

2. URBAN RENEWAL REVIEW

Officer responsible General Manager Strategic Development	Author Janet Reeves, Urban Design and Heritage Team Leader, DDI 941-8351
---	--

The purpose of this report is to advise the Committee of the progress of the urban renewal review and to recommend a system for longer term strategic planning for community renewal.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A review of the Planning Unit Urban Renewal Programme has revealed that there are shortcomings in the current system of Neighbourhood Improvement Plans. Options for continuing with the programme by completing existing plans, preparing plans for areas which do not currently have them, targeting the central city or targeting commercial areas are all problematic. A wider examination of other Council urban renewal activity reveals that there are a number of allied policies, programmes, projects and funds contributing to neighbourhood renewal but there is a lack of integration and co-ordination as well as omissions and overlaps between them. In order to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the Council's urban renewal activity it is recommended that a comprehensive urban renewal policy is developed and a system of longer term strategic plans is instigated.

BACKGROUND

Over the past 18 months the Urban Design and Heritage Team have been conducting a review of Urban Renewal, with particular reference to Neighbourhood Improvement Plans. This has included a survey of all the existing plan areas to establish the degree of implementation of the plans, a staff discussion of the Woolston Neighbourhood Improvement Plan to assess what would be involved in revisiting existing plans, preparation and discussion of a prototype of a new style plan for the Pegasus Ward.

REVIEW OF THE EXISTING URBAN RENEWAL POLICY AND PROGRAMME

Current Situation

Prior to 1983, the Council was involved in several large-scale urban renewal public rental housing schemes that were supported by Government funding. With the abandonment of this funding the emphasis of urban renewal changed. The Council began to concentrate on upgrading the public spaces such as streets and parks, of which it had ownership, to provide a catalyst for redevelopment of older areas. The Council has allocated funding on a continuing basis and adopted an Urban Renewal Policy to guide the use of the budget. The policy was revised in 1995 and is included as Attachment 1. This funding is used to prepare and implement plans and projects in neighbourhood plan areas (see below), and other older residential and local shopping areas. The criteria used for allocating urban renewal funding is given in Attachment 2.

Neighbourhood Improvement Plans

In the mid-1980s a plan was drawn dividing the central city and older suburbs into neighbourhoods. For each neighbourhood either a Local Area Traffic Management Scheme (LATMS) or where there were issues to be addressed beyond traffic management, a more comprehensive Neighbourhood Improvement Plan (NIP) was to be prepared. The purpose of the NIP's is to help retain and enhance the physical and social character of neighbourhoods. The intention is that the Council expenditure on traffic calming, street tree planting, creation of small parks, opening up and enhancing of waterways, landscaping, artworks etc acts as a catalyst for upgrading private property and fostering community initiatives. Sixteen NIP's have been prepared since 1987 - see Table 1 below. The criteria used for deciding to prepare a Neighbourhood Improvement Plan is included as Attachment 3.

Table 1: Neighbourhood Improvement Plans Prepared

No.	Neighbourhood Plan	Date
1.	Richmond	1987
2.	Beckenham	1989
3.	Sydenham	1990
4.	East Papanui	1990
5.	North New Brighton	1992
6.	Deans Avenue	1992
7.	Woolston	1993
8.	Phillipstown	1994
9.	North Waltham	1994
10.	Addington (revised)	1994
11.	Inner City West	1994
12.	Inner City East/Latimer	1995
13.	Gilby	1996
14.	Linwood	1997
15.	St Albans	2000
16.	Charleston	2001

NIP's have been prepared in conjunction with the relevant Community Boards and Resident's and Business Associations. The preparation of NIP's has been the responsibility of environmental planners and has been a multi-disciplinary exercise. The earlier plans involved primarily staff from the Environmental Policy and Planning, City Streets and Parks Units and Community Managers. More recent plans have also included Leisure and Waterways staff.

Over the last 17 years, the implementation of the NIP's has been inconsistent, with plans now in varying stages of completion. Projects which were funded at the time the plans were produced tend to have been carried out but projects relying on longer term funding or opportunities arising are less likely to have been implemented because of institutional memory loss and because new initiatives have come along.

