

3. NEW SUBDIVISION RESIDENTS SURVEY 2004

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The purpose of this report is:

- To provide the Council with interim results for the New Subdivision Residents Survey carried out in February 2004.

SUMMARY

This report presents some interim results from a comprehensive survey of residents who have bought or rented property in new greenfield subdivisions at the edge of the urban area in Christchurch. Preliminary total results from the 'closed' question part of the survey suggests that there is a high degree of satisfaction of residents with the quality of new peripheral subdivisions, and with their living environments. This suggests that the market and the City Plan are providing the range of living choices and environments being sought. It is expected, however, that responses to the 'open' part of the survey will highlight specific issues in various subdivisions that the Council will need to address, and these matters will be presented to the Council towards the end of the year.

Preliminary total results from the New Subdivision Residents Survey, available for the closed question part of the survey, suggests that across all subdivisions there is a high degree of satisfaction with the choices made by respondents and with their living environments. This suggests that the market and the subdivisions are providing the range of living choices and environments being sought.

INTRODUCTION

In response to the Committee resolution on 22 August 2002 that "*a survey of residents in new Greenfield subdivisions and other research be carried out to identify issues that can be addressed by the Council in improving the quality of Greenfield developments*" the survey was undertaken to:

- Provide information about the people and households in greenfield subdivisions,
- Identify the features and qualities sought by residents,
- Identify the choices made in the selection of the living environment,
- Establish the degree of satisfaction with the choices available,
- Establish the degree of satisfaction with the features and qualities provided,
- Determine improvements that would make the living environment a better place to live.

BACKGROUND

To date approximately 1,200 hectares of rural land has been rezoned for residential use and may increase as Environment Court decisions are released. This land is likely to become the home to as many as 40,000 people in the future. Currently, about thirty-five subdivisions are supported within this rezoned area, with eighteen of these subdivisions comprising 50 or more occupied lots, and a total of around 2,260 existing households. Little, if any, research has been undertaken to identify the demographics of these residents and households, or understand why they chose to live in peripheral greenfield subdivisions, rather than existing residential areas. Moreover, there is a dearth of information on whether residents are satisfied with their new living environments, whether these living environments are meeting the housing needs of residents or that they are satisfied with the choices available, and the features and quality of their living environments.

This information provides important base information from which to assess currently held views or assertions made about the quality of greenfield subdivisions, the choice of housing available in these areas, and whether these living environments are meeting the needs of residents.

This information is also vital for the City's urban growth strategy and consolidation and living environment policies within the City Plan. In particular, it will shed light on, for example, the notion that greenfield subdivisions should have a range of medium and higher density options, the location of subdivisions, and issues raised about the quality of urban design and subdivision layout, as well as the provision of services and facilities.

SURVEY RESPONSE RATE

A total of 2,431 surveys were sent out to owners and occupiers of greenfield subdivisions and 1,481 completed responses were received. A total response rate of 61 percent was obtained which is remarkable for a self-administered mail-out survey, which could usually be expected to yield a much lower response rate (30 per cent).

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

Subdivision Selection

A total of 27 subdivisions, eighteen with more than 50 occupied lots, primarily located on the periphery of Christchurch City's urban boundary (referred to as "greenfield" subdivisions) were surveyed. These subdivisions were rezoned from rural land to urban land in the Proposed City Plan as notified submissions or through Council decisions in 1999.

Questionnaire

The survey was a self-administered, mail-out questionnaire, that is, respondents filled out the survey without any assistance other than the instructions provided in it. All known occupied lots within the selected subdivisions were sent the survey. To obtain a random survey the questionnaire instructed household members to select the adult involved in buying, building or renting the house, who had the next birthday.

The survey comprised 54 questions with a mixture of closed questions (check boxes to be ticked) and open ended questions (unprompted written statements or comments). The latter questions were often used to supplement closed questions and probe respondents for reasons for making decisions to locate to specific areas and subdivisions. They also provided information about their living environment, including their overall satisfaction, likes, dislikes and possible improvements that could be made.

