

Re-imagining our Cities

The Green Party has an idea to help make Auckland homes and neighbourhoods great and we want your views on it.

We support the vision for more growth set out in the Auckland Unitary Plan. We also know that people are nervous about increasing density because they haven't seen it done well yet.

That's why the Green Party is going to introduce strong standards for warm, safe, dry homes and to build great neighbourhoods that people love living in.

This is a consultation paper on our idea to help make the Unitary Plan work better for Aucklanders, and to help grow great cities around the rest of the country too. We are keen to hear your views on our proposal.

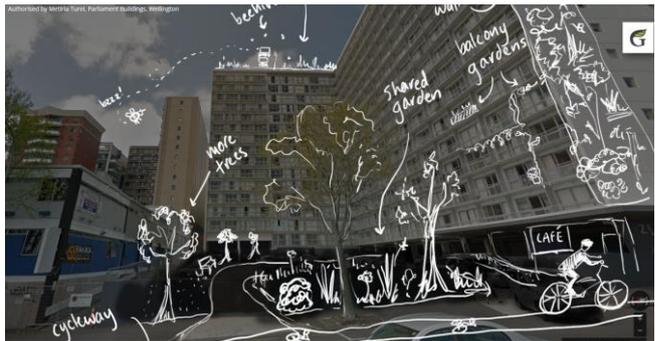
Visit <http://action.greens.org.nz/reimagine-our-cities> to share your ideas.

The Green Party is ambitious for great homes and neighbourhoods for all New Zealanders. We have a vision to move us towards the sorts of towns and cities that people are excited to live in. We know that with the right rules in place our towns and cities can be amazing.

Green Party idea

Imagine Auckland; not how it is, but how it could be. Everyone having a warm, safe, quiet home. Public transport links that take you where you want to be on time. Green spaces, both private and public. Bustling neighbourhood shops and schools. And, after paying your rent or mortgage, there's enough money left over to go out and enjoy what your city has to offer.

To grow a city that Aucklanders love living, working, and playing in, the Auckland Unitary Plan needs to create neighbourhoods like that. And to do that, it needs support from the national level. The finalising of the Auckland Unitary Plan is our chance to build a beautiful, liveable city where people have homes they love, close to where they work and play.



But the Unitary Plan as it stands is missing some very crucial parts that would give us high quality homes and neighbourhoods. The Independent Hearing Panel concluded that the Unitary Plan is not the place to deal with building standards. They argue that it is central government's job to set standards when it comes to things that will make homes warm, dry, quiet and safe.

Here's where central government can step in. The Green Party will do the work that the Unitary Plan doesn't. We will put in place the nationwide tools that will make sure that new developments in Auckland, and around the country, work both inside and outside. We'll make sure they provide warm, quiet, dry, safe, and enjoyable homes that fit happily into bustling, pleasant neighbourhoods. The combination of these tools with the Unitary Plan will make local neighbourhoods work better for everyone.

What are the national tools we're talking about?

Firstly, we will make sure all **new homes are warm, safe, quiet, and dry by overhauling New Zealand's Building Code** so that it actually reflects the new type of homes that New Zealanders want to live in. Improving the standards for homes and other buildings, including energy efficiency,

warmth and ventilation, quiet environments, water efficiency, and accessibility will ensure that new developments in Auckland are high quality homes that people love living in.

Secondly, we will **make sure that new developments look good and work well at the street level by putting in place a National Policy Statement on Urban Design**. It will address street design, storm water management, access to buildings, and how they interact with the street. The development of a National Policy Statement on Urban Design was already started by the previous Labour Government, but was shelved when National got into power. It's time to restart that work.

The Government is [currently working on updating the Building Code](#), but what it is proposing is visionless. Not only will it not provide New Zealanders with really warm, safe, dry and quiet homes, it won't help to create great cities that New Zealanders love living in. On top of that, urban design, or how we could create great cities, is something that this National Government doesn't even think about.

A better Building Code

The Building Code sets the bar for how buildings are built and perform. Better building codes overseas ensure that buildings perform well. When everyone builds to a higher standard, the cost of quality building materials comes down. It's also much cheaper to maintain and live in well built homes. Areas where the building code could be improved include:

- Insulation and energy efficiency
- Efficient water use
- Performance-based energy use standards for heating and cooling so that we can be sure new homes won't require massive amounts of heatingⁱ
- Airtightness, insulation and ventilation. All three of these are needed to work together properly to ensure low energy use and high comfortⁱⁱ
- Soundproofing because it's so crucial for homes that are closer to each other
- Renewable energy generation like solar
- Self-sufficiency in home design so that waste water and electricity infrastructure are not overstretched as our cities continue to grow
- Accessibility, so everyone can use and enjoy new developments

Great urban design

A National Policy Statement on Urban Design has the chance to impact on lots of different parts of city life. A national policy statement gives direction to local councils on issues that matter to the whole country. It's the government's way of doing some of the complex thinking about the design of cities and neighbourhoods and sharing that with councils for their decision making. We think it could include some of the following:

- Prioritising people in urban areas by emphasising the importance of pedestrian friendly roads and built environments that bring people together.
- Focussing on high quality public spaces.
- The street level experience of a building; are you just walking past a big concrete wall or are there windows and doors that make a building feel more human-friendly?

