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## Affordability and travel issues sway housing choices: Supplementary information

The findings on Aucklanders' housing-related preferences come from an Auckland Council People's Panel survey designed by the NZ Centre for Sustainable Cities. The report updates earlier findings on Aucklanders' housing, neighbourhood and travel preferences, and provides insights into evolving concerns of Aucklanders. The survey received responses from 3,285 Aucklanders registered on the Auckland Council's People's Panel.<sup>1</sup>

Three housing and neighbourhood attributes were the most important to respondents. First, was 'affordability' (94% extremely important, very important, or important). Second was a 'warm and dry house' (92%), while a safe neighbourhood (88%) was third. Other highly ranked attributes were outdoor space (80%), parking space (80%), an attractive neighbourhood (75%), a quiet street (73%), and having a standalone home (70%).

Respondents were also presented with price considerations and trade-offs.<sup>2</sup> Taking these into account, and regardless of house size, standalone houses were selected as the preferred type of house for 8 of the 12 choice sets presented in the survey. Townhouses were chosen as the preferred option in another three choice sets, while an apartment was only preferred in one choice set.

For all but one choice set, transport access was important – the option chosen most was located either very close (5 min walk to town centre and 5 min drive/15 min bus to CBD) or fairly close (10 min walk to town centre and 15 min drive/30 min bus to CBD) to the local town centre and CBD. Another common feature of the preferred housing choices was some form of parking (on street or off street), but there was no clear preference regarding neighbourhood type.

A third of respondents prefer to drive for their commute/daily transport (33%) while public transport (28%) and walking (27%) were each the preferred modes of transport for over a quarter of people. Cycling was the least preferred travel mode (11%).

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<sup>1</sup> Results reported here are based on a weighted analysis. The survey was conducted in November-December 2015.

<sup>2</sup> These were similar to those used in a 2014 survey for Auckland Council. See Yeoman, R & Akehurst, G 2015, 'The housing we'd choose: a study of housing preferences, choices and trade-offs in Auckland. Auckland Council technical report, TR2015/016', Market Economics Limited for Auckland Council, Auckland.

The report details barriers to alternative transport modes to the car. The most common barrier to cycling was a perceived lack of safety (65%), while unpleasant routes (e.g. steep hills) (39%), other things to do (31%), weather (29%), and long journey times (27%) were the other most important barriers.

'Takes too long' was the barrier most people mentioned in regard to using public transport (49%). The other most common barriers were an unsuitable or infrequent timetable (34%), no easily accessible stop or station (33%), an unreliable service (22%), and having other things to do (21%).

As far as problems with their dwellings went, the most common problems given were too small (12%), expensive (11%), cold/difficult to heat (10%), and poor condition (8%). These problems generally align with the most important attributes (reported above) of affordability, warmth and dryness, and neighbourhood safety.

In regard to the residential neighbourhood, the most common problems were the reliability of public transport (14%), noise or vibration (10%), sidewalks/cycle lanes (9%), distance to work (7%), and problem neighbours (7%).

Associate Professor Ralph Chapman of Victoria University, who led the survey work, commented that it was not surprising that affordability of housing ranked first in importance among respondents, nor that having a warm and dry house was seen as vital. These factors were more important even than a safe neighbourhood, which a previous survey had placed as most important.<sup>3</sup>

'It's also notable that, when people face constrained choice options which take into account affordability, neighbourhood and travel, they don't necessarily indicate a preference for standalone housing', Dr Chapman said. 'We are seeing a gradual evolution of preferences away from standalone houses towards townhouses and in some cases apartments. This is consistent with a shift we picked up in previous work we've done.'<sup>4</sup>

Another interesting insight was the significant number of Aucklanders who now prefer not to use a car for commuting, Chapman added. 'It is significant that about 55% of respondents prefer to take public transport or walk', he said. 'This is an important finding, and is consistent with other findings about the importance to people of easy access to public transport.'<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> See the Yeoman and Akehurst study cited above: p.23

<sup>4</sup> See Hamer-Adams, A, Randal, E, Howden-Chapman, P, Chapman, R & Early, L 2015, 'A Survey of Sentiments about Cities', in L. Early, M. Russell and P. Howden-Chapman (eds), Drivers of Urban Change, Steele Roberts Aotearoa, Wellington. <http://sustainablecities.org.nz/2015/11/new-horizon-poll/>

<sup>5</sup> See the Yeoman and Akehurst study cited above: p. 25

***For a copy of the report or more information, please contact:***

*Assoc. Prof. Ralph Chapman, Victoria Univ of Wellington, 021 725 742, [ralph.chapman@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:ralph.chapman@vuw.ac.nz)*