

# Understanding the Importance of Trust (and Distrust) in Auckland's Intensification Process

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**Abstract:** Rapid population increase due to increasing domestic and international migration, coupled with escalating real-estate prices, has resulted in a "housing crisis" in Auckland. These challenges, in addition to efforts to curb suburban sprawl have made intensification a priority for Auckland Council. However, intensification has created tension between stakeholders, not only because of the end results, which are often considered unsatisfactory, but also because of perceived shortcomings in the process itself. This paper reports on an interview-based study of the experiences and perspectives of three stakeholder groups: developers; Auckland Council politicians and planners; and community groups/community members who are affected by new medium/high-density developments. The findings highlight a diversity of opinions regarding the intensification process, and a dominant theme of trust/distrust among the different stakeholders.

## Introduction

Auckland is New Zealand's largest and most diverse city with 1.42 million residents in 2013, equating to 33.4% of New Zealand's population (Statistics New Zealand, 2015). Due to high rates of both domestic and international immigration, the population is rising rapidly. This represents a growth of 254,000 people between 2001 and 2013 (Statistics New Zealand, 2015). Alongside this population growth, Auckland is also experiencing escalating house prices and a (at least perceived) shortage of supply. This has resulted in affordability problems for many people trying to enter the housing market. The rate in which house prices have increased in Auckland has recently been highlighted by the Real Estate Institute of New Zealand (2015) who released figures showing Auckland's median house increasing from \$640,000 in October 2014 to \$771,000 in September 2015. In light of these challenges, Auckland Council is developing the Unitary Plan, a major planning document designed to bring the objectives of the publicly ratified 2012 Auckland Plan to life. Significantly, one of the major components of the Unitary Plan is a residential intensification agenda that seeks to provide greater higher-density housing choices at a range of prices. The Unitary Plan has received thousands of public submissions and is currently going through a hearings phase to finalise its content.

For some Aucklanders the Unitary Plan and its intensification agenda have been met enthusiastically, being seen as a way to effectively address housing choice and affordability problems. However, although many people favour mixed-use communities in principle, there is still a strong individual preference and aspiration to have stand-alone suburban housing (Preval et al, 2010). This preference is compounded by Aucklanders having house size expectations that far exceed their incomes. These points in addition to numerous examples of poorly designed higher-density housing in the past have resulted in a limited (although slowly growing) market for intensification (Auckland Council, 2012). As a result, the Unitary Plan process and intensification agenda have been greeted by many with cynicism or hostility, perceived as local government once again forcing their agenda on the public and in doing so impinging on individual rights and freedoms. In particular, distrust is evident when discussions have turned to the way in which intensification should be undertaken, both procedurally and in terms of outcomes. The New Zealand Herald (23/05/2013) reported the Unitary Plan as being "unwieldy, almost illegible, full of planner-speak", that it "prevents proper engagement and deliberation", that it has "pitted young against old, developers against residents, council against Government, and the council/Government against the people", and has "led to fear, uncertainty and distrust in both the process and in those promulgating the plan". Such opinions are both indicative of and perhaps contributing to a process plagued by suspicion and a lack of trust between stakeholders.

This paper investigates how and why distrust is being exhibited in the intensification process. First it presents a literature review looking into the idea of trust, how trust is manifested in contemporary society, and the importance it plays in the planning process and public participation. The research methods are then outlined, including background information on the interview participants and focus

groups conducted. Following this, the findings will be presented before moving onto the discussion and conclusions.

## **Background**

### ***Definition of Trust***

Before delving too deeply into why and how distrust is manifested in Auckland's intensification process, it is useful to define 'trust'. The Oxford Dictionary (2015) defines it as "a firm belief in the reliability, truth, or ability of someone or something". Rousseau et al. (1998; p395) state that trust is "a psychological state of mind comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behaviour of another". Trust can operate on many levels, however this paper will focus on two in particular (Korczynski, 2000; Tait, 2011):

- *Interpersonal trust*, which is an individual form of trust derived through personal contact and social relations with other individuals. This is a traditional form of trust more based on ideas of loyalty, reciprocity and empathy and is complementary to ideas of social capital.
- *Institutional trust*, which operates at an organizational level and is based on trust of institutions or abstract expert systems. This form of trust relies strongly on the expertise of institutions or people within organisations to conduct affairs along the lines of accepted procedures and codes of ethics.

