

Introduced by Brenna Waghorn

High rises – the people, the buildings, the farms?!

Apartment Living

Sustainable development across Auckland and many other centres includes encouraging mixed use development supported by passenger transport. As we encourage more apartment “urban” living and seek to design “great places that work”, it is useful to keep an eye on who is living down town and why.

A new survey by Wellington City Council sheds light on the makeup of the district community of 12,000 people who now live in the 5,500 central city apartments - and what makes them tick. The survey was conducted by the council in 2008. From a total of 1,350 responses, it found:

- There are more families with children in central city apartments than expected - 12 per cent of apartments were home to kids
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- 53 per cent of respondents said their apartments are over 76 square metres in size (and 32 per cent are over 100 square metres - the size of an average suburban house).
- Noise annoys - noise generated by neighbours and by the city in general is the source of the most gripes by apartment dwellers.
- The ages of apartment inhabitants varies widely - apartment dwellers are not all students or young people. There are a large proportion of older people (49 per cent are aged 45 years or older).
- 31 per cent of respondents don't own a car.
- In general, apartment dwellers have above average household incomes - 61 per cent of respondents with annual household income (before tax) as \$70,000 or more; 44 per cent over \$100,000.
- And what do they like about living in apartments? Lifestyle and city living (23 per cent), close proximity to work (20 per cent), shops and cafes (11 per cent), PT, schools, university. Also low maintenance, safety and security, design and affordability.

These results were quite consistent with previous studies in Auckland CBD and of medium density in several parts of Auckland in 2000. For the full report go to <http://www.wellington.govt.nz/services/urban/managinggrowth.html>

Canada Mortgage Housing Corporation

I have always been fond of the Canada Mortgage Housing Corporation (CMHC), as they seem to do so much research. It is worth a look on any housing and design related issues. There are technical fact sheets and best practice guidelines aimed at both consumers and the development professions. High rises and multi-unit development is covered – construction, operations, maintenance and repair. The technical research series focuses on building performance while the socio economic series focuses on housing quality, affordability and availability and topics like housing for seniors, social cohesion and urban form. There is real stuff for residents (consumers) like “The Tenants Guide to Mold” and “Dealing with Pests”, the latter which doesn't seem to be a major issue for NZ apartment dwellers – yet!

<http://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/>

Vertical Farming

And for something a little different, from the New York Times, a look at vertical farming. How about growing peaches, strawberries and herbs in high rise towers, and feeding thousands of urbanites from within the city?

Dickson Despommier, a professor of public health at Columbia University, hopes to spread his vision for "vertical farms" -- 30-story towers that could feed thousands of people. He created the concept in 1999 with his graduate students, and it has since captured the imagination of architects and various city planners. He suggests that the skyscrapers could protect a city's food supply from floods and droughts, and from pathogens that attack crops. Farmers markets and community gardens are clearly just the beginning! But do we really need it in NZ?

http://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/15/science/15farm.html?_r=4&ref=science&oref=slogin&oref=slogin&oref=slogin