



## MEDIA RELEASE

5 May 2005

### Research dispels intensive housing myths

Research received today at Auckland City's Urban Strategy and Governance committee shows no clear link between intensive housing and any positive or negative social effect.

The research, commissioned by Auckland City, Waitakere City, Auckland Regional Council and Housing New Zealand Corporation and undertaken by consultants from Synchro Consulting and Hill Young Cooper Ltd, is part of the sustainable cities initiative. It will be used to improve understanding of and responses to these concerns and to better monitor council policies and plans.

The research analysed public perception of intensive housing, as outlined in recent community surveys and local media coverage, and compared the views expressed in these with national and international research.

"The results show no clear link exists between an increase in housing density and any positive or negative social outcome," says Councillor Bruce Hucker, chairperson of the Urban Strategy and Governance committee.

"The report also indicates that recent surveys and media articles tend to focus on perceived connections between the design of intensive developments and social problems.

"However, most research literature acknowledges that the built environment is just one factor in a wide range of economic and social forces influencing social problems. In fact, many residents of intense housing developments appreciate features such as communal facilities and common open spaces."

The report does highlight that intensive developments should:

- place high importance on design, construction quality and maintenance
- reflect the local area and meet people's needs
- be located near (or accessible to) a range of services and activities
- accommodate a diverse range of households in terms of income and demographics.

The research reports a mixed public perception of housing intensification. About one-third of reported public perceptions supported intensification, but reflected the view that it is not for everyone; one-third saw the value of intensification; and one-third supported and are potential future users of it.

Extensive consultation by the Auckland Regional Council and Auckland City during the preparation of the regional growth strategy in 1999 confirmed that people in the Auckland region support limiting suburban sprawl that spoils the bush, beaches and farmland surrounding the city.

Consequently, every council in the Auckland region is taking a "compact city" approach to urban growth. This means reducing suburban sprawl (and the traffic congestion that sprawl creates) by limiting growth outwards and accommodating people and jobs within urban limits.

The councils are working together to manage growth and co-ordinate work on transport and economic infrastructure, so that the region can effectively manage its growing population.

One aspect of this approach is to increase housing density around areas identified as being able to accommodate future population growth. These areas are those that have good public transport access and storm water infrastructure, the capacity to grow, good public facilities and open space, and an environment not threatened by growth.

A key principle is to improve quality of life, sense of community and lifestyle choices by creating vibrant town centres that are easy to get around by foot and passenger transport.

The initial focus of planning for housing intensification in the Auckland region has been on location, accessibility as well as access to community facilities such as public transport, shops, jobs and schools.

The research into the social impacts of intensive housing indicates that the quality and diversity of development design, which to date has not received much attention, may be the biggest challenge facing the push to accommodate population growth in intensive housing developments.

The Urban Strategy and Governance committee further recommended that additional research be scoped to investigate links between housing and the nine key socio cultural factors identified in the research – health, crime, poverty, social exclusion, community, perceived well-being, anomie, education and labour force participation. This research will map the deprivation index alongside areas of intensification in Auckland to assess how they are related and report back to the committee.

## **Ends**

For further information, please contact:  
Councillor Bruce Hucker, chairperson, Urban Strategy and Governance committee  
ph (09) 307 6085

For media assistance, please contact:  
Siobhan O'Donovan, communications and marketing  
ph (09) 307 7578 or 027 496 7021

Ref: SOD