### ***A Crisis of Trust in a Pluralistic Society***

In contemporary society, there is a "crisis of trust" (Swain & Tait, 2007; O'Neill, 2002; Tait, 2011). This term has been used to describe two different phenomena: a decline in interpersonal trust, meaning we no longer trust individual people as much as we used to; and declining trust of institutions, organisations and the systems and processes within which they operate (Warren, 1999; Offe, 1999; Swain & Tait, 2007). The pluralistic society thesis positions this "crisis of trust" as a response to living in a highly pluralistic society where life is increasingly unpredictable. This thesis seeks to explain modernity in two ways. First, that modern society is increasingly fragmented, lacking in harmony or unity where citizens have similar interests and objectives. Second, that due to increasing diversity and fragmentation, modern society is characterised by power sharing between different groups (Swain & Tait, 2007). As a result, this can lead to the advancement of particular group interests, often at the expense of or without consideration of others.

### ***The Importance of Trust/Distrust in Planning***

Laurian (2009) argued that trust is a central element of planning because it is positioned at the nexus of public and private interests. Laurian (2009; p. 372) also contended that it is important that "citizens see planners as competent, caring and fair professionals working for the public good within trusted agencies". However, in modern society, what 'public interest' actually means and whether it can actually be catered for is contested and is seen by some as problematic or even impossible. Swain & Tait (2007) maintain that professions acting in the 'public good' may find it difficult to pin-down what public good is and whose interests they are serving in such a polarised society. Tait (2011; p. 168) goes further by positing that achieving trust in a planning system may in fact be impossible since planning requires making judgements between "irreconcilably different competing interests" where decisions must always favour one side over another. In this context interpersonal distrust in planners, and/or institutional distrust in authorities may arise. This dilemma facing planners was outlined by Tait (2011; p158):

Planning often produces intensely contested outcomes that are open to critique from diverse groups, and these decisions can polarize opinion to such an extent that groups fundamentally opposed to one another's interests and goals may feel equal amounts of distrust in a planning system that acts as final arbiter between them.

Because it is difficult to achieve outcomes that are viewed favourably by all members of society, a trustworthy process becomes increasingly important. This is asserted by Petts (2008) who believes that to improve trust in planning, authorities should emphasise process rather than outcomes, that people will trust institutions more if the processes of decision-making are seen as trustworthy. Yet according to Hardin (1999) it is very difficult for political institutions to convince citizens of the benefits of a new policy. This is because there is often little evidence that can be shown to support new policies and that citizens are typically unable to judge new policies beyond the effect it will have on their own immediate life. In our multidimensional society, Petts (2008) also contends that discussions of trust often stress the five dimensions outlined by Renn & Levine (1991): competence, objectivity, fairness, consistency and empathy, and that if these dimensions can be attributed to the planning process then trust is more likely to occur. Incorporating some of these dimensions, Laurian (2009) believes that objective mediators can help mitigate distrust and encourage effective communication between participants in the planning process, even if they desire different outcomes. If this is done then Laurian contends that participants can better work towards consensual solutions. However, as stated by Petts (2008), people have long memories and it takes more than one win to earn or regain trust, therefore good outcomes must be continuous to shift thinking and build trust.

### ***Trust/Distrust in Participatory Planning***

Participatory planning practices came about largely in response to public dissatisfaction over what people saw as technocratic, centralised and out-of-touch planning (Swain & Tait, 2007). They were introduced in an attempt to re-establish a form of institutional trust in the process of planning, and by proxy government itself (Swain & Tait, 2007; Laurian, 2009). According to Senecah (2004; p. 20) trust is also “the most commonly identified missing or present element in ineffective or effective processes”. This outlines a major dilemma for planners – they understand the importance of trust yet are often unable to achieve it.