NIP's for some areas have not been prepared, some older parts of the city are not within NIP areas and many of the existing plans are out of date. Insufficient staff resources exist to prepare new plans and update existing ones. Even if this were rectified, it would take decades to implement plan proposals, given the current level of funding.

The plans' ability to act as co-ordinating tools for Council projects has diminished because they are out of date and do not cover the complete range and type of initiatives now arising. A further problem arises because the need to renew kerb and channel is one of the main opportunities for renewal. The plan proposals therefore have a large component of street renewal works. Other Units, particularly Parks and Waterways, can find they are in a position where they may want to carry out enhancements in an area where street improvements are happening, to achieve an integrated solution, but the particular works required are not a priority for their Unit. Conversely, other Units might wish to do works in an improvement area but they cannot be done until kerb and channel renewal is carried out. The Council policies relating to traffic calming and kerb and channel renewal prioritisation are included as Attachments 4 and 5.

It can be difficult to uphold urban design objectives relating to overall character and amenity when individual projects are implemented. Staff involved in the project in-hand and consulting with immediately surrounding residents may fail to see the relevance of strategic planning, area specific themes and creating a sense of identity for the neighbourhood. Consequently the integrity of a neighbourhood plan can be compromised.

Commercial Area Renewal

Over the last 10 years the Council has also been involved in the renewal of some older commercial areas of the city such as Woolston, Merivale and Edgeware Road, St Albans. Initiatives are currently underway in New Brighton; Colombo Street, Sydenham and Stanmore Road, Linwood and solutions are being sought for two local shopping areas: Hampshire Street, Aranui and Acheson Avenue, Shirley. These projects are often partnerships with the business owners.

Some of the older centres are commercially sound, although the buildings and surroundings are run down, but many of the centres are less viable and have generally declined because of changes in shopping habits and demographics of the catchment population. This has resulted in vacant and under utilised buildings and a diminishing role of local centres as community focal points. While it is possible to develop strategies for renewal for older commercial centres, from upgrading to redevelopment for other uses, their implementation will rely on substantial funding. Because of the marginal nature of many businesses, it is difficult to encourage private sector spending. This leaves the option for the Council of either funding improvements to private property or acquisition of property. The latter course of action is made more difficult where there are unrealistic owner expectations based on the 'book value' of premises, rather than the true market value.

The Commercial Strategy currently being developed by the Planning Unit will provide a framework for making decisions about the future of older commercial areas. In particular whether efforts should be put into strengthening some centres and downsizing others.

Future Options

In the light of the above difficulties arising with the current policy and programme, managed by the Planning Unit, consideration has been given to how the programme might proceed. Possible options are as follows:

(a) Establish a programme of completing existing Neighbourhood Improvement Plans

Advantages:

1. Would ensure that plans which have been adopted, following public consultation, are honoured by the Council.
2. Would enable some areas to be completely upgraded, therefore maximising the effect of the improvements.

Disadvantages:

1. Many of the plans are several years old and would first need to be updated.
2. Completion of the existing plans would require substantial funding and would take many years.
3. Some older residential areas do not have NIP's and therefore would not benefit from the programme.

(b) Prepare Neighbourhood Improvement Plans for areas not already covered

Advantages:

1. There would be complete NIP coverage of the older areas.

Disadvantages:

1. There is insufficient funding to support the implementation of all the plans. Either only one or two plans could be funded in any given year or funding would be spread around, diminishing the impact.
2. Preparing a plan raises community expectations and then creates disillusionment when proposals are not implemented.

(c) Concentrate on the central city

Advantages:

1. This would support the Central City Revitalisation Strategy.
2. Would enable the existing central city Neighbourhood Improvement Plans to be revised and completed.

Disadvantages:

1. Concentrates funding in the central city at the expense of suburban areas.

(d) **Concentrate on Commercial Renewal**

Advantages:

1. Local shopping centres could be restored as the focal points of communities and act as a catalyst to wider renewal.

Disadvantages

1. Either a considerable increase in Urban Renewal funding would be required or the number of commercial centres that could be improved would be few.
2. Capital expenditure on street enhancements, planting etc could have little impact without considerable investment by business owners.
3. Operational funding would be required to make improvements to private property and land.
4. Funding would not be available for improvements in residential areas.

As none of these options offer a clear way forward, it was felt that consideration should be given to the wider sphere of urban renewal to explore whether there might be a better approach.

