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Urban Amenity

Key Urban Amenity Approaches

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| | |
|------------------------------|--|
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Executive summary

This paper is an essential step in the Ministry funded Urban Amenity Project. It collates ideas developed during Urban Amenity Focus Group workshops and from the five case studies. The overall purpose of this paper is to reflect these ideas in a recommended approach for defining, managing, and monitoring urban amenity (including indicator development) in local environments. The paper also extends these ideas by suggesting ways in which the Ministry could approach the development of national urban amenity indicators.

The recommended approach to urban amenity management outline in this paper has been developed with an understanding of the ways in which councils are currently defining, managing, and monitoring urban amenity. As part of this project Karen Bell and Associates (now Enviro Solutions NZ Ltd.) and Glasson Potts Group Ltd. undertook a survey of all local authorities in April 2000. The main findings of this survey are contained in Chapter 2 of this report.

In summary the results of the survey highlighted that most councils relied on generic definitions of amenity and very few councils were monitoring the intangible elements of urban amenity. The Consultant Team has also discovered ways in which councils are defining, managing, and monitoring urban amenity through the meetings of the case study councils and the Focus Group workshops. These results reflect the findings of the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment's investigations into suburban amenity values in 1997. One of the main aims of this project is to provide councils with practical ways of addressing these issues.

Chapter 3 of this report documents the range of methods that have contributed to the overall approach to urban amenity contained in Chapter 4 of the report. Chapter 3 begins by describing a range of methods to define urban amenity. The methods described aim to engage communities in defining the attributes and values of urban amenity that are valued by local communities. It is emphasised that it is necessary to have an understanding of the characteristics of communities before starting community engagement processes. The methods that are currently used by councils to manage urban amenity are also documented. It is recognised that councils use a range of methods both statutory and non-statutory. The approaches discussed in the Focus Groups for monitoring urban amenity (including indicator development) are also outlined:

- P-S-R framework;
- raw attribute analysis;
- community characteristics/values; and
- principles/qualities.

In Chapter 4 of this report an overall approach to define, manage and monitor urban amenity (including indicator development) is described. This overall approach is described as a cycle of urban amenity and involves the following steps:

- define with the community what urban amenity means;
- use a range of management techniques such as provisions in district plans, and reference to design guidelines and codes of practice;
- monitor changes in urban amenity (including by using indicators); and finally
- review all existing means of managing urban amenity in relation to the above.

Within the cycle of urban amenity a conceptual framework for the development of indicators on urban amenity has been suggested. This framework summarises the views developed in the Focus Group workshops on urban amenity. The conceptual framework is shown diagrammatically in Figure 2. The following key stages are identified in the framework:

- **Qualities:** The key qualities in the framework are generic and apply equally to all urban spaces.
- **Urban type:** The wide variety of urban places are recognised in the model. It is recognised that there may be a variety of urban places within a town /city. For example the qualities may be applied at a metro-scale level and they may also be applied to urban villages within the metro city.
- **Attributes:** Attributes are the elements of each quality. Basically attributes are the building blocks for the qualities. For example landform is an attribute of the quality 'sense of place'. An attribute may also relate to more than one quality.
- **Community characteristics:** It is important to understand the dynamics of the various communities within different urban spaces. The characteristics of a community such as age, gender, income, ethnicity etc. are important factors to understand when both developing attributes and indicators and collecting information on the selected indicators.
- **Indicators:** It is possible to develop indicators from the identified attributes and with knowledge of the characteristics of a community. Indicators for urban amenity may relate to both tangible and intangible measurements. It is also important that the indicators developed take into account community characteristics. As an example it will be important if there is a projected increase in elderly within an area that the 'indicators' developed for qualities such as accessibility take this characteristic into account.

From the development of the cycle of urban amenity and the conceptual framework for monitoring urban amenity some key lessons have been learnt. These lessons are documented in Chapter 5 of this report. Some of the key lessons include:

- urban amenity has the greatest meaning at a local level;
- it is important to describe the qualities and values associated with urban amenity in a way that is generally understood;
- it is important to engage the community in defining and monitoring urban amenity;
- councils want step by step processes to follow;
- using only statutory instruments alone will not give the full answer;
- an approach that only focuses on the most measurable things is not desirable it is important to find a way of capturing and tracking the least measurable but most important things; and
- there is no "one" correct way of managing urban amenity.

In conclusion, this report is a major step forward in discovering ways in which urban amenity can be defined, managed and monitored (including the development of indicators) at the local level. This report also suggests that there may be ways in which national indicators on urban amenity can be developed. The next stage of the project, which involves the trialling of the ideas contained in this report, will provide practical feedback. This feedback will then be incorporated into the 'Good Practice Guide on Urban Amenity' programmed to be finished at the end of June 2001.

Glossary of terms

| | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Accessible | Ease at which it is possible to reach other places, people, activities, resources, services, in a relatively direct and comfortable manner. |
| Amenity | The qualities and attributes people value about a place that contribute to the experience of a high 'quality of life'. |
| Amenity attributes | The tangible and measurable aspects of the environment such as physical noise measurements. |
| Amenity values | The less tangible aspects of the environment such as people's perceptions, expectations, desires, and tolerance. "Amenity values" is defined in the Resource Management Act as <i>"Those natural or physical qualities and characteristics of an area that contribute to people's appreciation of its pleasantness, aesthetic coherence, and cultural and recreational attributes"</i> . |
| Attributes | Attributes are the elements of each quality or urban amenity. Basically attributes are the building blocks for the qualities. |
| Biophysical | The biological, geological, hydrological, and atmospheric components of the natural environment. |
| Choice | Availability of places that cater for all sectors of the population and provide a diverse range of activities and experiences. |
| Community characteristics | The demographic characteristics of communities such as age, gender, and ethnicity. |
| Design guide | A document that illustrates principles of design, provides design guidance for particular development types and makes explicit the benchmarks for assessing the level of amenity and design quality of a development. |
| Environment | A physical environment that is relatively free from nuisance/ /overcrowding/noise/danger/pollution allowing people to live and work in reasonable comfort |
| Familiarity | Existence of entrances, exits, thoroughways that are easily identified and understood. |
| Indicator | An indicator is a measure (eg a distance from a goal, target, threshold, benchmark) against which some aspects of policy performance can be assessed. Indicators are information tools. Environmental indicators simplify, quantify and communicate trends in and impacts on the environment. They also tell us the extent to which our policies are working. |
| Intangible | The attributes associated with urban amenity that are associated with people's perceptions of the environments within which they live |
| Inner city | The urban area comprising the central commercial area and high density residential development. |
| Liveability | Unique combinations of amenity values (open space, design features, urban vegetation); historic and cultural heritage; location; and intangibles such as character, landscape, and 'sense of place'. |
| Monitoring | The deliberate act of observation and surveillance over time with a defined purpose. |
| Peri-urban | The interface between urban and rural environments. |
| Participation/Involvement | Extent to which there is a constituency of community members empowered to participate in the process. |
| Quality of service | Extent to which opportunity costs and travel time are reduced and use of infrastructure is maximised. |
| Raw attributes | The building blocks of higher level concepts. |

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|--------------------------------|--|
| Residential environment | Urban areas used predominantly for residential activities, but including open space and local support services. |
| Robustness | Degree to which the elements that make up an area are versatile enough to accommodate and support the range of activities that people might want to engage in and their changing social/cultural needs and expectations. |
| Satisfaction surveys | Method to how satisfied people are with the environments that they live in. |
| Sense of place | Memorable or distinctive characteristics that differentiate one place from another. |
| Urban | An area characterised by high-density development and a variety of housing styles including apartments, terrace housing and semi-detached housing. Reduced areas of private open space and vegetation. |
| Urban amenity | The liveability of urban environments. |
| Well-being | The overall sense of satisfaction that people feel. |