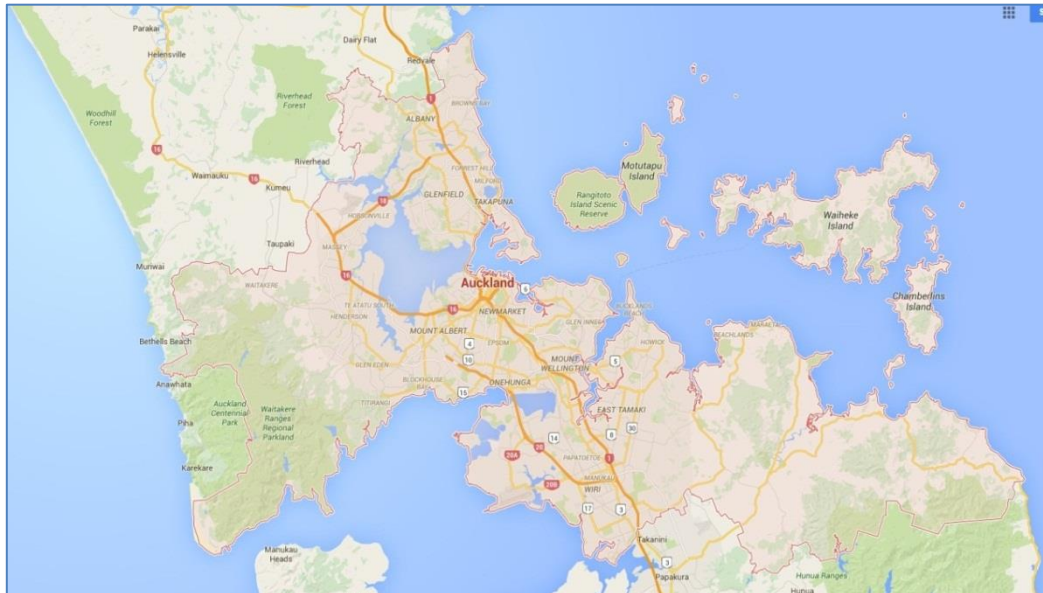
It is very important that participative processes are seen as competent if they (and the institutions organising them) and the participants are to be trusted (Petts, 2008). Laurian (2009; p379) also stated that trust can be promoted through ‘meaningful’ participation: “collaborative participation processes that promote transparency, mutual respect and learning”. The key word here is ‘meaningful’ which refers to participation which actually makes a difference to the planning process and is not just a lip-service exercise. This idea is echoed by Laurian (2009) who states that meaningful participation will not only help improve the trust of planners, but is also a visible way to show trust in the public. As Yang (2005, 2006) observed, administrators who trust citizens are more likely to engage the public proactively and promote meaningful participation. The risk for planners is that many now see any form of engagement as a kind of ‘holy grail’ that will instil a sense of trust with the public (Petts, 2008); however if engagement is not meaningful it can actually serve to create further distrust.

If participatory processes are to help restore trust, not only must they be meaningful but they must also overcome certain difficulties, including a lack of plural representation and power imbalances (Laurian, 2007; Ranson & Stewart, 1998). In particular, planning processes perceived as having unbalanced power relations can breed suspicion and further distrust (Stein & Harper, 2003). Further, inefficient planning processes and a lack of planner accountability can create distrust. However, as argued by Swain & Tait (2007), calls for increased regulations and restrictions, while making the council more accountable, also risk making the system even more inefficient and bureaucratic, which can further slow down the planning process and in doing so exacerbate distrust.

As contended by Kitchen & Whitney (2004), the growing emphasis on performance and efficiency has resulted in many planning authorities viewing public involvement as a time-consuming and costly practice, which makes it harder to achieve aspirational efficiency targets and can prevent the realisation of good outcomes. There is evidence of this in Australia where there is a now lack of community trust due to the removal of development assessment rights as part of an effort to streamline the planning process (Shevellar et al, 2015). Another concern relates to whether views heard from only a small number of participants can really be ‘trusted’ to be representative of the wider population (Petts, 2008). Consequently, authorities are sometimes hesitant to engage in public participation in case a minority view is overly represented and influential.

### **Auckland Context**

Auckland is a diverse and sprawling city consisting predominantly of low-density detached housing with a population which is projected to reach two million in the next 30 years. Geographically, Auckland consists of a number of distinct, yet not autonomous regions, the main ones being the central isthmus, south/east Auckland, west Auckland (often referred to as Waitakere) and the North Shore. The spatial dimensions of Auckland are largely determined by the south/western Manakau Harbour and north/eastern Waitemata Harbour. As can be seen from Figure 1, this is a challenging geography which results in limited land in close proximity to the CBD on the central isthmus.



