

LURP Review May 2015 Submission #29 - Melanda Slemint

DIRECTION AND COORDINATION

We have a city to be rebuilt, and critical challenges. These are not just around funding and affordability, but also our carbon and ecological footprint, public health crises, and demographic shifts.

We need new ways to achieve our goals of greater resiliency, vibrancy, sustainability and urban health, and of course, economic success.

We must recognize that money for the wrong things is too expensive - substandard development and design, costly suburban sprawl, currently bankrupting some cities in America, and accepting "free money" for roading and other counter-productive ideas. You'll be aware that Auckland Council are currently challenging the government to pay the real costs of infrastructure for the proposed special housing areas.

TRANSPORT

Young Americans are turning against the car-oriented, low-rise life, and are flocking to city centres, where they live in rented apartments, take trams or walk to work, and hang out in coffee shops.

They're typical of the young people we have here already and need to attract to Christchurch to ensure our growth and reduce the average age of our population in the future. UBER was in the press last week, about to launch in chch – this and other car-share apps will revolutionise our use of the car and public transport, and subsequent needs around roading and carparking.

we know that we need to be offering successful communities with liveability and quality of life. We need smart growth, not sprawl, we need future citizens to be able to make shorter, smarter trips, with everything we need closer. We want a family friendly city with great public places that more people visit, and stay in longer.

To afford this we need not just to increase density, in the CBD and in the hubs identified by the LURP, but to do this density well! - With great design, walkability, amenities, and housing and population diversity.

The unhealthy "war on the car" rhetoric, distracts from inspiring developers and citizens about what a true multi-modal city would achieve. All ways of getting around work better, including cars, if we emphasize walking, biking and transit.

When Brent Toderian was visiting Christchurch a couple of months ago, he mentioned the 'greatest urban design decision vancouver ever made' - in 1997, they approved an game-changing Transportation Plan.

It was most notable in its decision to prioritize the ways to get around, rather than balance them.

The active, healthy and green ways of getting around were ranked highest - first walking, our top priority, then biking, and then transit, in that order.

The prioritization then went on to goods movement for the purposes of business support and economic development,

and lastly, the private vehicle.

Vancouver still devotes much energy to trying to make driving a greener and healthier proposition, with examples from electric vehicle charging station pilot projects, to policies and zoning incentives that have contributed to an incredible growth of car-sharing. However the private vehicle remains the last priority. Vancouver is not anti-car, and rarely bans the car, but prioritizing it last has had a dramatic effect on the liveability of the city.

There is no “war on the car”, the model understands the “[Law of Congestion](#)” and proves that when you build a multimodal city, it makes getting around better and easier for every mode of transportation, including the car.

It makes the city work better in every way.

This decision to prioritize rather than balance our ways of getting around has affected everything in how the city has been designed since then. It's guided every decision, from thousands of physical design decisions, to budget allocation. Has every decision followed it perfectly? No - there are many illustrations around the city where the prioritization hasn't been perfectly reflected. However, enough decisions have reflected this prioritization to make our city design fundamentally different.

So my main point is that I believe we need to take the courage to adopt Vancouver's ahead-of-the-curve 1997 decision to prioritize active transport rather than trying to balance ways of getting around..

A transportation decision, sure – but also an urban design decision, a city-making decision, and a budgeting decision.

COMMUNITIES AND HOUSING

the LURP review states that while the uptake in the Greenfield priority areas has been huge, with 75% of potential sections already developed. Welcome, to the future commuters from those 30,000 new sections.

the actions supporting intensification, however, in contrast, have been ‘difficult to implement and monitor’. I've no doubt this won't change until policies and incentives to restrict future outer subdivisions and promote smart growth are in place.

While we may also need developer incentives to encourage intensification, eg DC rebates (linked to good urban design as they currently are) and density incentives, it is also imperative to get the various exemplars underway (including the south frame, BREATHE, and the govt schemes. It is also imperative to see progress on some of the facilities that will make living in the city centre great, eg the metro sports facility, the town hall repair, the library etc.

The final thing that I think will help, will be the beginnings of conversations around affordable alternatives to 3 bdrm houses in outer subdivisions – eg apartments, tiny houses, cohousing. The Christchurch Centre for Architecture has been formed by Jessica Halliday and others, these conversations are already underway (Brent Toderian, Charles Montgomery and Gareth Falconer have visited so far). As in Auckland, we need not just a shift in physical landscape but in people's aspirations and values.

Limiting outer suburban growth was a main component of the Urban Design Strategy – please, please, lets take this opportunity to enforce it at last.

Thanks for your time
Melanda Slemint