Contents

| | |
|--|------------|
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS | II |
| EXECUTIVE SUMMARY | III |
| GLOSSARY OF TERMS | V |
| 1. INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| 2. THE MANAGEMENT OF URBAN AMENITY IN NEW ZEALAND | 5 |
| 3. THE DEVELOPMENT OF A FRAMEWORK FOR URBAN AMENITY | 11 |
| 4. RECOMMENDED APPROACH TO URBAN AMENITY | 21 |
| 5. LESSONS LEARNT | 30 |
| 6. THE NATIONAL PERSPECTIVE ON URBAN AMENITY | 32 |
| 7. CONCLUSIONS AND WAY FORWARD | 34 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY | 38 |
| APPENDIX 1 – MEMBERS OF THE URBAN AMENITY FOCUS GROUP | 42 |
| APPENDIX 2 – P-S-R FRAMEWORK | 43 |
| APPENDIX 3- RAW ATTRIBUTE ANALYSIS | 47 |

1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose and audience for this report

The purpose of this report is to document some ideas on a conceptual framework and possible approaches to managing urban amenity at the local authority scale. This report does not seek to comprehensively answer the question of how to manage urban amenity but outlines some approaches and way forward. The focus is on how to define and monitor changes in urban amenity (including some suggested processes to develop urban amenity indicators). The intended audience for this report is the Ministry for the Environment and members of the Ministry's Urban Amenity Focus Group (refer Appendix 1).

This report is not a definitive statement on the management of urban amenity. It provides a much-needed conceptual framework and some recommendations about processes councils can use to assist them to define, manage and monitor urban amenity. The range of people that have been involved in the project has influenced it.

1.2 Background work on amenity

This work on approaches to managing urban amenity stems from the Ministry for the Environment's work under the Environmental Performance Indicators (EPI) Programme and work on good practice for local government. To date indicators work has focused primarily on the development of indicators for biophysical aspects of the environment, such as land, air, water, biodiversity, the marine environment, waste, transport and energy. The Ministry has also been preparing a number of good practice guides for local government to assist them in the administration and implementation of the Resource Management Act (1991).

This project on approaches to managing urban amenity builds on the Ministry for the Environment's previous work on urban amenity and the indicators and good practice work programmes. The Ministry for the Environment's relevant work on urban amenity (which is fully referenced in the draft technical report "*Urban amenity indicators – the liveability of our urban environments*", by Karen Bell and Peter Glasson, June 2000) is:

- *Working Paper 7 – Amenity Values under the Resource Management Act 1991, defining amenity values with suitable specificity* (October 1996);
- *Technical Paper No. 21 – Urban Amenity Indicators Workshop Report* (August 1998);
- *Technical Paper No. 22 – Case Study: city and district council state of the environment monitoring and indicators* (August 1998);
- *Technical Paper No. 54 Proposed Approach to Indicators for Urban Amenity* (June 1999);
- Summary of Submissions on the Proposed Approach to Indicators for Urban Amenity (September 1999);
- *Curbing the Sprawl: Urban growth management in the United States – lessons for New Zealand*, Lindsay Gow, (April 2000); and
- A draft technical report entitled *Urban amenity indicators – the liveability of our urban environments*, by Karen Bell and Peter Glasson (June 2000).

1.3 Other related work

The Ministry has funded or is involved with a number of other projects related to this work on urban amenity. *Urban amenity indicators – the liveability of our urban environments*, by Karen Bell and Peter Glasson (June 2000), gives an overview of these related projects. Briefly they include:

- Integrated Monitoring Project in Waikato;
- Plan Effectiveness Monitoring Project – case study in Wellington;
- Quality Plans project;
- Rural Amenity Conflicts Study;
- Planning Under a Co-operative Mandate; and
- Impacts of Rural Subdivision on Landscape Values.

For further information about these projects, refer to the technical report or contact the Ministry for the Environment.

1.4 Project brief and methodology

The overall brief for this project was originally to investigate developing a small set of national urban amenity indicators, starting with environmental performance indicators for noise, open space, urban density, and the use of satisfaction surveys to determine what people like about where they live. There was also a requirement to develop a good practice guide for local government on plan effectiveness monitoring, using urban amenity as an example.

The consultant team prepared a draft technical report for the Ministry for the Environment (June 2000) identifying an approach to developing national urban amenity indicators and some potential urban amenity indicators. A key recommendation was to assess approaches to defining and monitoring urban amenity at the local authority scale before attempting to develop national urban amenity indicators. This report (September 2000) aims to provide a conceptual framework for the management of urban amenity in New Zealand and suggest some approaches and processes that can be used by councils to define, manage and monitor urban amenity.

Urban amenity Focus Group

The Ministry established a practitioner focus group (The Urban Amenity Focus Group) in March 2000 to assist with this project. This Focus Group covers a wide range of backgrounds and experience to assist with aspects of the project. The Focus Group met on 7 April and 20-21 July 2000.

A mini Focus Group meeting was held on 31 August 2000 to discuss key approaches to defining, managing and monitoring urban amenity and to set up some trials for the approaches developed. This work will be discussed later in this introduction.

Case studies

In addition to this Focus Group, the Ministry for the Environment and the consultant team is working with five councils to undertake case studies relating to urban amenity and plan effectiveness monitoring. One of the objectives of the project is:

“To develop a series of case studies with a wide range of councils. The case studies would illustrate different tools and techniques for defining urban amenity, developing RMA plan provisions based on this definition, and developing monitoring requirements for the plan provisions.”

Put simply the case studies will explore the development of tools and templates to:

- define urban amenity
- manage urban amenity (through plan provisions and other mechanisms)
- monitor urban amenity (including indicators and reporting) and
- monitor the effectiveness of plans.

The local authorities involved in the case studies and the focus of their case studies are:

- Tasman District – the use of public satisfaction surveys in two townships (Richmond and Mapua) to assist with assessing urban amenity issues and management of urban amenity in these locations;
- Christchurch City – documenting the strategy the Council adopted for monitoring the effectiveness of the Christchurch City Plan (a review of progress and write up of the process used by the Council);
- Waimakariri District – an investigation of processes to enable urban amenity indicators to be developed by communities as well as identifying the limitations of any such processes in two rural towns (Rangiora and Kaiapoi) and comparing the opinions of members of the community on urban amenity with the provisions of the District Plan, which was developed by practitioners;
- Palmerston North City Council – developing instruments for addressing amenity effects from non-residential development. The Council is determining the effectiveness and suitability of the package of measures that are used to address the adverse environmental effects on amenity from non-residential development in a defined inner business locality;
- Auckland City Council – a study of residents and business in the Business 4 Zone of the City to assess people’s perceptions of amenity. This will enable assessment of what people like/do not like about living in these areas and how this relates to provisions in the Plan and any reverse sensitivity issues.

Survey of councils

The Consultant Team also conducted a survey of all councils in New Zealand in April 2000 in relation to their management (including monitoring) of urban amenity and plan effectiveness monitoring. This survey provides useful information about how urban amenity issues are being dealt with throughout New Zealand, and indicates what people in local authorities think about the development of national urban amenity indicators.

Literature review

An additional source of information has been an international and national literature review. Some of the key sources of background information for this work are listed in the bibliography at the end of this report.

Council trialling of urban amenity approaches

The second Focus Group meeting discussed the importance of testing out ideas on how to approach the management of urban amenity in New Zealand through the use of council trials. The mini Focus Group meeting started to set up these council trials. The trials are discussed in the conclusion of this report, as they constitute part of the way forward for this project.

1.5 *Scope of this report*

This report on approaches to managing urban amenity covers the following:

- What's happening with the management of urban amenity in New Zealand?
- The development of a framework for urban amenity
- Lessons learnt
- Recommended approaches to managing urban amenity
- National perspective on urban amenity
- Conclusions and way forward.