**Figure 1 Map of Auckland Boundaries (sourced from Google Maps)**

The people of Auckland are governed by a single Supercity Council, which was the result of a long process of amalgamating the previous regional council and the seven city and district councils in 2010. It was in the wake of this process that the Auckland Plan was developed, setting out the goals for this new, integrated urban centre. This amalgamation has been contentious for reasons such as increasing civic bureaucracy and weakening local level democracy opportunities due to a perceived lack of power offered to the 21 local boards. Auckland has a diverse population. While the majority of Aucklanders belong to the European ethnic group (59.3%) the ethnic composition is changing quickly, particularly with regard to Asian people who made up 23.1% (307,233) of the population in 2013 compared to only and 5% in 1991. The percentage of Maori (10.7) has decreased slightly whereby the percentage of Pacific Islanders (14.4) has increased slightly from 2001 to 2013 (Auckland Council, 2014). According to the 2013 Census Auckland is a relatively youthful city with a median age of 35 years, compared to 38 nationwide. In particular, Auckland has a large proportion of residents aged between 24 and 44 years compared to the rest of the country.

With regard to housing, in 2013 three quarters (74.7%) of housing was classified as separate or detached. Of this number, 62.3% were one story, single dwellings. Accordingly, joined or attached private dwellings made of 24.8% of Auckland housing. From the 2013 Census, there were 15,645 apartments, compared to 9876 in 2006, which is a significant increase (Goodyear and Fabian, 2014).. These statistics highlight a dominance of single detached housing in the Auckland housing market, although a dominance which is now starting to decline. Between 2001 and 2013 home ownership decreased from 236,778 to 201,408, which is a significant change. Reflecting this, between 2001 and 2013, the percentage of Aucklanders (over 15 years of age) who own their own home also dropped from 49.8% to 43.4%. This 2013 percentage is significant when compared to the national figure of 52.9% - a nearly 10% difference (Auckland Council, 2014). Research has also shown that Auckland households spend more of their income on housing than elsewhere in New Zealand (Goodyear and Fabian (2014).

## Methods

This paper describes viewpoints on trust/distrust in Auckland's Unitary Plan process concerning urban intensification. It is based on data gathered in a series of individual interviews and focus groups:

- Three people represented Auckland Council perspectives: the Deputy Mayor, a planning and policy manager; and a resource consent manager;
- Three representatives of community groups who have been vocal in their opposition to council intensification plans – Generation Zero, a sustainability focused lobby group, Auckland 2040 and the Character Coalition; and
- Three property developers, one heading up a small townhouse development in the central suburb of Avondale, one an apartment developer and the other in charge of a 3000+ housing development on the old Hobsonville airforce base located to the west of the city.
- The focus groups were held with members of two resident groups formed in neighbourhoods located close to new higher-density developments: the Powell Himikera Residents Association (PHRA) in Avondale and the Grey Lynn Residents Association (GLRA).

These interviews and group discussions were conducted in the latter half of 2014 and early 2015. And were part of a larger study into intensification in Auckland. Interviewees were recruited directly by the researcher. The interviews were conducted at locations of participants' choosing and were digitally recorded and transcribed. Focus group participants were recruited through a combination of letter drops and direct contact with resident associations and again were held in locations proposed by participants.

## **Findings**

Findings from the interviews and focus groups revealed significant distrust between stakeholders in the intensification process, and even stronger distrust in the planning process itself. Factors contributing to this distrust included: a lack of meaningful public participation; problems with engaging the public; council shortcomings, including ideas such as incompetence and inefficiency; a perception of an unfair arbitration process; a lack of certainty and clarity around planning rules; poor quality developments in the past; and negative perceptions of developers.

### ***A Lack of Meaningful Public Participation***

Public exclusion from meaningful participation in the planning process was perceived as being a serious problem by some participants. One way this occurred was through non-notification of resource consents which resulted in residents feeling they were being intentionally excluded from the process: "The perception from the community is that the council are pushing the limit as much as they can and encouraging developers not to speak to the community" (GLRA member). Another form of exclusion highlighted was that, although technically able to participate, the process prevented meaningful engagement. This feeling was outlined by the Character Coalition representative who described the difficulties they experienced trying to participate in the Unitary Plan hearings:

They change it every day, you have to read the website, not just daily but hourly because they keep changing things, changing the dates of hearings and moving things, splitting things off. You have to have a PhD to understand it. One member said to me that they went to a hearing and there were 100 people in the room, 95 of whom were being paid handsomely to be there and 5 were community people doing it for the love of their city. It is not fair, blatantly not fair

One feeling that featured strongly was that the process is more important than even the outcome and that to gain trust there would have to be a process that people felt genuinely able to take part in. This idea was shared by the Auckland 2040 representative: "if you have aired the community's concerns you're going to get at least a certain degree of buy-in". This indicated that their priority was not only to be heard but to have their views carefully considered, whatever the outcome might be. A fair democratic process was considered essential to trust; one developer outlined how currently this was not occurring: "I think a big part of the problem is a lack of confidence in the council... People just don't think that their interests will be well looked after so they feel that they have to get together and fight for it, and I think the reality is if you look at history they are probably right".

