

NEWS

May 2005

1	Expensive State Housing-to keep, redevelop, or sell? (New Zealand Herald Kirsty Wynn, also editorial) The apparent economic insanity of leasing highly valuable state houses at low rentals to low income families is again covered in these articles, in this case quoting a house worth over \$800,000 in Orakei, returning \$75 per week. The 10 most expensive State houses range from \$820,000 to \$1.1 million and receive rentals ranging from \$34 per week to \$84 per week. Note: The matter highlights a fundamental political divide, with economic forces on one hand and the perceived need for "social engineering" on the other.
8	Million-dollar speed trap (New Zealand Herald David Fisher) Of the 20 busiest speed cameras in the country, most are in Auckland. The busiest is located on the Ellerslie Panmure highway at Mt Wellington and has produced fines amounting to \$500,000 in the last six months. Speed camera fines nationwide last year were about \$40.8 million. Are speed cameras a profit centre, or a method of controlling road speed?
16	Apartments crowding inner city (New Zealand Herald Bernard Orsman) near In figures from Auckland City Council released to the Herald under the Official information Act, it is noted that since 1998 123 new buildings or major building operations have occurred, of which 83 were Apartments. Of the apartments, only 2 were offered for public scrutiny. The mayor Dick Hubbard is one of many critics who say that the Council led push for high-density development has led to scores of ugly apartment towers, which may become future ghettos. The design of some complexes has been described as simply barbaric. In response to criticism, Auckland City Council in the last two years has established an urban design panel and imposed a minimum 30 sq m size. Note: Civic Trust Auckland is greatly concerned over most of the matters raised in this article, including poor building design, inappropriate building scale, shonky building construction and lack of public participation in the design process of major CBD structures.
17	Bad Road signage and (New Zealand Herald several articles and letters to the editor) During the month the New Zealand Herald has highlighted the fact that road signage around Auckland could do with upgrading and is not completely visitor friendly.
23	Town plan pushes limits-providing from new town centre at Westgate (New Zealand Herald Anne Gibson) Waitakere City needs to expand its urban area in order to allow for a new \$1.2 billion town centre at Westgate. The centre is proposed for a 40 ha site at the end of the north-western motorway in the ownership of IMF Westland. Permission is required from the Regional Authority. The developer is proposing a 10 year master plan to include 100,000 square metres retail shopping, which would be twice the size of the present Westgate shopping centre, plus a residential hub with over 1500 apartments and offices and light industrial areas for a working population of 10,000 people. The concept involves a traditional town plan in a grid format incorporating a town square and there are to be reserves, is us community and natural areas. Note: this is a major town planning exercise, where Civic Trust Auckland is keen to see the best planning principles being observed.
23	Growing pains: is denser housing the solution to the transport problem (New Zealand Herald Arnold Pickmere) The present population of the Auckland region is 1.3 million. It is estimated that it will increase to 2 million by the year 2050. According to the Auckland Regional Council, Auckland will require a further 320,000 homes. The Regional Council expects these homes to be provided within higher density blocks. The government insists that its additional expenditure on transport infrastructure should go hand-in-hand with plans for suburban land use. In other words higher density living conditions will lead to more demand for and use of public transport. Note: Civic trust Auckland is following this ongoing planning conundrum closely.
23	\$130 million for new state houses (New Zealand Herald Simon Collins and Wayne Thompson) In the recent budget, Auckland is to be given 2400 of the 3288 new state houses to be built or acquired in the four-year period from July 1 for \$130 million. Another budget initiative is to transfer \$54 million worth of defence land at Hobsonville air base to housing New Zealand.
24	Growing pains: the suburbs expand (New Zealand Herald Arnold Pickmere) In this, the second of two articles the growth of suburbia is covered and the first of a number of reader's responses are published. Note: It is difficult to judge the majority view, but it would seem that Aucklanders are doubtful about the prospects for high-density living. It also appears that planners are having some difficulty in anticipating likely population trends. The population of Auckland in the year 2050 is estimated to be either as little as 1.6 million or as much as 2 million. Government immigration policy is a major, but unknown element in these calculations
31	Auckland City Council in a major town planning culture change (New Zealand Herald Bernard Orsman) Auckland city Mayor Dick Hubbard has unveiled plans to introduce new rules to city apartment developments. A scoring

	<p>system will be set out to vet building design quality. Mediocre plans will be thrown out. Quality plans will be fast tracked. Acceptable plans will go through the consent process in the normal way. District plans will be altered to incorporate urban design criteria. An urban design champion and city architect to be appointed. There is to be a culture change for the Auckland City Council planning department. Note: Auckland Civic Trust and other commentators will be interested to see the detail of this scheme. Who will vet designs being undertaken to the city itself? What is the difference between "quality" and "mediocre" in design terms? What criteria apply under the points system? Will fast tracking mean that there will be no public consultation? Who will pay the extra costs, the developers, or ratepayers?</p>