OTHER CITY COUNCIL URBAN RENEWAL ACTIVITY

The Council has a number of other policies, programmes, plans and sources of funding which can be described as urban renewal or have an urban renewal element. These activities are implemented and managed by various Council Units as indicated below. Other urban renewal proposals and initiatives arise from a variety of sources including individual members of the public, community groups, community boards and council staff.

Table 2. City Council Urban Renewal Activity

	Type of Urban Renewal Activity	Unit Responsible
1.	Urban Renewal Programme	Planning
2.	Neighbourhood Plans	Planning
3.	Central City Revitalisation	Planning
4.	Non-conforming Use Fund	Planning
5.	Undergrounding Overhead Wires	Planning and City Transport
6.	Local Area Traffic Management Schemes	City Transport
7.	Street Renewal Clusters	City Transport
8.	Living Streets Process	City Transport
9.	Capital Works Programme	City Transport and Greenspace
10.	Street Tree Planting	Greenspace and City Transport
11.	Waterway Enhancement	Greenspace
12.	Local Park Acquisition	Greenspace
13.	Art in Public Places	Community and Recreation
14.	Aranui Community Renewal	Community and Recreation
15.	Housing Programme	Community and Recreation and Facility Assets
16.	New Brighton Revitalisation	Secretariat

A brief review of each of these activities follows:

Local Area Traffic Management Schemes

The purpose of the Local Area Traffic Management Schemes (LATMS) is to manage traffic in residential areas. 32 LATMS's have been prepared, the most recent in 2001, see table below. There are 31 other LATMS originally intended but not prepared, these are mainly in the outer urban areas (which existed prior to 1980).

Table 3. Local Area Traffic Management Schemes prepared

Local Area Traffic Management Schemes	
Upper Riccarton	Wainoni
Kilmarnock (SD27)	Avondale
Tudor Hamilton	Aranui
Bryndwr	South Shore/South New Brighton
Burnside	Inner City (Icon)
North Papanui	Avonside
St Andrews Square	Linwood North
Holmwood	Linwood South
Merivale	Linwood West
St Albans	Opawa
St Albans East	Ashgrove
Mairehau	Spreydon
Mairehau South	Hillmorton
Shirley	Broomfield/Hei Hei/Islington
Shirley East	Hornby
Dallington	
Parklands	

City Streets (now City Transport) have been responsible for LATMS and they have been prepared and implemented in conjunction with the relevant Community Boards. LATMS have been implemented on a piecemeal basis as projects met funding criteria.

Clusters of Street Improvements

The practice of funding improvements throughout all the LATMS areas has led to a dispersal of works where often the benefits of the expenditure were not apparent. It was felt that clustering street improvements in certain areas would have more impact and effect. The opportunity to test this theory arose with the preparation of the Charleston Neighbourhood Plan in 2001. Subsequently funding has been allocated to clusters of streets in East Papanui and Addington. This approach has the benefit of better co-ordination of the street renewal budget.

Living Streets

In 1999 the City Streets Unit prepared a report on the existing philosophy and policy on traffic calming. At that time there was growing recognition and concern that whilst practices were based on accepted philosophy, policy and best engineering practice, in reality, the demand for traffic calming by residential communities supported by Community Boards, often exceeded the funding available. Scheme plans implemented under pressure for delivering 'quick-fix' solutions often resulted in low cost physical works on street, like speed humps, without the necessary environmental enhancements that could have been implemented had suitable funding been available. Generally this resulted in compromised solutions. These compromises often did not fulfil everyone's needs and in some instances served only to frustrate or antagonise road users. The City Services Committee requested a review of current practices be undertaken and that alternative means to achieve similar objectives be explored.

This study led to the adoption of a 'Living Streets' philosophy. A Living Streets Charter was adopted by the Council in December 2000 (see Attachment 6). The Charter includes 10 Key Result Areas. Since the adoption of the Charter a number of 'show piece' pilot studies have been undertaken. Analysis of the potential of the Living Streets philosophy to create a quality environment is now being undertaken.