Top-down planning was also identified as preventing meaningful participation with more bottom-up planning preferred. This was emphasised by the Auckland 2040 representative who said that to make good decisions at the top, it is imperative studies are first done at the grassroots level. The Character Coalition representative said that it [Unitary Plan] has received such a hostile reaction from community groups precisely because the council didn't adopt a bottom-up approach. This problem was summed up by one GLRA member who said "we've got no faith in council process".

### ***Problems with Engaging the Public***

Developers and Auckland Council representatives exhibited a degree of distrust in the public and outlined reasons for not wanting to encourage public participation. One reason was that the public were often perceived as being irrational and emotive:

the locals come in and it's all emotional, there's no fact to any of it, so it's not like we were debating with town planners or architects about outcomes, we ended up with just a whole lot of emotional discussion... there is lots of mis-information out there and its emotions so people aren't rational anymore... It's an acrimonious battle (Developer).

This thought was shared by the Auckland Council resource consent manager who expressed frustration in their dealings with the public: "everything gets blown out of proportion - they don't believe the evidence that is in front of them". It was also suggested that members who engage in the planning process and affect actual change are often not representative of the whole community, but rather of particular subsets:

They [councilors] also get a lot of pressure from the communities... it tends to be communities that are well resourced in terms of income. They usually are European/Pakeha. They usually are groups that are 50+ so they can be quite organised and vocal but that doesn't necessarily mean they represent the whole of that community (Auckland Council planning manager).

The complex nature of public participation was outlined by the Auckland Council resource consent manager identifying the pros and cons of limiting public involvement in the planning process:

Of course you're going to get a handful of people that are still unhappy at the outcome but you've given them the right to have their say. Excluding people doesn't really help us in the long run but it does make for a quicker decision

### ***Perceived Council Shortcomings***

Perceptions of Auckland Council were predominantly negative. One developer was particularly distrustful of the council and by proxy the whole resource consent process after experiencing serious delays and significant expenditure:

It was just a classic example of council completely balling up and was frustrating because it ended up costing us \$650,000 maybe close to \$700,000 to get a resource consent. It completely destroys the economics of just about anything at that site...

The developer understood the sensitive and bureaucratic nature of the consent process but was angry at an apparent lack of coordination and accountability in council decision making:

We can't go sue the council for incompetence, you can't do that, you just got to wear it on the chin. So it's like a one-way system, we've just got to go "thank you for the consent"... how about we sue you for cost, for all of the environment court costs". You can't do that; it's not the done thing so you just basically lump it and move on. It is completely ridiculous. We probably won't do another development... it's seriously not worth it.... it is a horrible process

There was also a perception that the council is not a unified organisation and that even within departments and teams there was disagreement about how intensification should be undertaken. This point was made by a developer who stated that: "The council itself isn't a coordinated organisation, it

is a whole lot of fiefdoms... everyone has their own agenda” and that, “when combined with the bureaucracy and politics of that organisation, it’s an unmitigated disaster”.

Another perceived shortcoming of Auckland Council was their inability to adequately control developers, to ensure that they do not construct low quality developments. This idea was vocalised by a GLRA member who said that: “the council encourages them to do whatever they do... the council is where the problem is, not the developers”. This highlights the conflict of opinion about how much regulation needs to be administered in the development process.

### ***Unfair Arbitration Process***

Another cause of distrust came from a perception that the arbitration process was unfair. Residents from both focus groups perceived the Environment Court to have a strong developer bias, which went against its reputation as a neutral institution. Speaking of their experience with the Environment Court, one member of the PHRA said that: “He [the judge] came in with an agenda, there was nothing unbiased about this judge or the whole process... the lawyer for the Environment Court was friends with the developer in the first place”. A member from the GLRA was also unhappy with the arbitration process, believing that community members were not equal participants: “After that hearing I had a real feeling that everybody packed up their suitcases and slapped each other on the back... there was nothing in the process that made me feel that they cared about what we thought”.