Attention will now focus on what is happening with the management of urban amenity in New Zealand.

2. The management of urban amenity in New Zealand

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this section of the report is to highlight the ways in which different organisations including territorial local authorities are presently managing the issue of urban amenity in New Zealand. The information referred to in this section of the report has been collated from a number of different sources including a survey of all local authorities in April of this year. This section begins by briefly describing the issues associated with urban amenity in New Zealand.

2.2 Issues associated with urban amenity in New Zealand

According to the 1996 census:

- 85% of New Zealand's population live in urban areas; on
- 3% of the total land area; and
- 29% of New Zealand's population live in the Auckland area.

These statistics reveal that issues associated with urban environments and by implication the way in which urban environments are managed are directly relevant to a large number of New Zealanders. Urban amenity, the qualities and attributes that people value about the environment within which they live, is therefore an important issue.

The importance of amenity is reflected in the RMA where it is included within the definition of environment and is also contained in Part II of the Act. The RMA is one of the main regulatory tools that impacts on urban environments as it is the principle piece of legislation that controls the use of land. There are also a number of other factors or influences that affect urban environments including the state of the economy.

Over the past ten years there has been increasing pressure on some urban environments in New Zealand from factors such as increased levels of urbanisation, stressed infrastructure, and technological changes. In other urban environments there has been different sorts of pressures as populations have decreased and employment opportunities have decreased. These pressures have sometimes conflicted with the values that people hold about the environment within which they live thereby adversely affecting amenity values. These conflicts have raised a number of issues for local authorities and have led to the investigation of different approaches to defining, managing and monitoring urban amenity. Before these different approaches are outlined the way in which local authorities are presently managing urban amenity will be outlined.

2.3 Management of Urban Amenity in New Zealand

The importance of investigating different approaches to defining, managing and monitoring urban amenity has been highlighted in a number of documents.

One of the recommendations contained in the investigation conducted by the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment (1987) into the Management of Suburban Amenity Values in Auckland, Christchurch, and Waitakere was for the:

Minister for the Environment to develop environmental indicators for amenity values to assist local authorities and communities to monitor and report on the state of amenity values.

All the previous work conducted by the Ministry (listed in the Introduction to this report) related to this project, identifies urban amenity as a priority area of work. Research into different methods of monitoring urban amenity is an important issue. This was also highlighted in the results of the survey of local authorities that was conducted as a part of this project in April of this year.

2.4 Survey of Local Authorities on Plan Effectiveness Monitoring and Urban Amenity

The April 2000 survey (conducted by Karen Bell and Associates and Glasson Potts Group) had two main parts:

- plan effectiveness monitoring; and
- urban amenity.

The survey was sent to 86 local authorities, of which 54 local authorities completed and returned the survey.

The main findings of this survey are as follows:

Urban Amenity:

- more than half of the councils said they had generic as opposed to specific plan provisions for urban amenity;
- councils stated they had used a range of tools and techniques to define urban amenity for their district/city/region. Most commonly, councils reported that they had used public consultation through the plan review process. Other techniques and tools used were:
 - general experience within the planning department in dealing with complaints etc.;
 - previous planning documents;
 - stakeholder consultation, community research;
 - evidence at consent hearings – eg KFC bucket sign adjoining residential area, etc;
 - workshops for particular settlements or areas;
 - specific studies and reports eg: landscape assessment, main entrance route enhancement;
 - specific studies done to identify state of the environment with regard to lot sizes, where heritage values are concentrated, traffic patterns, etc;
 - co-ordination with urban design section of council; and
 - regional practice guides (urban area intensification, low impact urban design guidelines).
- councils reported using a range of tools and/or techniques to manage urban amenity. Most commonly, they reported using plan rules and standards to control development; These included the general performance standards for buildings, density etc, and landscaping rules. Other tools included:

- tree planting guidelines and tree enhancement programme;
 - design guides, (eg: low impact urban design guide, urban area intensification guide);
 - council services eg: parks, landscaping, street trees, maintenance of roads and footpaths;
 - 'mainstreet' programmes;
 - beautification projects;
 - CBD streetscape investment;
 - Council/ community streetscape projects;
 - signage bylaws, co-ordination of signage;
 - other council strategies (eg: tourism, transport, coastal marine area);
 - consent process and building consents;
 - other council plans, eg: asset management plans, reserve plans, landscape plans, town centre development plans, traffic studies;
 - annual plan and budget for projects for upgrading streets etc;
 - council code of practice for land development;
 - specific programmes eg Landmarks programme;
 - provision of information, eg brochures on tree planting.
- councils were asked to state what they considered to be the key urban amenity issues in their area, and what indicators they use (if any) to undertake the monitoring for these issues. The councils reported a wide range of issues. A considerable proportion of these were matters not dealt with directly in district/city/regional plans such as:
 - disputes between neighbours over trees;
 - unsightly sections;
 - neighbourhood support;
 - location/style/standard of public facilities including amenity plantings;
 - personal safety; and,
 - cultural identity and diversity.
 - only a small proportion of councils reported undertaking specific monitoring in relation to urban amenity issues. Many councils reported that responding to complaints was their main way of monitoring urban amenity. In addition, some councils used residents' surveys and undertook informal monitoring of development through consent monitoring;
 - only a few councils said that they have been monitoring the intangible aspects of amenity;
 - councils differed as to whether they agreed with the approach of developing a national set of urban amenity indicators which may then be applied at the regional, sub-regional, or local level; and
 - the majority of councils reported that they had not co-operated with other local authorities in the development of urban amenity indicators.

Plan effectiveness monitoring:

- half of the councils who completed the survey had begun plan effectiveness monitoring. Some councils commented that they had not begun plan effectiveness monitoring as their plans were not yet operative;
- few councils had notified variations/plan changes as a result of plan effectiveness monitoring;
- councils indicated that they have relied significantly on outside assistance in establishing the framework and indicators for monitoring plan effectiveness;
- of those councils involved with plan effectiveness monitoring a high proportion share plan effectiveness monitoring information with other councils;

- half of the councils reported that they had developed a set of objectives or anticipated environmental results, which are specifically linked to the provisions for monitoring the effectiveness of district/city/regional plans;
- few Councils monitored socio-economic changes;
- as well as using SOE monitoring information to assist with plan effectiveness monitoring, many councils have used information they require resource consent holders to collect to assist them in assessing plan effectiveness; and
- for some councils monitoring has also resulted in consideration of alternative methods of achieving the anticipated environmental results.

The results of this survey highlighted that the majority of councils define urban amenity in a generic way and rely on the Act's definition of amenity. The survey also highlighted that the most common way that councils manage urban amenity is through provisions in district plans. The way in which the plan provisions relating to urban amenity have been constructed have evolved as a result of case law on the drafting of rules and on the interpretation of the Act's definition of amenity values. The survey also highlighted that the majority of councils are not monitoring the 'subjective' elements of urban amenity.

2.5 Other Approaches/ Initiatives in relation to Defining/Managing and Monitoring Urban Amenity

There are other linked initiatives that are either underway, or in the development phase that were not recorded in the results of the survey outlined previously.

'indicate Canterbury'

'indicate Canterbury' is a community indicators programme in Canterbury. The project was started in 1998 by an independent charitable trust 'Sustainable Cities' with input from local councils and other organisations. As an organisation the Trust aims to maximise cross-sector involvement between, the community, corporate and public sectors with initiatives for a sustainable future. The 'indicate Canterbury' programme is owned by the community and managed by Canterbury Dialogues. The aims of the programme are to:

- measure progress towards a positive future in the city and region for all; and
- create a number of indicators to record the quality of life in Canterbury

Following a survey of people in Christchurch a series of indicators have been developed on the following topics:

- traffic safety;
- waste;
- energy;
- employment;
- personal safety; and
- health equity.