- Bringing nature back into the city.
- Keeping alive our social and cultural heritage.
- Keeping communities safe through the layout of streets and lanes and lighting.
- Making sure that urban areas work well for children, older people and people with disabilities, which will also work better for everyone.



Why do we need this now?

The Independent Panel’s recommendations for the Auckland Unitary Plan have set out that the city needs to build up and out to provide enough homes for people. Now that this plan has been brought together, we need the rest of the pieces of the puzzle in place. The Green Party is committed to providing the central government part of the picture with world class building and design standards for areas where terraced houses and apartments will be built so that we can make sure they are great homes and neighbourhoods that people love to live in.

Auckland needs a world class urban environment

Most New Zealanders live in main urban centres, 72 percent of our population.ⁱⁱⁱ That’s more than 3.3 million people living in cities. The biggest group, and growing, is in Auckland. But our cities, especially Auckland, are not working the way they should be.

People need good quality affordable homes

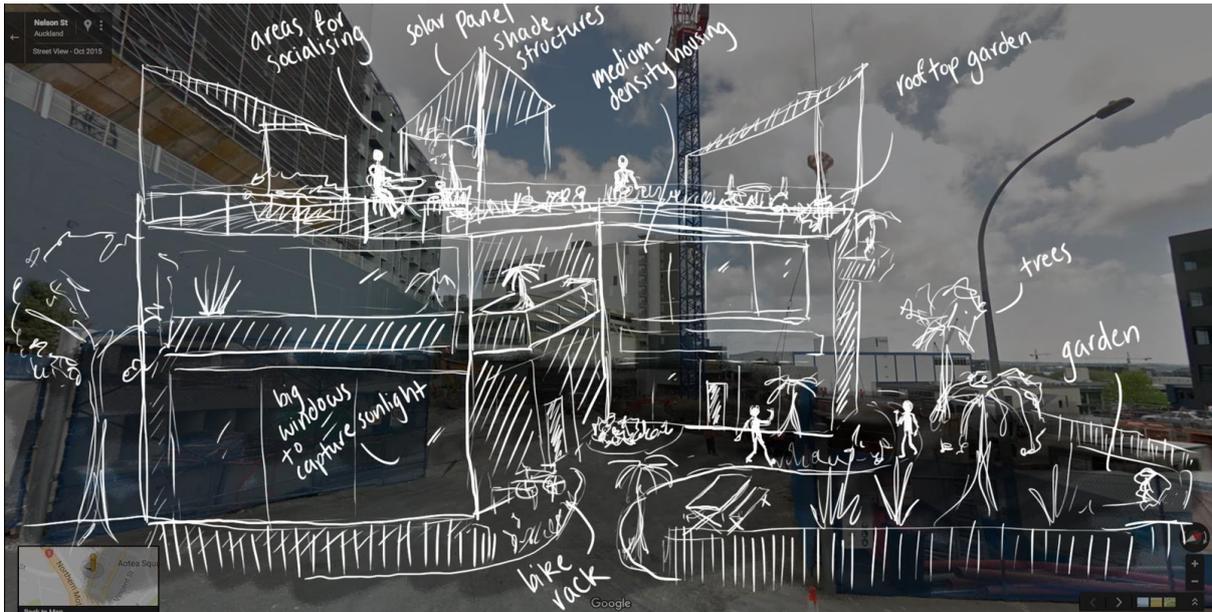
We have a housing crisis, felt most strongly in Auckland. House prices are soaring above affordability for many first home buyers. But it isn’t just in Auckland, people are struggling all over New Zealand to find a secure home. The median national sale price reached a record \$500,000 this year, a 10 percent jump from the same time last year.^{iv} People are living in cold, damp houses because of the lack of decent supply. At the very edge of the crisis, levels of homelessness are continuing to grow, one in every 100 New Zealanders at the latest census.^v

The National Government is continuing to refuse to do what is actually needed to address this housing crisis. The Government needs to start building thousands more affordable homes, cracking down on property speculation and overseas buyers, and introduce a capital gains tax on all properties except the family home.