One GLRA member stated that: “communities who go up against developers are actually just pissing into the wind”, revealing a sense of frustration with a process which from their perspective should give them equal footing with larger and better-resourced stakeholders. They felt their views were ignored and they were fighting an uphill battle: “At the end of the day developers come along and do what they like and council approve it, so it actually makes a lie of the process and is a waste of our energy” (GLRA member).

### ***A Lack of Certainty in Rules***

A major point of concern for many was the lack of certainty in the rules about what is allowed to be constructed in particular locations. The perception was that without certainty in the planning process, it is hard for local communities to trust council decision making. In particular, GLRA members were frustrated by the lack of enforcement of height restrictions along a central city ridgeline, Great North Road. Although GLRA members who lived close to Great North Road preferred lower height developments, the point of contention was more about shortcomings in the process: “if the rules were rules rather than guidelines which anyone can apply to ignore then we’d be happy” (GLRA member). The Auckland 2040 representative summed up this frustration:

The District Plan says four stories and council is consenting to six, now that should not happen. There is a thing called certainty and certainty is you’ve read the provisions of the plan, it says the height limit is four stories. You expect it to be four stories... So to have the council turning around and approving six when the height limit is four is not good because it just calls into the question the certainty of the plan

The Auckland Council resource consent manager sympathised with this perspective and thought it would be better to give developers absolute parameters for height, to give them clarity and certainty in the rules and then let them exercise their creativity and judgement more. The focus group participants said they were not opposed to intensification and just wanted some clear lines in the sand. They stated emphatically that trust could only exist if there was certainty and clarity in the consents process.

### ***Poor Quality Developments in the Past***

While most distrust focused on procedural shortcomings, there was also concern about the design and quality of future developments based on what had been produced in the past. The Character Coalition representative stated that numbers in their organisation had swelled largely because people do not trust the council to ensure high quality outcomes:

People look at the CBD and they look at Hobson Street and they go "we're leaving this to you? Look what you've done and look what you've allowed. You've enabled Auckland to become one of the ugliest cities in the world... I used to say some of the councilors in meetings, "there is no trust, and you've got to rebuild the trust before people will allow you to be in charge of this?"

The Auckland Council resource consent manager again sympathised with public concerns and understood the lack of trust shown towards the council stating that: "leaky home syndrome was an absolute debacle and there are shitloads of apartments around the city that were absolutely appalling". However, comments from both developers and Auckland Council representatives revealed a tacit acknowledgement that mistakes had been made in the past and a confidence that trust will be regained once the public see more high quality developments completed.

### ***Negative Perception of Developers***

There was also strong criticism of developers, criticism not only of their outputs and motivations, but also their personalities. Findings suggested that developers (on a personal level) were seen as inherently untrustworthy and profit-oriented: "Developers are motivated by profit and that is what they do, so they will propose whatever they can get away with to make profit" (GLRA member). As stated by one PHRA member: "The developers are laughing all the way to the bank... they don't care about anything... to me it is like a rape of the land". According to one developer even the banks do not trust them: "Banks don't trust developers because they always lie and people don't like developers because they don't do what they say they are going to do". The harshest criticism actually came from one of the developers:

Most of them are pretty bad... it's all about the money that tips out the bottom of it... they don't care what they are building, and they don't care if the city ends up being a bloody ridiculous mess... The whole system is basically, fundamentally corrupt.

However, in a rare show of support for developers, the Auckland Council planning manager was critical of the overwhelmingly negative perception currently held by the public towards developers in Auckland:

Developers aren't necessarily really evil... there are developers who want to be in Auckland for a long time so need to develop a product that they build a reputation for... we do have a little bit of a mind-set within some communities that developers are evil people who are going to build monstrosities

The findings from these interviews and focus groups outlined a complex and conflicted planning process where distrust from and of all stakeholders was evident. The significance of this to Auckland's intensification process will be the focus of the rest of this paper.

### **Discussion**

With significant distrust between stakeholders and distrust in the process itself, accommodating future housing demand in a way that is socially, environmentally, politically and economically acceptable might be difficult to achieve. It will be difficult because efforts to improve trust must be done so in a pluralistic society, polarised by competing (yet not unified) stakeholder groups and publically played out dichotomies (Swain & Tait, 2011; Stein & Harper, 2003). For example, Auckland Council, like local authorities everywhere, is a convenient scapegoat for public and private frustration and often in a no-win position trying to mediate between contrasted interests (Swain & Tait 2007).