The 'indicate' Canterbury programme is collecting information from various agencies to assess progress towards a positive future for people in Canterbury.

National Indicators Project

A further initiative focusing on socio-economic indicators was started by the Chief Executives of the six largest cities (Auckland, Christchurch, Manukau, North Shore, Waitakere and Wellington). The project aimed to define a key set of economic, social and environmental indicators to measure social change in New Zealand's six largest cities. After considering a number of different frameworks the working party involved with this project decided to adopt an approach that divided socio-economic indicators into a range of issue areas under different sector headings such as 'housing' 'education' and 'health'. A 'basket' of indicators were then developed under each issue area.

The following is an example taken from the information produced by the working party:

Sector: Housing

Issues: Quality of housing, Affordability and accessibility, Range of housing options.

Example indicators:

- Spatial distribution of housing in poor condition (plus number and percentage of people living in housing in poor condition)
- Number and percentage of population receiving accommodation supplement
- Changing nature of our accommodation: Areas in city zoned for high density, Number of building consent issued for apartments/townhouses, trends in number of bedrooms per dwelling, changes in household composition.

A consultation document on the proposed indicators was released for comment in February of this year. After receiving feed back on the proposed set of indicators the project team has revised the set of indicators. As a result of this process 60 key indicators have been developed. Each local authority involved in the project team is currently collating information on the indicators. A joint report on the results from this work will be released in November of this year. Following this a report on the indicators will be released every 3 years.

Liveable Communities Project

As identified in the survey some local authorities have also adopted different initiatives for managing urban amenity. An example of this is the Liveable Communities project that Auckland City Council has been developing in response to the mounting pressure on Auckland's urban area as a result of population growth. This project is part of the SMART City approach that Auckland City Council has adopted. This approach focuses on local responses to local issues and has five key strategies:

- liveable communities;
- connecting communities;
- strong communities;
- place of opportunity; and
- sense of place.

Auckland City Council defines 'liveable communities', as communities that are:

- safe;

- walkable;
- attractive;
- offer a choice of lifestyles;
- have mixed use at their core;
- have access to a choice of transport; and
- create a sense of belonging.

Liveable community plans for Glen Innes, Panmure and Avondale are being developed with communities with each of these areas. The Liveable Community Plan for Panmure has recently been released.

2.6 What are the Gaps!

This section of this report has described current practises on ways that councils and other organisations are defining, managing and monitoring urban amenity and the development of urban amenity indicators.

From the information contained in this section of the report it is clear that:

- urban amenity is perceived to be an important issue by councils;
- councils tend to rely on the RMA definition of amenity values;
- the principle way councils manage urban amenity is through provisions in district plans
- a number of councils have not yet begun plan effectiveness monitoring; and
- few councils have become involved in developing indicators on the subjective elements of urban amenity.

From this research there appears to be a significant 'gap' which if filled would assist councils with these issues. This gap being the absence of a clear framework for the development of urban amenity indicators

The next two sections of this report aim to fill this gap.

3. The development of a framework for urban amenity

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this section of this report is to:

- document the different approaches that have been worked through in this project to develop a framework for urban amenity; and
- document the range of processes or methods that can be used to engage communities in defining, managing and monitoring urban amenity (including developing urban amenity indicators).

3.2 Defining urban amenity

Introduction

The first Focus Group workshop held for this project addressed the question: *What is urban amenity?* The Focus Group concluded that in defining urban amenity the following question should be asked “*What is it about a place that makes us feel good or bad about it?*”. The Consultant Team in preparing the “*Draft technical paper: Urban amenity indicators - the liveability of urban environments*”. This way of describing urban amenity appears to have been accepted by the Focus Group and the Ministry for the Environment.

This description is obviously broad and encompasses a wide range of attributes and values, a great majority of which are not resource management issues, or issues directly relevant for local government. It also does not necessarily define urban in any particular way. For instance it does not adopt the Statistics New Zealand definition of urban areas being more than 1,000 people. The emphasis with the definition as proposed is that amenity is all about what people feel about the environments they live in. If this approach is generally accepted as a way of describing urban amenity then it is really irrelevant to consider placing limitations such as a minimum number of people. For example in the work done for this project in the case study for the Waimakariri District people involved with the Focus Group sessions considered that settlements of 500 people were urban areas, as well as places like Rangiora, with a population of 10,500.

If this approach is accepted then the answer to the question: “What is urban amenity?” can only be found by discovering the qualities or attributes that people value within the environments that they live. The ‘how to’ question associated with this approach is an issue that was identified in the April 2000 survey conducted by Karen Bell and Associates and Glasson Potts Group Limited. From the work associated with this project to date a number of different methods have been identified that can assist in answering these questions. The following description of methods provides insight into different ways of answering the ‘how to’ part of the question.

Ask “What do you like”? / “What don’t you like”?

An approach that has been adopted and used successfully by Waitakere City Council is to ask people the following four key questions:

- What do you like about this place?
- What don’t you like?

- What would you change?
- What would you really like it to be?

Staff from Waitakere City Council have used this approach in public meeting type forums where staff are wanting to find out what people value about a specific place ie a neighbourhood/suburb. These four questions then form the focus of the meeting. The objective of the meeting is not for Council staff to inform the community it is rather the opposite an opportunity for the community to inform Council staff about what they value.

Staff at Waitakere City have then used this information in technical design workshops to create visions for different places.

Waimakariri District Council has asked similar open-ended questions of their communities:

- What do you most like about where you live?
- What do you least like about where you live?
- What would you most like to see changed?
- What would you least like to see changed?

In the case of Waimakariri District Council, these questions were asked in a survey and on flyers that were targeted at members of the community.

The use of public satisfaction surveys to define key issues

Many councils around the country carry out public satisfaction surveys to assess what people value about their environment and what they are satisfied and dissatisfied with. In many cases councils ask questions about councils services. Some of these surveys are written surveys, some are telephone surveys, and some are face-to-face interviews. They vary in complexity and subjects covered.

Satisfaction surveys show promise as a means of gathering information on what different people mean and understand by the term 'urban amenity'. Local satisfaction surveys are important as confirmation of the key issues relating to urban amenity in different locations, and as a check that matters of significance to local people have not been overlooked.

One of the challenges in relation to the use of public satisfaction surveys to define key urban amenity issues, is that in order to get the most useful information from them, it is important to have well designed and implemented survey instruments.

Focus Group workshops

Many councils are using selected groups of people, called focus groups, to assist them with defining urban amenity. People are brought together and involved in facilitated workshops to answer questions and explore issues and ideas relating to a range of topics including urban amenity.

Charettes

Some councils have used charette type forums to create community plans for different areas. A charette is essentially a workshop for the community to document and record their visions for their area. Professionals are also involved in charettes to facilitate the workshop, add different perspectives and also to assist in the recording of ideas from the workshop. Charettes have been

used successfully by a number of councils. Staff from Christchurch City Council have been involved in charettes prior to the notification of the City Plan for the Merivale and Sumner areas in Christchurch. In Christchurch some key lessons about the charette process have been learnt.

In Christchurch the community worked intensively with professionals in a workshop type environment over a weekend. The report produced as a result of the workshops captured the communities' vision for the future of the area. The report included details such as the type and form of buildings, locations for high intensity development, enhancement of parks and reserves, and locations for walkways.

In Christchurch the reports produced as a result of the charettes were then included by the community groups as submissions to the City Plan. This approach to implementing the charettes proved difficult for council staff. The reason being that the submissions process was not the right forum to implement the outcomes from the charettes. The key lesson learnt from this process is to be clear about the way in which the charettes can be implemented and to not raise false expectations with communities.