The term 'Living Street' has come to mean, in many peoples eyes, a street that has been narrowed, has wide berms, street trees and landscaping. This was not the intention of the initiative. Living Streets is a philosophy rather than a particular treatment of streets. Living Streets are those where living and community interaction have greater priority. Residents are asked to take collective ownership and stewardship of local streets. Having implemented a number of showpiece projects, The Living Streets programme is now moving into a phase of planning and advocacy. However, a strong demand for 'Living Streets' (ie the widened berms, planting, waterway enhancements and other features of the showpiece projects) is still in evidence and there is currently a lack of funding for the implementation of these type of works, either in the City Transport Unit budget or the Planning Unit urban renewal funds.

Undergrounding Overhead Wires

Undergrounding of overhead wires has a marked positive impact on the appearance of the street, particularly in the case of local streets. Undergrounding is hugely popular with residents, even to the extent that some residents are willing to part fund the operation. A policy for undergrounding of overhead services was developed in 1993 - see Attachment 7. The City Transport Unit has a budget (2004/05) for undergrounding of \$1,363,300 (\$1,167,100 operational, plus \$196,200 capital). The roads where overhead wires are undergrounded are principally arterial and collector roads selected using the City Transport prioritisation criteria, which are:

- road reconstruction,
- traffic volume,
- safety benefit,
- road hierarchy,
- amenity value,
- cost.

The Planning Unit urban renewal budget contributions towards undergrounding are confined to local streets in the older residential parts of the City covered by Neighbourhood Improvement Plans, where undergrounding will contribute to enhancing the residential qualities of the area. The undergrounding is mainly operational expenditure (around 91% of the cost) with the balance utilizing capital funding. The urban renewal operational budget is currently \$250,000 per annum, the majority of which is devoted to undergrounding.

At a cost of approximately \$500 per metre the combined City Transport and Planning Unit budgets will fund only around 3.2 kilometres of undergrounding per annum. At this rate it would take at least 130 years to underground all urban roads not yet converted.

In May 2000 a report to the Environment Committee detailed the issues surrounding undergrounding. The recommendation was:

- "1. That the Committee confirm its policy to underground all overhead services within 40 years from 1993.*
- 2. That the appropriate budget provision be made to achieve this goal from the 2000/01 budget year."*

However, there was no increase in funding as a result of this recommendation.

Non-Conforming Use Fund

The Council has an established revolving fund, the purpose of which is to remove non-conforming uses from residential areas. The fund is targeted at non-residential uses that are causing a nuisance, ie they are noisy, dirty, unsightly, emit smells or glare, or cause vibrations. The fund was built up over a number of years and at present no further money is added to it. The fund is used to purchase sites and associated buildings. Often the purchase price will include the cost of buying out a business. Once the site is purchased the non-conforming use is removed and the site on-sold for housing. Sometimes there will be a period of delay in order to extinguish any existing use rights. The money from the sale of the site (less any expenditure incurred in purchasing the property, removing the use and clearing the site) is returned to the fund.

In addition to removing the nuisance there are urban design objectives that can be achieved. For example, a non-conforming use on a prominent site (particularly on a corner) can be removed and the site sold for housing with conditions on fencing, housing design, etc. Another example is where a non-conforming use can be purchased and the site amalgamated with an adjoining site to allow a better layout for housing development. Cases arise where a non-conforming use could be removed but the land released is either not suitable for housing or could be better used for purposes other than housing. Some of the premises which are causing a nuisance are on land which is not zoned residential, therefore the fund cannot be used to remove them.

The removal of a non-conforming use is generally a long slow process, which has to be approached very carefully in order not to distort the cost of purchasing. Also, a considerable amount of staff time can be spent, ultimately to no avail. Nevertheless the benefits of the successful removal of a non-conforming use can make the effort worthwhile. More use could be made of this funding if the removal of non-conforming uses were more actively pursued.

Capital Works Programme

The Council's capital works programme includes projects which contribute to the urban renewal of older areas. Because capital expenditure programmes are managed by a number of different Council Units and they are drawn up on a five year basis, based on asset management plans, there can be difficulty in co-ordinating programmes for greatest efficiency and maximum effect in the absence of any overall longer term renewal strategy. The Neighbourhood Improvement Plans were intended to co-ordinate Council expenditure within local areas and this objective is still achieved to some extent, however, there are many areas which are either not covered by a neighbourhood plan or the plan is outdated. Furthermore, urban renewal funds, intended to add value to functional works through landscaping, provision of seats, walkways etc are insufficient to enhance all the capital works projects that could be enhanced.