Communication

Potential survey respondents were made aware of the pending survey through articles in the local newspapers and the Press. The survey, and an invitation to complete the survey was mailed to households. Near to the closing date a reminder letter was also mailed to households from which surveys had not been received. As part of an incentive to complete the survey a prize draw for five dinners was also included.

KEY SURVEY FINDINGS

The information presented in this report (see Attachment 1) is from the responses to closed questions only, and should be considered as interim or preliminary information. Most of the closed questions stand alone and can be considered on their own merit. The supporting open-ended questions, which have yet to be analysed, provide additional and valuable information about the likes and dislikes of respondents and improvements that could be made to greenfield subdivisions to create better quality living environments. This information will not only assist with improving some aspects of existing subdivisions but also provide invaluable information in the development of future greenfield subdivisions. In addition, further analysis provided by cross-tabulating responses to explore patterns in responses received and to cross-check responses against actual facility and service provision, amenity values, and standards of maintenance has yet to be undertaken.

It would appear from analysis of the preliminary total results across all subdivisions that there is a high degree of satisfaction of respondents with the quality of their subdivisions, and with their living environments. This suggests that the market, City Plan provisions and the subdivisions themselves are providing the range of living choices and environments being sought by people choosing to live in these subdivisions.

UNEXPECTED FINDINGS

The overall findings for most of the survey were not necessarily unexpected, but the extent of satisfaction on such a wide range of matters was surprising, particularly given the concerns expressed in open-ended questions over some matters that were relevant across all subdivisions.

Specific matters that are unexpected are:

- The high level of overall satisfaction with the location, section, house, subdivision and the choice of house and section types available within respondents price range.
- The high level of overall satisfaction with features and qualities of the subdivisions.
- The composition of households, in particular the high proportion (two thirds) of households without children, the high proportion of two person households (42 per cent) and the high proportion of four bedroom homes (56 per cent).

For some issues, concerns expressed in open-ended questions are not reflected in the satisfaction rating for closed questions on these issues, although a number appear to be common across all subdivisions, such as traffic management, park provision and maintenance, distance to services and facilities and lack of facilities.

USE OF THE RESULTS AND PREPARATION OF REPORTS

The results from the survey and further analysis will be used to inform the following Strategic Planning, Environmental Services and Asset Management functions within the Council to improve the quality of facilities and services and living environments in the City. It will also seek to address, where possible, issues raised by respondents through this survey and provide some feedback on matters over which the Council has responsibility or can influence.

Christchurch City Council	Unit	Work Plans
Strategic Development	Planning Strategy Unit	LTCCP; Community Outcomes and Priorities Area Plans - Urban Growth Urban Development Strategy Greenfield Subdivision Guidelines
Regulation and Democracy Services	Environmental Services Unit	Greenfield Subdivision Variation Urban Urban Consolidation Policy City Plan Monitoring Resource Consent Monitoring
City Environment	Greenspace Unit	Open Space Strategy Greenspace Asset Management Planning
	City Streets	Transport Strategy
	Water and Waste	Asset Management Planning
Environment Canterbury		Public Transport Planning
Greenfield Stakeholders		
Developers		Subdivision Layout and Design
Survey Respondents		Responses to issues raised, addressed and resolved where possible

A report containing the findings at both the overall level and at the subdivision level will be completed in October 2004 and will include final results from the:

- Greenfield Subdivision Survey; responses to the survey, analysis of results, and implications for the Council's urban growth planning, urban consolidation, and living environment policies;
- Greenfield Amenity Survey; currently being undertaken including an expert assessment of amenity features of greenfield subdivisions and analysis against respondents assessment; and
- Greenfield Resource Consent Survey; being a desk top exercise providing an overview of the type of resource consents, type of activity and level of non-compliance with rules in greenfield subdivisions.

Staff

Recommendation:

1. That the results of this work be reported to the new Council, and its implications be the subject of a seminar to elected members in February/March 2005.
2. That the preliminary results presented in Appendix 1 be made available to respondents to the questionnaire, developers and the public.

Chairman's

Recommendation:

That the staff recommendations be supported.