

Presentation to the Hearings Committee. Submitter 166

Tena Koutou

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak today.

My name is Fiona Christeller. I have worked as an architect and urban designer in the Wellington region for over 30 years, and, together with my children and now my grandchildren have lived in Hutt City most of my life. So, I've a vested interest in this Plan Change.

In my written submission I made 4 recommendations. I am not going to talk about the 4th - how to cope with known hazard areas – because other submitters cover this.

Instead, I want to talk about my three other recommendations, all of which concern the live-ability of our city. This being the very first objective of Plan Change 56 - Page 7 - Amendment 3 to quote: *“Objective – A well-functioning urban environment that enables all people and communities to provide for their social, economic, and cultural wellbeing, and for their health and safety, now and into the future.”*

For me hangs everything off that objective.

And, to achieve it, we cannot design our city one site at a time. We need to look at the whole city and form some parameters and guides to make a live-able city happen cohesively, over time. To make good communities, each development needs to consider both site and context using 5 design basic principles: Planning; Placemaking; Public Spaces; Community and Sustainability.

This objective to influence the future urban form of our city matches that of your surrounding Councils. As most designers and developers work across TA boundaries, my over-arching recommendation is that Hutt City consults and works with bordering Councils to agree on similar objectives and policies.

My first recommendation: **Provide design guides for all developments – for both the permitted 3-house activity sites and for all other and larger developments which require resource consent.**

In the late 1980's I wrote the design guides for Jackson Street and Courtenay Place, to retain the existing tenancies, to enliven the streetscape and enable modernization of dilapidated buildings which

would otherwise have been demolished. The guides worked and both Te Aro and Petone are now a lively mix of industrial, commercial and residential activities. 30 years later Wellington City Council has a suite of design guides in their operative plan. These have recently been updated to be outcomes focused and to support denser urban development in their proposed District Plan.

I recommend you engage with Wellington to adopt their guides in your District Plan, and to use them proactively with designers and developers as early in the development process as possible. The **Residential design guide V05** aims to provide wellbeing, resilience and enrichment for future generations by making land development sustainable and resilient, to work with the natural topography and respect whenua.

It emphasizes that the context and characteristics of the built environment contribute to a neighbourhood's unique sense of place and identity.

I recommend also, that you utilise and publicise other residential densification design resources – eg **those of Kainga Ora** which are easily available online.

As part of saving the inner city in the early 1980's, WCC gave free design advice to help owners renovate dilapidated housing, specifically Aro Street, Newtown and Berhampore. This initiative helped bring people back into the city and create the diverse communities which exist today. I recommend you repeat that initiative – give free design advice at the front end of projects to encourage innovative and considered quality design solutions for denser developments, whether these projects need resource consent or not.

My second recommendation: **Create an urban design panel, preferably in conjunction with other near-by Territorial Authorities to consider the urban design impact of all development trends and projects, to ensure better quality and consistency within the built environment.**

Again, consistency across TA boundaries will help achieve better outcomes. Work with Wellington and other near-by Councils to set up an urban design panel and again, make it free for all developments of say > 6 housing units, this being where densification works more effectively.

As a designer, I believe that talking to an informed panel provides an opportunity to test options, think innovatively and incorporate unthought of ideas. It is a win-win for both individual developers and for the city.

Last but not least is my third recommendation: **Make all encroachment licences a resource consent matter.**

Last month the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment published a report on declining green space in urban areas called: '*Are we building harder hotter cities? The vital importance of urban green spaces, March 2023*'; An analysis of Auckland, Hamilton and greater Wellington, showed residential yards and gardens make up 1/3 of green space. 1/3 is provided by public parks and reserves and 1/3 by vegetated berms. Permeable surfaces and trees are essential to reduce effects of extreme rainfall events and reduce ambient temperatures on sunny days, both help mitigate climate change temperature increases.

The report stated that a 10% loss of green space (proportional to total area) in our cities could add 0.30C on top of that already predicted by climate change.

And looking at effects of shade -- the example given where general air temperature was 23°C, under a street tree it was 20.3°C and on the sunny adjacent footpath it was 47.7°C.

Most green space loss has occurred on private residential land, due to infill development and bigger houses on smaller section sizes.

As outdoor living /open space and the amount of vegetation within private sites decrease, the visual amenity and community use of street edges and communal spaces in our cities becomes increasingly more important. I am concerned that with the removal of car-parking requirements in Plan Change 56, there is a high probability owners and developers will apply to Council for encroachment licences to provide car-parking and garages on road reserve. On a case-by-case basis this might not seem like a big deal, but incrementally this will adversely impact on the quality and amenity of the streetscape, remove trees in overland flow paths and reduce pedestrian and cyclist safety.

It is essential that the 1/3 green space making up vegetated berms in the city is enhanced, not covered in hard-surfaced parking areas. Making encroachment licences a resource consent matter gives you, the Council, the opportunity to set objectives for retaining street and public space amenity as densification takes place. It will assist in the proposed rule 4F (page 100 of the officer's report) - ('consider the effects on the safety and efficiency of the transport

network (including pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles') Good edges and interfaces are imperative in creating well-functioning communities with active frontage and conditions to support pedestrian activity prioritized over vehicle access and parking. Encourage landscaping to contribute to biodiversity and tree canopy to minimize loss of ecosystems and habitats. To promote mode-shift, the environments we walk or cycle through or wait for a bus in, are a critical factor in making the decision which transport mode to use.

To finish: imagine for example the Waterloo or Naenae town centres developed to contain a variety of well-designed 6 storey apartment blocks above retail, business and community uses; with integrated landscaped areas and lively activity spaces for kids and adults alike, with trees on green berms, with wide footpaths and with safe cycleways to access local facilities and schools.

And within medium density areas, new housing is designed to complement its context, with good and safe living spaces, designed using design guides. I look forward to my grandchildren growing up in such a diverse, healthy and safe city.

Thankyou.

Aotearoa is losing its leaves. -

<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/e3f4c7a2f8534d4e877d140ec209514c>

Parliamentary Commissioner report:

<https://pcc.parliament.nz/publications/are-we-building-harder-hotter-cities-the-vital-importance-of-urban-green-spaces/>

V05 residential design guide - [https://isoplاندocs.s3-ap-southeast-](https://isoplاندocs.s3-ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/figures/wellingtonProposed/64/02_00_Design_Guides_Residential_V05.pdf)

[2.amazonaws.com/figures/wellingtonProposed/64/02_00_Design_Guides_Residential_V05.pdf](https://kaingora.govt.nz/assets/Publications/Design-Guidelines/Taone-Ora-Urban-Design-Guidelines.pdf)

Kainga Ora design guide -

<https://kaingora.govt.nz/assets/Publications/Design-Guidelines/Taone-Ora-Urban-Design-Guidelines.pdf>