

## **Hamilton Urban Growth Strategy**

### **Submission from Living Streets Hamilton**

**Presenter:** Judy McDonald

Living Streets Hamilton is in agreement with the need for higher density urban housing in future decades in order to contain urban sprawl and maximise the efficiency of provision of services such as electricity, gas and water supply, and public transport. For this reason we also support the development of the Peacocke area taking priority over Rotokauri because there is the potential to link easily to the central areas of the existing city, and the University, by foot and cycle if an appropriate bridge is provided in the Hamilton Gardens area. At the same time the long-running debate about pedestrian access to the Gardens could be dealt with and Hamiltonians on both sides of the river could benefit considerably.

However, and this is a big however, we are very concerned about the way in which high density residential areas may be provided.

At present Hamilton seems to have very minimal control over what developers can do once they have gained ownership of a site, and it is quite obvious from some of the examples provided in the attached photo gallery that they are pushing to the limits of some very accommodating laws.

Our main concern is that development needs to provide good quality, sustainable housing that is fit to live in. Cramped boxes set in a quarter acre of concrete and tarmac do not fit this description. Neither should high-density developments be set at random in established residential areas. Not everyone is going to want to live in high-density areas, and they have often deliberately bought in older areas in order to avoid this. It seems unreasonable that they can then have a developer buy the quarter acre (or two) next door and install several two-storied apartments that look directly into the backyards of the surrounding houses.

Good high-density housing needs to be close to the city centre for preference, or at least close to major public transport nodes, to minimise car use and encourage the use of active transport and public transport. As can be seen in the photos, the present type of development frequently leads to cars parked inappropriately all over surrounding streets because the developers have provided one park per unit. When these are rented to multiple tenants and there is no effective public transport system in place, tenants' cars spread all over the landscape. This is unsightly and a hazard to pedestrian traffic.

We feel that there is a need for much more control over the nature of high density housing and its location. Leaving development to individual developers produces the results we have now, and they are not pretty in most cases. Individuals will generally try to maximise profit by minimising costs, and this is going to cause trouble in the medium to long term, as shoddily built multiple dwellings become slums with rapid turnover of tenants. The signs of this are already apparent in some quite recent blocks of apartments.

It is important that Hamilton City Council has clear plans for areas of development and clear criteria which must be met by developers. It might have much better long term outcomes if high density development proceeds in larger blocks – these may need to be bought by council and developed in conjunction with developers, rather than leaving the developers to get on with it.

We believe it is vital that Hamilton's urban planning laws are made stricter to avoid the kind of unpleasant, randomly distributed developments illustrated on the following pages. Without regulations with teeth and a genuine commitment to properly planned, central city high density development, we will have the dubious honour of having produced one of New Zealand's ugliest large towns.

Hamilton City Council already has councillors and staff with experience of large cities overseas where cycling and walking are high priorities and where urban development has been planned to facilitate this. Now is the time to listen to the knowledge these people have and to lead Hamilton to a sustainable future in which good quality high density housing is coupled with efficient public transport, good facilities for cycling and walking, and safe, attractive public spaces.



*These units in Peachgrove Rd are inappropriate to the surrounding environment, provide inadequate off-street parking and are in a state of almost constant turnover of tenants. There is no exposed soil anywhere on the two adjacent sites. The black asphalt driveways are very hot in summer and all rain becomes instant stormwater runoff.*



*Blank walls facing the street and rows of windows looking directly into the neighbouring section are less than attractive.*



*These are some of the worst. Small, hastily constructed, with minimal privacy and again in a state of constant turnover, they are slums in the making. The photos make them look better than they really are. They are also located on a very busy road (Fifth Avenue) and result in six to eight cars per property joining the daily traffic flow into the congested Five Cross Roads area.*



*This is the immediate neighbour to the block pictured on the right above. Urban design? Any kind of design??*



*Then we have the kind where the developer goes broke, leaving us an inheritance of some of the nastiest little boxes imaginable. Knox St, above, and Peachgrove Rd below.*

