only continue if we allow it. Planning for a better Auckland means deciding on a population target and sticking to it, no matter how awkward that may be.</p>	8
<p>Heritage buildings must be protected otherwise our children and grandchildren will have no historic buildings left. We are a young country and so all older buildings are important. They may need strengthening to be earthquake proof and this should be done to ensure that we do not lose all the old buildings to the demolition hammer to be replaced by glass-fronted monstrosities. New buildings should be in keeping with the surroundings -</p>	7
<p>I'm sorry to say that I've yet to see a city that's benefited from what polities call 'growth'. It seems that growth for growth's sake is sufficient reason for some people yet it does seem to bring with it all sorts of drama and conflict over land use etc etc. I ran a tour business some time ago and everyone, no exceptions, said 'try to keep the essential nature of NZ and Auckland the way it is" they meant NOT like the rest of the world; they hadn't come to NZ to see transplanted England or eat at the Golden Arches....they came because they wanted to see something different....and without exception they saw our small size as a huge advantage. Sure they thought things were pricey compared to Walmart....but they also pointed out that most of that stuff was really superfluous anyway....what they really valued was the ease of access (relatively), the lack of crowds, the sense of open space, and, mostly, the people. One US gentleman said to me "I've seen the kinder, more gentle place my grandparents talked about....a slower pace, more attention to the land and its offerings...without stomping all over it." Maybe that's a bit rose tinted but it seems to me that the more folks we get, the more problems we have.....we are not having any conversation, even at a Central Government level on how to really tap in to the advantages of our small size and distance from other countries....are we really that broke for ideas? Growth for growth's sake is a dead end....you can see the world is going to hit a resource wall sooner or later if we keep the loadings going; isn't it time for some sort of intelligent discussion about quality and our huge advantage of being relatively thinly populated by world standards? And if everyone wants it all to get bigger, faster, whatever (the purpose and benefit of which I've yet to see really well explained) then so be it if we get a chance to comment before the event...But this insistence on growth seems to have gotten most of the world into something of a mess right now...how about quality growth...not just growth?</p>	7
<p>All the focus questions seem to assume "more of the same" GROWTH. It is patently obvious that we cannot protect our heritage, natural environment and quality of life (e.g., affordable housing) along with exponential and unfettered growth. Instead of just growing Auckland bigger, we should declare a green belt and develop smaller outlying villages (Helensville, Pokeno) with their own amenities, business and work opportunities. Instead of just "protecting" historic character areas and natural environment, we should think "regenerating" or "creating". Character isn't just created by heritage, but by</p>	6

<p>attention to creative architecture and urban design (not left to developers who only want profit, but those who are socially and environmentally conscious and work in partnership with the local community). Having enough affordable and quality housing doesn't have to be at the expense of our environment and heritage (which the question seems to assume), we can do both with good design (e.g. converting heritage buildings like warehouses into good quality living accommodation) incorporating natural environment features like living roofs and walls, trees and water into our housing developments.</p>	
<p>And yet the Council has started the precinct of St Heliers on the way to Ugly Modern.</p>	6
<p>If the District Plans are the current rule book, why are so many (often non notified) consents granted which are in breach of these rules? And how can we be assured the same will not happen with the Unitary Plan?</p>	6
<p>Make sure that any development plans incorporate natural environment and heritage sites, and connect them to the development so access is maintained. The reliance on private land associated with houses is diminished if access to local reserves and natural environment is walkable and encouraged. Parks and reserves do not need to be large to achieve this, they just have to be well designed and accessible. Sports parks while valuable are not suitable for this intent.</p>	6
<p>Nobody named anyone.....But if we're going to have an intelligent conversation we ought to be able to say where perceived problems lie and offer a solution...I'm of the opinion, through experience in Rodney that the level of competence in planning matters is very difficult to determine as 1: the decisions seem at odds with the DS often and 2: when you try to talk to a planner you get nowhere.....you simply can't interface with The Machine easily and its all after the event...a done deal...often in secret even though its non complying! So out here there's a huge sense of frustration; we all submit to the DS, rules get incorporated, then they seem to be buried and ignored.... repeatedly. Why???? Looking at the facts and outcomes it seems the planning and consent departments are reading from a different script to us lot. It's a mystery why we feel that the Company we actually own (the Council) is not working for us and responsive to our reasonable requests for intelligent discussion. Any other company would respond reasonably to its shareholders...its not complicated!</p>	6
<p>Views of course are another thing that needs protection. Not building too high around volcano view shafts. Auckland should be protected as a city of views.</p>	6
<p>What do we value? One of the things we value most is our uniquely NZ environment. At the moment, the most effective thing the Auckland Council could do to protect this is to fire their entire Planning and Heritage Departments and reconstitute them with (1) a Planning Dept head who actually IS a qualified planner (bizarre but true that the current one isn't) and (2) a corporate ethic the opposite of the current "anything a 'developer' wants is fine, we don't have to ask the neighbours before granting the most outrageous consents". The present situation borders on the criminal. Please GET RID of these clowns.</p>	6
<p>Whilst I understand this is going to be a wildly unpopular suggestion, I feel it is relevant on several levels; not only will it improve the 'living experience' so to speak (and believe me, it impacts very negatively on the area where I live at present) it is vital that we grasp this nettle before it gets out of hand as it has in Australia. There must be something done about the control of cats. I have no idea why we do not licence them as we do dogs. Cats destroy native birds</p>	6