Photographs/Visual Records

A method of discovering what attributes of amenity that communities' value is through photographic records. This method avoids the difficulty often associated with language in that it does not rely on the interpretation required in written surveys. It therefore assists in capturing people's views that do not have good language skills.

For instance a method that has been used in Minneapolis, St Paul in America for people within communities to be supplied with disposable cameras. People then photograph what they do and do not like about an area. Once the photographs have been taken and developed professionals can use the photographs to interpret peoples values. To be successful this methodology relies on professionals feedback their interpretations to the community prior to any decisions being made by local authorities or other decision makers.

The book entitled "Community Participation in Practice a Practical Guide" (1999) by Wendy Sarkissian, Andrea Cook and Kevin Walsh describes a range of interesting methods to involve communities. The following three examples have been taken from this text.

The SpeakOut

The 'SpeakOut' is a method described in "Community Participation in Practice a Practical Guide" (1999) by Wendy Sarkissian, Andrea Cook and Kevin Walsh. It essentially provides a forum whereby people can speak out on certain issues. Often people are critical of public meetings as that feel they are not given opportunities to express their concerns.

The typical practice in a public meeting is that people who decide to attend are required to sit and listen for the majority of time and are given allotted time towards the end of the meeting for questions. In contrast the purpose of a "SpeakOut" session is essentially that it is an opportunity for people to speak and for professionals/council representatives to listen.

This method requires a high level of facilitation skills from the people organising the meeting. In addition it is important that the person taking the records of the meeting reflects the concerns raised clearly and accurately.

The ‘Blob Plan’

The ‘Blob Plan’ is a method described in “Community Participation in Practice a Practical Guide” (1999) by Wendy Sarkissian, Andrea Cook and Kevin Walsh. It works best at a neighbourhood / sub-neighbourhood level when specific feedback is being sought for instance on a plan or development. It could be used as a method to seek feedback from communities when professionals have elicited views from the community and are seeking confirmation as to whether or not they have interpreted views correctly.

The main steps in a ‘Blob Plan’ session are as follows:

- a plenary session where the objectives, constraints and issues associated with the development or plan are explained;
- participants then outline their goals/objectives for the area in a brainstorming session; and
- participants are then provided with a copy of the plan and using the objectives that have been set for the meeting identify where the proposed plan does and does not meet the objectives through placing different colour blobs on the plan. Participants can then write reasons for their views on the ‘blobs’.

Following this part of the workshop the views are then analysed by the people conducting the workshop resulting in revisions to the proposed plan being identified.

Food modelling

Food modelling is a method described in “Community Participation in Practice a Practical Guide” (1999) by Wendy Sarkissian, Andrea Cook and Kevin Walsh. It is seen as a way of capturing children’s visions for ‘ideal neighbourhoods’. It has been used successfully with children between the ages of 5-12 and with adults present

The main steps involved with the process include:

- asking children to tell or share stories of their ‘ideal neighbourhood’;
- children are then given a tray full of food and are asked to construct a 3 dimensional image of their ideal neighbourhood;
- during this process facilitators discuss the models children are developing and label key features with cards;
- the model is then photographed and or videotaped;
- children can then explain their models to other children by visiting different tables; and
- the children are then invited to eat the model.

Obviously a lot of fun can be had with this exercise.

Conclusion - defining urban amenity

This section of this report recommends that the way to define urban amenity is by discovering what are the qualities or attributes that people value within the environments that they live. This information can only be found out by asking communities what it is that they value. There are a number of recognised methods for finding out this information, some of which are explained above. These methods are in addition to the more traditional approaches of surveying and interviewing. There are obviously a number of issues associated with each method such as costs and resources for

adopting such approaches. However, it can be equally costly for councils particularly in preparing plans and changes to plans if attempts are not made to define urban amenity.

An significant point to note is that in order for people to feel comfortable about telling council staff what they value and what liveability and well-being mean to them, that it is important to meet in these people's own environment. So for example, it may be appropriate to meet on a marae to discuss these issues with Maori, at a local church to discuss the issues with Polynesians and go to a sports club to discuss the issues with some members of the community. Many people do not feel comfortable in council buildings, so the environment within which discussions on urban amenity occurs is important.

The approaches outlined above will assist councils in identifying the range of attributes and values that people associate with urban amenity in different places.

There are however some general process points that will need to be highlighted in the 'Good Practice Guide for Urban Amenity' that apply to any method that is chosen to discover attributes and values associated with urban amenity. These points are as follows:

- it is important to have an understanding of characteristics of the community to ensure all groups within the community are represented – there are some particularly important issues when considering the representation of Maori;
- it is important to understand cultural and age differences when choosing different methods for defining urban amenity; and
- it is vitally important that interpretation done by council staff and or other professionals is fed back to the community for their comment. If this stage is missed out then ownership of the elements that make up the definition are lost.

3.3 Managing Urban Amenity

Once urban amenity has been defined decisions need to be made as to what tools are the most effective for managing urban amenity. For councils this is inherent in the requirements of Section 32 of the Resource Management Act. Councils are, however, only one body or organisation that can influence urban amenity. Equally as important is the role of other agencies and organisations, particularly central government departments such as in the health, housing, and education sectors. The ways in which councils are currently managing urban amenity have been outlined in Chapter 2 of this report.

In summary these methods are both inside and outside statutory planning documents. For some councils there has been a reliance on rules in statutory planning documents for the area, while other councils have chosen a range of methods – such as design guidelines, workshops, streetscape beautification projects, codes of practice etc. A list of tools currently used by councils is listed in 2.4 of this document. It is noted that advocacy to other agencies or organisations is not included within this list. If councils choose to define urban amenity using the processes outlined previously in this chapter then advocacy may in fact be identified as a necessary role for councils to assist communities in achieving their vision. It follows then that if urban amenity is defined through engaging communities then new ways of managing urban amenity may be discovered in this process.

3.4 Monitoring Urban Amenity and the development of indicators

Introduction

Once urban amenity is defined and tools have been established to manage urban amenity then ways of monitoring whether or not the tools are achieving the attributes and values outlined in the definition need to be defined. Different approaches to monitor urban amenity and develop indicators have been discussed by the Urban Amenity Focus Group. These approaches are outlined below.

P-S-R Framework

The P-S-R framework is a method that the Ministry has adopted for the development of biophysical indicators. It is also a framework that has been used internationally for indicator development.

As a method it essentially involves the following steps:

- identification of issues and goals;
- identification of the pressures/threats that give rise to the issue;
- a description of the state of the environment that is affected by the issue; and
- identification of the ways in which the issue can be addressed (response).

Through following this process potential pressure, state, and response indicators can be developed for different urban amenity issues.

In order to test the 'robustness' of the potential indicator, criteria have then been applied to each indicator. The criteria used by the Ministry for the Environment and many others are that the indicators must be:

- policy relevant;
- measurable;
- analytically valid;
- cost effective; and
- understandable.

And the following should be answered:

- is it the most appropriate indicator?;
- is it the best way to monitor anticipated environmental results?; and
- can it stand alone or does it require additional information?

For the second workshop of the Focus Group the Consultant Team had worked through an urban amenity issue using the P-S-R framework (Appendix 2). This example gives an indication of the application of this process to urban amenity indicators.

Raw Attribute Analysis

At the second workshop the approach of breaking down concepts associated with urban amenity into 'raw attributes' was worked through.

The rationale behind this approach is that broad concepts associated with urban amenity such as the 'character of neighbourhoods' are difficult issues to monitor and gather information on. The thought was that if these concepts could be broken down into their raw elements, information could be collected on those elements. For example, noise is a raw element of neighbourhood character. Once information was collected on the raw attributes the idea was that the combination of information on the raw attributes would then give local authorities pictures of the broad concepts such as neighbourhood character. An example of the way in which the workshop conducted a raw attribute analysis for 'neighbourhood character' is contained in Appendix 3.