To get affordable housing, we don’t need to sacrifice quality. In fact, we cannot afford, or justify, the building of homes that leak, make people sick, give them high power bills and make them unsafe.

In most high quality homes, any increased costs of capital investment are offset after a few years. One example is homes that reach 6 Stars in the Homestar energy and water efficiency ratings have an additional capital cost of around \$5,000, but this amount is made back in reduced power and water bills after just five and a half years. That does not even count the cost savings from reduced need for healthcare.^{vi}

Any homeowner or council staff member who has had to deal with the aftermath of leaky buildings knows that freeing up the building code doesn’t save us money in the long run. In fact it, in that case it had huge costs and left mouldy and damp homes in its wake. Doing building on the cheap with low standards isn’t more affordable.



What do people want in their cities?

More and more New Zealanders want to live in smaller houses and apartments, especially in the younger and older age groups.^{vii} People want to live within walking or cycling distance of the places that they travel to most often. Most people are happy with mixed-use development, putting homes close to offices, shops, parks, schools, and public transport routes.

When people are nervous about medium density developments it is often because they haven't seen it done well before. The challenge for Auckland is to show how it can be done well. We want to help Auckland rise to that challenge. Of course, lots of people still want to live in large homes, further away from the big city. The great news is that we can provide a whole range of different homes that will suit the whole range of people in our communities, and we can do it well. Better cities and higher quality homes will suit all New Zealanders. They will also have extra benefits for groups of New Zealanders who are too often missing out.

Our plan will make cities better for children who spend the majority of their time at home. Homes that are affordable, warm, dry, safe, and secure will significantly improve their health and quality of life. It will also improve life for children who live in apartments or town houses who will have quiet homes and access to safe play spaces.^{viii}

The 20 percent of New Zealanders who have a disability, and their friends and families, will also benefit from our proposal. While updating the Building Code, and developing a National Policy Statement will see a greater commitment to accessibility, our plan will also lead the way in ensuring that everyone has the ability to access and enjoy their neighbourhood regardless of age or mobility.

Cities and towns in New Zealand are built within the context of Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Te Tiriti affirms tangata whenua rangatiratanga so all decisions need to be based on this relationship. In Auckland and elsewhere, some iwi are already at the leading edge of quality, affordable, sustainable housing development. We are specifically reaching out to tangata whenua groups to hear their views on our proposal.

Our questions for you

We want to hear your views on our proposal.

Visit <http://action.greens.org.nz/reimagine-our-cities>

- What would you expect a brand new home to be like? What should the minimum standards be?
- What impact would increasing building standards have on the building industry?
- How should new housing developments be powered? How can we use more renewable energy in our cities?
- What do you want to see when you walk down your street?
- How can we improve both the quantity and quality of housing at the same time?
- What do you think the trade-off should be between the upfront cost of a house vs the cost of running the house over the next 10 or 20 years?

Authorised by Metiria Turei and Julie-Anne Genter, Parliament Buildings, Wellington

ⁱ <http://www.phinz.org.nz/passive-house-standard>

ⁱⁱ PM Leardini and T van Raamsdonk, 2010, *Design for airtightness and moisture control in New Zealand housing*, School of Architecture and Planning, University of Auckland, Auckland, New Zealand Pro Clima NZ Limited, New Zealand, accessed online at <http://www.cmznl.co.nz/assets/sm/5934/61/11.PN035Leardini.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ Statistics NZ. *Urban and Rural Migration*. Statistics NZ Website.

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^{iv} Tina Morrison. 2016. *National median house prices pass \$500k to new record*. New Zealand Herald.

http://www.nzherald.co.nz/business/news/article.cfm?c_id=3&objectid=11656809

^v University of Otago. 2016. *Homelessness accelerates between censuses*. University of Otago website.

<http://www.otago.ac.nz/news/news/otago613529.html>

^{vi} E Cubed Building Workshop. 2013. *Homestar Case Study: Cost Benefit Analysis*, prepared for Auckland Council,

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^{vii} L. Early, P. Howden-Chapman, and M. Russell. 2015. *Drivers of Urban Change*. Centre for Sustainable Cities.

<http://sustainablecities.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/Drivers-of-Urban-Change-PDF-edition-11-Feb-lowres-1.pdf>

^{viii} Penelope Carroll, Karen Witten, Robin Kearns and Phil Donovan. 2015, *Kids in the City: Children's Use and Experiences of Urban Neighbourhoods in Auckland*, New Zealand. *Journal of Urban Design*, 20:4, 417-436,