<p>by the multi-thousands; they damage gardens and stink public and private areas by urination. They are noisy at night and have been a health hazard for a long time. Without the pollution cats cause, living would be much more pleasant for most of us - even the cat lovers.</p>	
---	--

Appendix – the forum introductory page

Welcome to the Online Forum on Auckland Council's Unitary Plan

Thanks for taking part in our new interactive discussion forum. We hope this forum will encourage Aucklanders to get involved in the discussion about the Unitary Plan and some of the key challenges and proposals being considered.

How the Forum Works

Joining the discussion – you are welcome to read through people's comments and see the discussion on each topic (see the three topics in the sidebar on the left), but before you can post a comment, you will need to [create a profile](#) and login. Don't worry, signing up is very easy and takes 30 seconds. You just need to make an alias (which can be anonymous and there is no way other panellists can identify you unless you want them to), provide an email address and choose a password. If you want to make a profile picture you can, but you don't have to.

Submitting posts – once you have created a profile you can add posts (comments) on any of the discussion topics, reply and comment on other people's posts, and 'like' other people's comments. You can also request to be notified so that if someone responds to one of your posts we'll send you an email letting you know.

We openly welcome your comments and encourage discussion. We ask that you are polite and respectful with your comments and views. We reserve the right to remove comments which are disrespectful, rude, abusive, or considered spam - see our [ground rules](#) for the discussion.

Moderators – we're here to answer any questions you might have and keep the conversation moving along. We'll try to provide answers to your questions within 24 hours, but if your question is highly technical, or if you ask it at 3am, it may take longer to answer :)

We'll also pose new questions and discussion threads, respond to specific points and generally keep the discussion moving and on topic.

If necessary we will remove abusive or otherwise inappropriate comments, but only if they break the [ground rules](#). In these cases we will email the participant to explain why their comment has been removed and invite them to re-submit their post in more appropriate language.

Our moderators are:

BenP, LizM, CarolH, KateF, and ChrisY

Timing - the forum will be open from Thursday October 25th to Wednesday November 7th. You can visit the forum at any time during that period and take part as many times as you want.

The Unitary Plan

Context

Auckland has always been a place of tremendous growth – this growth will continue in the future. We have to think ahead and we have to plan for this growth – for example:

- **how and where do we find space to build another 400,000 houses** – on top of the 500,000 we already have now – for another 1 million more people over the next 30 years?
- **how do we create the right areas for business activities** so that they are well placed for transport connections and facilities?
- **how do we make sure that we can continue to enjoy the things we do in the future** – like visiting our beaches or doing a bit of fishing?

These are some of the things we have to think about and that we have to plan for, with your help.

Earlier this year, Auckland Council brought out the region's 30-year vision for the future. Simply called the **Auckland Plan**, this is the **blueprint for how we want Auckland to develop over the next 30 years**. For more on the Auckland Plan, [watch this video](#).

The Unitary Plan

If we plan properly, we'll have a city that's even more exciting, fun and vibrant than the one we already have. We need to make sure that what gets built is much more attractive and beautiful than much of what has been built in recent years. And we need to ensure that we protect what we love about Auckland – its beaches, maunga, its special character.

What will happen if we don't get it right? This is our choice – plan, make our city even more beautiful, and enjoy what our growth brings... or don't plan and see our city strain and burst. There is no choice.

That's why the **Auckland Plan is so very important**. And the Unitary Plan - what we're talking about in the forum – is the **rulebook** that will bring it to life. **It will set out what can be built and where**, replacing the previous regional and district plans, many of which are already past their use-by date:

- it will be how we ensure that we not only build the **homes we need**, with the choice of types of housing that people are desperate for, it will ensure that they are built in the right places
- it will ensure our **businesses** have the space and capacity to start up and grow, bringing jobs and greater prosperity for us all
- it will help to provide the protection of our **heritage and environment** that we desperately want.

Your role is to help us ensure we get those rules right.

For more information on the Unitary Plan [click here](#).

The topics – on the left you'll see links to the three topics

- [Where we live](#): creating more housing choices and more affordable housing
- [Where we work](#): enabling businesses to grow and develop
- [What we value](#): protecting our natural environment, heritage and character.

We welcome your comments on each of these topics.