Waterway Enhancement

The Greenspace Unit is championing a sustainable approach to surface water management, which entails replacing pipes and box drains with more natural waterways and utilising swales and detention and retention basins to manage the surface water run-off. The sustainable management of surface water is particularly problematic in older urban areas where intensification of housing is occurring. Increased run-off occurs because of greater areas of impermeable surface, increased demand for roadside parking and multiple property accesses makes the inclusion of roadside swales difficult and more land is required to allow for natural soakage, yet land prices are at a premium because of their potential for higher density development. The requirements for, opportunities of, and methods for achieving this new approach to surface water management need to be incorporated into existing and future urban renewal plans and initiatives.

Street Trees

Street trees make a major contribution to the appearance and ambience of older urban areas. All of the Neighbourhood Improvement Plans include plans for street tree planting and many of these have been or are intended to be implemented. The Council has a Tree Planting in Streets Policy (Attachment 8) which specifies minimum footpath and berm requirements to enable trees to be planted. This can be problematic in some areas. There is no direct link between urban renewal initiatives and street tree planting programmes, although staff work co-operatively in this respect.

Open Space Provision

The Greenspace Unit has a local parks acquisition strategy (Attachment 9) for creating new open spaces in existing built up areas. Some of the neighbourhood plans identify potential sites for new parks but the strategy is not directly linked to the urban renewal programme.

Art in Public Places

The Council encourages and funds the provision of art in public places through its art in public places strategy. This initiative provides for artworks to be installed to enhance older areas. Only the more recent NIP's have included proposals for the siting or incorporation of public artworks.

Community Board Project and Discretionary Funding

Each Community Board is allocated monies annually to fund projects and groups in their area aimed at strengthening communities. Many of the initiatives are social programmes and projects but some of the money is used to fund projects such as tree planting, seating and artworks, which physically enhance and upgrade older areas. Sometimes this is done as part of implementing a Neighbourhood Improvement Plan.

Council Housing Programme

The Council, through its housing programme develops, acquires and maintains affordable housing for citizens on low incomes and with disabilities. This activity contributes to the renewal of older parts of the city.

Community Plans

In accordance with the Council's Community Policy, Community Plans are developed for each Community Board area. Community Plans are a vital tool to inform the Council planning processes across a range of functions and to encourage local co-operation and effective partnerships between the community sector, government agencies, private sector agencies and the Council. In the long term it is intended that community planning will become a function that involves the community and all sections of the Council as well as other community, government and private agencies.

Aranui Community Renewal

In July 2000 the Christchurch City Council entered into a partnership agreement with Housing New Zealand to progressively renew the social, physical and economic structure of the Aranui Community. One key aspect of the Aranui Community Renewal project is the upgrading of the physical environment, ie buildings and spaces. The primary objectives of upgrading are to improve the appearance, safety and security of the community, to provide facilities to meet the needs of the community, and to foster a pride and neighbourliness in the community. The Aranui Community Renewal project area is not a Neighbourhood Improvement Plan area but the physical renewal objectives are the same as those of a Neighbourhood Improvement Plan.

Central City Revitalisation

The Central City Revitalisation Project was established three years ago in order to reverse the decline of the central city (within the four Avenues) and to make the central city a more attractive place to live, shop, socialise and conduct business. Many of the projects initiated under the revitalisation strategy can be described as urban renewal, for example the High Street Heritage Precinct Project, the Bedford Row upgrade, the redevelopment of the Turners and Growers site and the draft Green Streets Strategy. Some of the NIP's are within the area covered by the Central City Revitalisation Strategy.

Private Development

The nature of the use of private land, especially that visible from the street or other public space, has a great impact on the character and status of a neighbourhood. Private renewal may be small changes made by individual owners such as painting, erecting or removing fences, planting, extensions and changes to buildings or may be on a larger scale such as infill housing or site redevelopment (eg Addington Workshops site). The appropriateness, design and standard of maintenance of such changes affect both the character and appearance of an area and the way in which the street space and other public space is used. Private owners clearly have a significant contribution to make to urban renewal. Ensuring they contribute in a positive way to their surrounding environment can be achieved either by encouragement and education or controlled through legislative means, primarily the City Plan.