The workshop recognised that while raw attribute analysis may be a method to understand the concepts associated with urban amenity it is not in itself a useful method to monitor the 'subjective elements' of urban amenity such as 'what people like about the environment they live in'.

Community Characteristics/Values

The values that people hold are a product of cultural, socio-economic and demographic characteristics. An approach that was worked through at the time of the second Focus Group workshop was that it may be possible to characterise communities according to these relationships.

This approach focused on the assumption that it may be possible to establish relationships between key demographic characteristics of a community and the amenity values that they hold. If this was possible it was suggested that these relationships could then be used to characterise communities and be a means by which different communities could be compared.

This type of approach to understanding the values that communities hold was viewed as being part of an overall approach at the workshop. Instead it was suggested that it was useful for councils to fully understand the characteristics of a community and different ways were suggested for engaging communities.

The characteristics of communities were seen to include the following factors:

- age;
- gender;
- ethnicity;
- income levels; and
- education.

It was felt that any framework for indicator development must include, as an initial phase, the collation of information about the key characteristics of a community. The reason being that it is important to have an understanding of the different characteristics of a community before methods can be developed to successfully engage different communities.

Principles/Qualities

A further approach to the development of urban amenity indicators that was suggested at the second Focus Group workshop focused on the accepted principles / qualities of urban areas.

It was suggested at the workshop that the following features were qualities of all urban areas:

- accessibility (walkability, ease of access);
- legibility/understanding (way-finding, landmarks, vistas)
- physical amenity (comfort, shelter, safety);
- diversity (activity, choice of experience);
- robustness (adaptability of public space and buildings);
- inclusiveness (social equity, affordability);
- sense of place (identity, image, the ‘signature’ of a place); and
- efficiency (infrastructure, energy use, linked to existing indicators on waste, transport and energy).

These principles/qualities were seen as forming the foundations for the establishment of attributes and indicators for urban amenity. At the Mini-Urban Amenity Focus Group the words used to describe the various principles were refined. This work involved the renaming of some principles and also the identification of key questions / key concepts that relate to the principles. The revised list of principles is as follows:

Table 1 – The principles / qualities of urban amenity

| Original Key Quality | Revised Key Quality | Key questions / Key concepts |
|----------------------|---------------------|--|
| Sense of Place | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What makes this place unique/different? • Signature/essence • How do you feel about the place? |
| Legibility | Familiar | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is it familiar? • Can you find your way? |
| Physical amenity | The environment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is it pleasant? (including air quality, water quality) • A wicked place to live, work and play? • Is it safe? • Is it comfortable? • Does it have a good image? |
| Diversity | Choice | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there options/choices in terms of lifestyle choices ie skateboard parks, places to shop, places to be entertained • Are there options/choices in terms of where you live/work and play? |
| Robustness | Ability to adapt | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there the potential to change? • Is there the ability to change? • Is the place fulfilling its purpose? • How adaptive is it? |
| Accessibility | Accessible | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is it easy to get around? |
| Efficiency | Quality of services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do services work well? ie water, getting into town? • What sort of future will my children |

| | | |
|---------------|-------------------------------|---|
| | | /grandchildren have here? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What urban form would meet your lifestyle needs? |
| Inclusiveness | Participation/ Involvement | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is it affordable? • Is their choice? • Can you influence? • Can you make a difference? • Do I belong? |
| | Well being | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does a place nourish you? • What is the energy of the place/feeling for you? • Are you happy living in this place? • Do you have a sense of belonging? |

Analysis of different approaches

In this report four different approaches to the development of urban amenity indicators have been outlined these being:

- P-S-R Framework for indicator development;
- raw attribute analysis;
- community characteristics; and
- principles/qualities of urban areas.

From the description of the approaches outlined above there is a range of different ways that the work associated with this project could proceed. At the second Focus Group meeting the participants at the workshop favoured the adoption of an approach that focused on the key principles/qualities of urban areas.

The advantages of developing the principles/qualities approach is:

- it provides an overall conceptual framework to define, manage and monitor urban amenity (including the development of urban amenity indicators);
- it is directly relevant to the objective of liveable urban environments;
- it is able to be applied in a range of urban environments from metro city to rural village; the qualities are focused on people's perception of environment which is directly linked to amenity; and
- there is a possibility of being able to aggregate information across communities to report on the principles at a national level.

3.5 Conclusions

This section of this report has documented a range of different methods associated with the definition, management and monitoring of urban amenity including the development of indicators. The process outlined in this chapter essentially identifies the pieces of the jigsaw or the parts of the framework.

Obviously each one of these pieces is dependent on each other. It has become obvious through this chapter that the most important phase is accurately capturing the attributes and values that communities associate with urban amenity. If this piece of the puzzle is not completed first then it is likely that the tools chosen to manage urban amenity will not be accepted by communities and will be constantly subject to challenge.

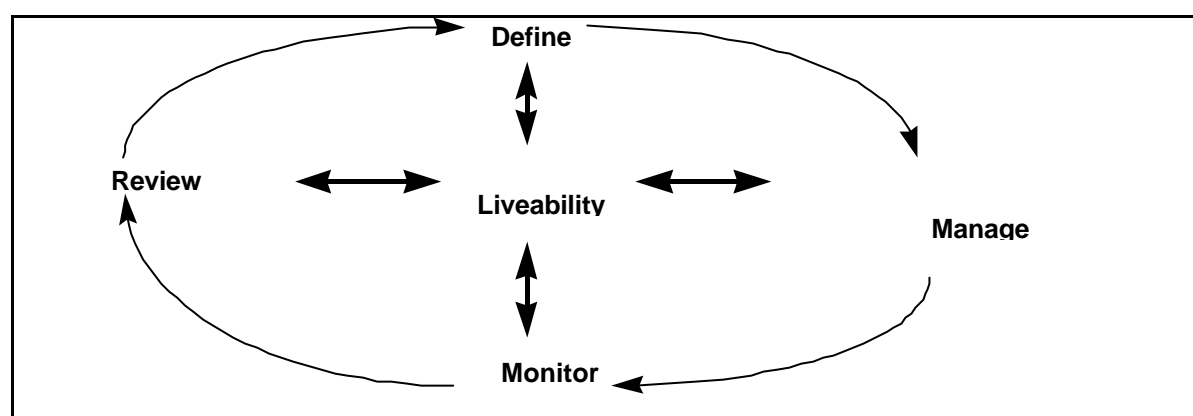
The next chapter in this report attempts to put the pieces of the jigsaw together thereby creating an overall framework for urban amenity.

4. Recommended approach to urban amenity

4.1 Introduction

Through the Urban Amenity Focus Group meetings an overall approach to define, manage and monitor urban amenity - including the development of urban indicators has been developed. The approach is iterative. For instance the feedback obtained through monitoring may mean that management techniques need to be reviewed. This iterative cycle of urban amenity management is illustrated below in Figure 1.

Figure 1 – The cycle of urban amenity management



The cycle of managing urban amenity involves the following steps:

- define with the community what urban amenity means;
- use a range of management techniques such as provisions in district plans, and reference to design guidelines and codes of practice;
- monitor changes in urban amenity (including by using indicators); and finally
- review all existing means of managing urban amenity in relation to the above.

This approach is further expanded in the conceptual framework for approaching the management of urban amenity that has been developed by the Consultant Team in consultation with the Urban Amenity Focus Group, Ministry for the Environment and the Case Study Councils; and includes:

- defining urban amenity (in the context of the local community);
- selection of appropriate techniques to manage urban amenity;
- presentation of a conceptual framework for the development of urban amenity indicators;
- suggested attributes and links to indicators; and
- review of chosen techniques to manage urban amenity.