Evidence of the "crisis of trust" thesis (Swain & Tait, 2007; O'Neill, 2002; Tait, 2011) was also apparent with interview findings suggesting strong 'institutional' and 'interpersonal' distrust between stakeholders in the intensification process. One major reason for this distrust was a perception by members of the public of exclusion from meaningful participation. This resulted in feelings of disillusionment and apathy from some participants and determination from others who galvanised to fight against what they believe to be an unfair and undemocratic process. In particular, there was frustration over consultation and arbitration processes which some people perceived as being biased



in favour developers. Perceptions of developer bias is a serious issue for Auckland Council, suggesting an imbalance in power relations, which as contended by Stein and Harper (2003), further perpetuates suspicion and distrust. Distrust of council was also manifested in the frustration shown by both the public and developers regarding the resource consent process, where a lack of certainty about what is allowed to be built and to what specifications is further eroding trust in the council. A general perception was that although the final outcome is important, the process by which the outcome is realised is paramount. Developers also expressed frustration with the slow, inefficient and seemingly incompetent process by which consents are granted. For one developer this process incurred such significant costs they are now unwilling to risk undertaking further developments. Laurian (2009) outlined the importance of planners being regarded as competent and fair professionals working for the public good in trusted agencies, however the negative perceptions of the council and court processes throughout the interviews suggest that this is not the case. This is a problematic situation for the council, who as elected officials require a considerable degree of favourability come election time. However, much of the criticism directed towards them could be identified as coming from the oft-mentioned vocal minority.

Although Auckland Council received most of the criticism, it would be misleading to identify them as the main cause for distrust. Both the public and developers were also distrusted at times within the intensification process. Distrust in the public was largely due to perceptions voiced by both the council and developers that opposition was often coming from groups not representative of the whole community, often pushing narrow and sometimes irrational interests not in-line with wider community needs. This distrust resulted in perceptions of NIMBYism (not in my back yard), a prominent and divisive label given to public opposition in contemporary planning. Subsequently, both developers and the council have often been hesitant to engage the public in a meaningful way, through fear of non-representative public influence and irrational opposition, both of which can result in costly delays. Where the council was often perceived as being incompetent, and public opinion as non-representative, distrust in developers was sometimes much more virulent, attacking their personalities and ethics accusing them of being purely profit-oriented and selfish. Unfortunately, for Auckland Council, perceived developer shortcomings often translated into further distrust in them as they were frequently seen as being responsible for development outcomes and developer behaviour.

Laurian (2009) argued that because contemporary society is so uncertain, divided and unpredictable, the need for trust is even greater. However, findings here suggest that achieving complete trust is not realistic in such a polarised process. This is not to say that trust should not be strived for, but perhaps that as proposed by Petts (2008), stakeholders can, and should endeavour to establish a more realistic and attainable form of 'critical trust' located somewhere between the poles of trust and distrust. This would require a constant degree of healthy scepticism, coupled with basic level of institutional trust that although the outcome may not always be desirable, the process by which it arrives is perceived as fair. This idea is reinforced by Hardin (1999) who believes that given the complexity of council responsibilities and their need to always consider contrasting perspectives, having total trust in any government institution is implausible and that neither the public, nor government institutions should expect it. Therefore, keeping in mind earlier comments that a fair and transparent process is of greater importance than specific outcomes, Auckland Council needs to ensure that the intensification process itself is (perceived as) fair and trustworthy to other stakeholders, in particular the public. If this is achieved then a form of critical institutional trust could manifest. Simultaneously, it is also important that the public be perceived as more trustworthy than they currently are. To do this they need to demonstrate rational behaviour, particularly when their views contrast those of other stakeholders. Subsequently, if emotive opposition can be reduced in favour of rational behaviour, then the council and developers would perceive them as a more credible voice. This would mean they are likely to be more inclined to involve them meaningfully in the planning process.

The findings presented in this paper highlight some significant problems in Auckland's intensification process, many of which are due to or the result in a lack of trust between stakeholders. At the same time, opportunities to improve trust between stakeholders and in the process itself are also revealed. They also highlight some areas that could benefit from further research. In particular, it would be useful to more clearly understand the relationship between stakeholder distrust and both the effectiveness and efficiency of the intensification process. Accordingly, if this causality can be better understood, then further research into how much and what form of public participation should be undertaken.

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