

Living at Density: Resident Perceptions in Auckland, New Zealand

Authors : Errol J. Haarhoff

Abstract : Housing in New Zealand, particularly in Auckland, is dominated by low-density suburbs. Over the past 20 years, housing intensification policies aimed to curb outward low-density sprawl and to concentrate development within an urban boundary have been implemented. This requires the greater deployment of attached housing typologies such as apartments, duplexes and terrace housing. There has been strong market response and uptake for higher density development, with the number of building approvals received by the Auckland Council for attached housing units increasing from around 15 percent in 2012/13, to 54 percent in 2017/18. A key question about intensification and strong market uptake in a city where lower density has been the norm, is whether higher density neighborhoods will deliver necessary housing satisfaction? This paper reports on the findings to a questionnaire survey and focus group discussions probing resident perceptions to living at higher density in relation to their dwellings, the neighborhood and their sense of community. The findings reveal strong overall housing satisfaction, including key aspects such as privacy, noise and living in close proximity to neighbors. However, when residents are differentiated in terms of length of tenure, age or whether they are bringing up children, greater variation in satisfaction is detected. For example, residents in the 65-plus age cohort express much higher levels of satisfaction, when compared to the 18-44 year cohorts who more likely to be bringing up children. This suggests greater design sensitivity to better accommodate the range of household types. Those who have live in the area longer express greater satisfaction than those with shorter duration, indicating time for adaption to living at higher density. Findings strongly underpin the instrumental role that the public amenities play in overall housing satisfaction and the emergence of a strong sense of community. This underscores the necessity for appropriate investment in the public amenities often lacking in market-led higher density housing development. We conclude with an evaluation of the PPP model, and its part in delivering housing satisfaction. The findings should be of interest to cities, housing developers and built environment professional pursuing housing policies promoting intensification and higher density.

Keywords : medium density, housing satisfaction, neighborhoods, sense of community

Conference Title : ICUH 2019 : International Conference on Urban Housing

Conference Location : Tokyo, Japan

Conference Dates : April 22-23, 2019