4.1 Defining Urban Amenity – “Futuring”

Urban amenity has been described in this report as the ‘*qualities and attributes that people value about the environment within which they live*’ or the liveability of our urban environments. In the

conclusions to Chapter 4 of this report defining urban amenity was seen as the first stage of the process of beginning to manage urban amenity successfully within local environments.

The main reason for this view, is that once councils fully understand the attributes and values associated with urban amenity appropriate management tools can be selected and meaningful attributes and indicators can be identified for monitoring purposes. This process will also assist councils in prioritising urban amenity issues. For instance it will assist in identifying projects such as street maintenance works and priority areas for open space.

With time peoples' values change and councils will need to make decisions as to when the definition of urban amenity is required to be reviewed. It is likely that reviews of the definition will need to occur prior to reviews of district plans. There may also be other factors, which generate a review of the definition including changing needs in the community.

It is of interest to note that an article written by Dr. Morgan Williams, Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment, entitled the 'Importance of Futuring' (Planning Quarterly, September 2000) addresses the issue of visioning which is directly relevant to defining urban amenity. In this article Dr. Williams describes 'futuring' as the act of developing visions and long-term strategies. He describes that a visioning process would need to:

- recognise that people and communities are an integral part of the environment;
- recognise that the environment includes natural, historic and cultural heritage;
- be supported with clearly stated goals; and
- be supported by a wide array of mechanisms for implementation (including economic instruments, community funded education programs as well as RMA rules and regulations).

Dr. Williams describes the product of this process as not being detailed but rather a "shared view of how the environment of the area might evolve during the lifetime of this and future generations".

Dr. Williams views are very relevant to the issues that have been canvassed in this report in relation to the definition of urban amenity. The Consultant Team is of the view that 'futuring' is an important part of the process of defining urban amenity. It is therefore recommended that 'methods of capturing the communities' vision should form part of the 'Good Practice Guide for Urban Amenity', and that the council trials explore a range of approaches to working with their communities to establish their values and visions in relation to urban amenity.

4.2 Selection of Appropriate Management Techniques

Once urban amenity has been defined then councils are in a better position to select appropriate management techniques. This project does not focus on recommending appropriate management techniques for use at the local level. The reason for this is that the most effective tools to manage urban amenity can only be identified once urban amenity has been defined within local environments.

It is of importance to note that through the process of defining urban amenity a range of tools for managing urban amenity are likely to be identified. One of the possible outcomes is the identification of both statutory and non-statutory methods. Examples of techniques presently used by councils to manage urban amenity were outlined in Chapter 2 of this report. In summary examples of statutory techniques include rules in plans and in some cases the use of design guides.

Non-statutory techniques currently used by councils include works such as main street programmes and the enhancement of waterways and parks, and education programmes such as land care groups. It is likely if councils do adopt the approach of defining urban amenity in a comprehensive manner prior to the selection of management techniques then an anticipated outcome is that rules in plans will only become one management technique amongst a range of other methods.

4.3 Conceptual framework

The people involved with this project have adopted a potential model for the development of indicators on urban amenity this is shown in Figure 2.

This model is the 'Monitor' phase identified in Figure 1: 'The Cycle of Urban Amenity Management'. In terms of Figure 1 it is assumed that urban amenity has been defined and that appropriate management techniques have been selected.

Since the majority of councils have notified proposed plans it is this stage of the cycle at this point in time that is most relevant for councils. The methods described in Chapter 3 may also be relevant to the 'monitoring' phase as it may be necessary for councils in terms of gaining an understanding of the 'intangible elements' of urban amenity to use some of the methods in Chapter 3. This reflects the iterative nature of both Figure 1 and Figure 2.

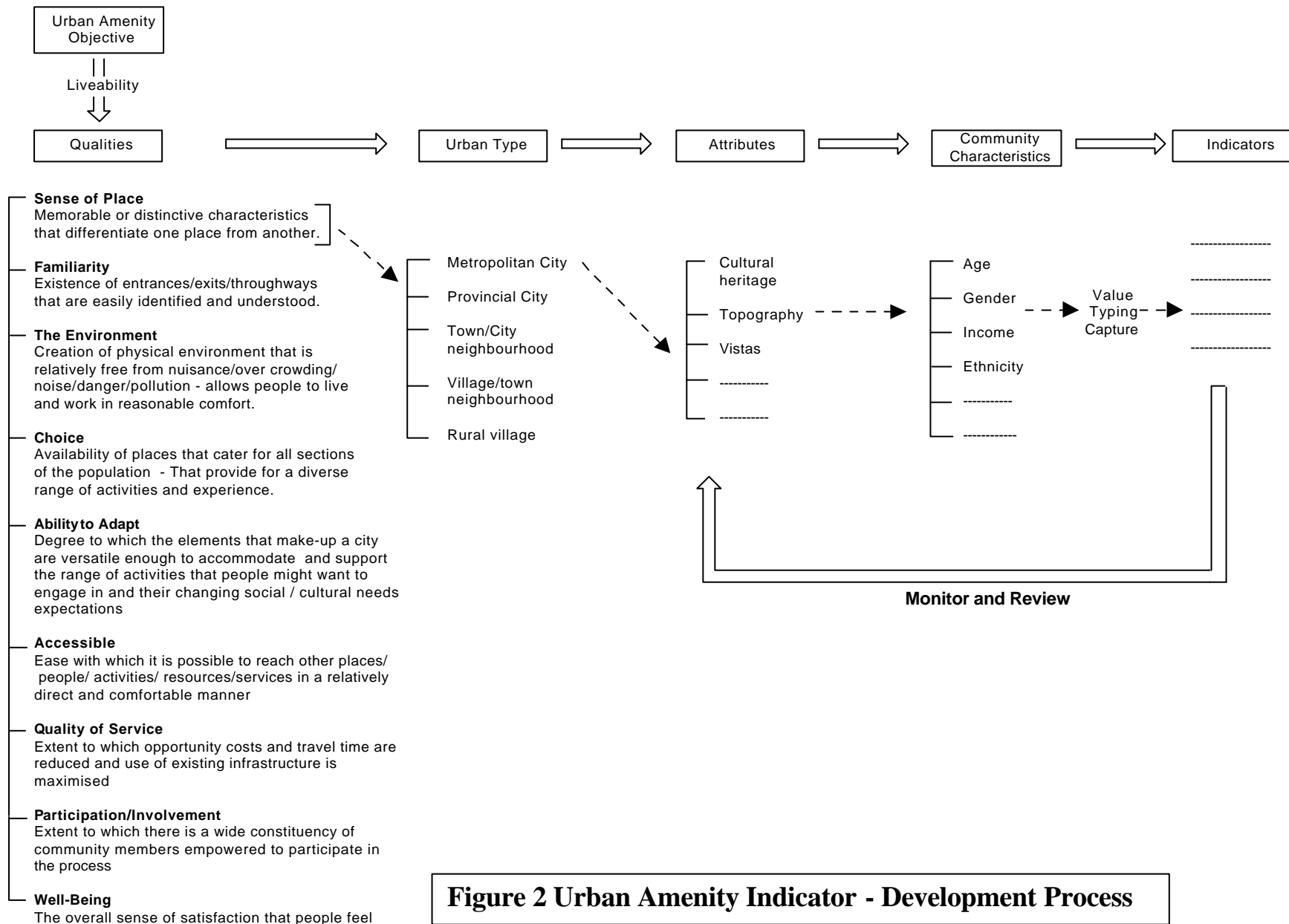


Figure 2 Urban Amenity Indicator - Development Process

The model is an iterative process and links objectives, principles/qualities, attributes, community characteristics, and indicators.