DISCUSSION

The policies, programmes, projects and funding which have been introduced over the past twenty years are clearly addressing urban renewal on many fronts. However, these initiatives have developed independently leading to a lack of co-ordination between programmes, a lack of funding, and overlaps and omissions.

As the various policies relating to urban renewal have developed independently, they are not necessarily compatible and do not give a clear policy direction for staff to follow. Furthermore some of them are out of date.

Many programmes and projects have been developed independently by Units of the Council and one-off projects, such as Aranui Community Renewal, arise due to particular circumstances occurring or partnerships forming. Staff work together collaboratively on many of these projects, but conflicts arise because of a lack of overall planning and co-ordination, lack of agreement on objectives, difficulties in aligning budgets and competing demands on staff time. The NIP's were intended to act as forward planning and co-ordinating devices. This objective is only being fulfilled to a limited extent and in particular they are not directly linked to the Community Plans, Waterways Enhancement programmes and Art in Public Places Strategy, which have developed more recently.

Uncoordinated Council urban renewal activity not only leads to inefficiencies in Council expenditure and ineffectiveness in delivering outcomes, but also impacts on the public through, for example, a lack of clarity about the intentions for an area (influencing investment decisions), raising false expectations, or confusion and duplication in public consultation.

Some means of co-ordinating and advancing urban (or perhaps more appropriately community) renewal effectively and efficiently is needed. A robust inclusive process and plan which integrates all Council activity would appear to be required. In addition all manner of developments, new schools, a new bus service, suburban mall redevelopment etc create an improved neighbourhood even though they are not necessarily urban renewal. A system of neighbourhood planning that drew all of these together would be more effective in achieving comprehensive and integrated neighbourhood planning.

Strategic Community Renewal Plans

These would be longer term plans, prepared five years in advance of expected implementation. They would provide a framework for more detailed, more local projects. They would enable Units and Community Boards to think about their budget allocations, giving sufficient lead in time for Units to co-operatively establish their capital works programmes. Other initiatives, such as land acquisition or community facilities could be identified, for which funding bids could be made or fund raising commenced. Area identity and urban design principles could be established at this early stage, so that a consistent theme developed.

The first step in this approach would be to establish the boundaries of areas. There are numerous ways of dividing up the City but it would seem sensible to align boundaries with Community Board Areas. Each Board area would have a number of plans, depending upon its size and the nature of the component parts. The works already identified in a Neighbourhood Improvement Plan would not be lost, but would become 'Action Areas' for urban renewal within a comprehensive community renewal plan. These Strategic Community Renewal Plans would come together with the Area Plans and Community Plans now being developed, to provide more comprehensive area based planning.

RESOURCING

At the 26 November 2003 meeting of this Committee it was requested:

- "1. That the Annual Plan Working Party review the level of urban renewal funding, in order to deliver a greater focus on planning without losing the ability to fund small infrastructural projects."* and
- "2. That the Council review the level of service for urban renewal improvements in neighbourhoods in order to offer better urban design outcomes."*

A report was put to the Sustainable Transport and Utilities Committee Annual Plan meeting on 3 February 2004, because of the benefits of the proposal to the co-ordinated planning of all neighbourhood improvement works and the implications for undergrounding overhead wires. This committee recommended:

- "1. That the budget for urban renewal planning be increased by \$250,000".*
- "2. That the Annual Plan Subcommittee consider an increase in funding for the completion of Neighbourhood Improvement Plans".*

These recommendations were embodied in a report to the Annual Plan Subcommittee on 19 February 2004, requesting increased funding for urban renewal planning. Such funding would enable a programme of Strategic Community Renewal Plan preparation to be established by the Planning Unit. Existing Planning Unit urban renewal funding would continue to be used for undergrounding local streets, 'action plan' preparation and landscaping and amenity improvements when detailed proposals are developed within the strategic plan framework.

Staff

- Recommendation:**
1. That a comprehensive community renewal policy is developed which updates, rationalises and extends existing policy measures.
 2. That the Committee support a system of neighbourhood planning based on longer term Strategic Community Renewal Plans.
 3. That staff report back on 'area identity' on how this might be prioritised.

Chairman's

Recommendation: That the staff recommendations be supported.