The following key stages are identified in the model in Figure 2:

- **Qualities:** The key qualities listed in the model are generic and therefore apply equally to all urban spaces.
- **Urban type:** The qualities need to be applied to urban places. The wide variety of urban places are recognised in the model. It is recognised that there may be a variety of urban places within a town /city. For example the qualities may be applied at a metro scale level and they may also be applied to urban villages within the metro city.
- **Attributes:** Attributes are the elements of each quality. Basically attributes are the building blocks for the qualities. For example landform is an attribute of the quality ‘sense of place’. An attribute may also relate to more than one quality.
- **Community characteristics:** It is important to understand the dynamics of the various communities within different urban spaces. The characteristics of a community such as age, gender, income, ethnicity etc. are important factors to understand when both developing attributes and indicators and collecting information on the selected indicators.
- **Indicators:** It is possible to develop indicators from the identified attributes and with knowledge of the characteristics of a community. Indicators for urban amenity may relate to both tangible and intangible measurements. For example in terms of noise:
 - it is possible to physically measure noise in terms of dBA; and
 - it is also equally important for amenity that people’s perception of the level of noise in an area is recorded. One way of documenting people’s perception of the noise environment may be through surveying.

It is also important that the indicators developed take into account community characteristics. As an example it will be important if there is a projected increase in elderly within an area that the ‘indicators’ developed for qualities such as accessibility take this characteristic into account.

4.3 Suggested Attributes and Links to Indicators

Following on from the Mini Urban Amenity Focus Group the Consultant Team has developed some suggested attributes that relate to the key qualities. These attributes have been developed using the ‘raw attribute analysis’ process described in Chapter 3 of this report.

The attributes are not seen as an exhaustive list but are a starting point. It is also noted that the ‘Good Practice Guide for Urban Amenity’ due to be released in June next year will also not contain an exhaustive list as for some communities the attributes chosen will vary and will be dependent on factors such as the characteristics of communities. The Councils who will be involved in the trialling of the ideas contained in this report will be asked to identify what the key attributes are from the work that they have undertaken. With this information the Consultant Team will then be able to formalise a comprehensive list of attributes to be included in the ‘Good Practice Guide for Urban Amenity’ due to be release in June next year.

For councils a starting point for the identification of attributes within their urban area would be to refer to their planning documents.

Table 2 – Preliminary list of suggested urban amenity attributes

| Qualities | Key Components | Attributes |
|------------------|---|--|
| Sense of Place | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • History • Landscape • People • Architecture • ... • | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vegetation type • Landform • Architecture • Cultural Heritage • People's perceptions • Defined entrances and exits • Open Space • Safety • Accessibility • Sense of belonging • ... • |
| Familiarity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Navigable urban areas • View shafts • Person scale • ... • | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location/type of signage • Landform • Viewing points • ... • |
| The environment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pleasant • Healthy • Safe • Comfortable • ... • | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Air quality • Water quality • Solar access • Lighting • Noise, smells • Tagging/litter • Protection from weather • Quality of public/private spaces • ... • |
| Choice | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Range of experiences cultural sporting etc. • Variety of Open Space • ... • | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Availability of public transport • Passive open spaces • Active open spaces • ... • |
| Ability to adapt | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsive to technology • Capacity for physical form to absorb changing land use demands • Capacity to accommodate range of activity • ... • | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transport routes • Design of neighbourhoods • Characteristics of public spaces • ... • |
| Accessible | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct routes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Availability of different transport |

| | | |
|---------------------------|---|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Range of transport options • Quality of routes • All levels of ability ('disabled') • ... • | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> options • Accessibility of different transport options • Quality of streets • ... • |
| Quality of Services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reliability • Availability • Meet present and projected demand • ... • • | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sewage • Water • Stormwater • Roads • Public Transport • ... • |
| Participation/Involvement | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sense of belonging • All views represented • No/limited socio-economic barriers • ... • | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representation on local council • ... • • |
| Well being | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Makes you happy • Energy/feeling of the place • ... • | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Image • Community Spirit • ... • |

Once attributes have been defined for the key qualities then it will be possible to identify indicators. A list of possible indicators was included in the draft technical paper: *"Urban amenity the liveability of our urban environment"* (Karen Bell and Associates and Glasson Potts Group, 2000). These indicators can be linked to the attributes outlined above.

The following is an example of the development of indicators for noise being an attribute associated with 'sense of place':

| | |
|--------------|--|
| Quality: | Sense of Place |
| Place: | Neighbourhood scale |
| Attribute: | Noise |
| Indicator: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Daytime background noise levels within the neighbourhood b) The change in desired noise levels within the neighbourhood |
| Methodology: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Physical measurement of sound levels throughout the scale of urban environment concerned. b) Surveying people to ascertain desired noise levels. |

The following is an example of the development of indicators for image being an attribute associated with 'well being':

| | |
|--------------|---|
| Quality: | Well being |
| Place: | Metro-City |
| Attribute: | Community spirit |
| Indicator: | a) The celebration of community achievements ie sporting events. b) Representation of views in decision making at the local level. |
| Methodology: | a) Document different community achievements and how they were or not celebrated. b) Surveying people to ascertain whether or not they feel their views are being represented. |

Before councils select specific indicators the Consultant Team is of the view that it is useful to cross-check the overall 'robustness' of the indicators against the Ministry's indication selection criteria. This criteria include – is the indicator:

- policy relevant;
- measurable;
- analytically valid;
- cost effective;
- understandable;

And

- Is it the most appropriate indicator?
- Is it the best way to monitor anticipated environmental results?
- Can it stand alone or does it require additional information?

By using these criteria then councils will collect information in the most practical and efficient way, using well-established selection criteria.

4.4 Review

Once information has been collected on the indicators then this leads to a process of review.

There are a number of possible outcomes from the review process:

- the re-definition of urban amenity in specific areas;
- a review of plan provisions; and
- the identification of non-statutory methods.

4.5 Conclusion

In summary the recommended approach to urban amenity at a local level has been described in this section of this report as an iterative process. It includes the following four key stages:

- defining urban amenity in local environments;
- selection of appropriate management techniques;

- a conceptual framework for the development of urban amenity indicators; and
- suggested attributes and links to indicators.

The Consultant Team is of the view that the critical stage in this process is the definition of urban amenity. It is the essential building block for the other stages. It is recognised that over time definitions of urban amenity will change and that it will be necessary to revise the definition and then adjust management techniques accordingly. In the mean time it is valuable to work towards the successful management of urban amenity by using a similar conceptual framework as a starting point for discussions with local communities.

5. Lessons learnt

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this section of the report is to document some of the key lessons learnt from the development of the conceptual framework for urban amenity and from the meetings that have been held with the councils involved in the case studies.

5.2 The Lessons Learnt

The following list documents the lessons learnt to date:

- urban amenity has the greatest meaning at a local level;
- a key lesson learnt is the significance of language. A number of people have reported both in the focus group meetings and in the meetings with case study councils that confusion can occur when there is not a common understanding of different terms. This can happen not only because of the use of ‘technical terms’ but also due to age and cultural characteristics of the population;
- in the survey of local authorities, a number of councils reported that they had not begun plan effectiveness monitoring, and one of the reasons often stated was lack of resources. Because of this the councils involved with the case studies are documenting the resources required to undertake the work they have been involved in. It is interesting to note that most councils relied on outside assistance to undertake the work. On the other hand, Tasman District Council undertook the work for their case study with in house staff and the assistance of a student;
- the importance of having people involved in monitoring with a range of skills including data analysis and computer skills. Although some councils will not necessarily have people with a range of skills dedicated to monitoring there may be people within the organisation that have these skills;
- an issue that has arisen at a number of different meetings is the importance of timing. Councils reported that communities can suffer from survey fatigue. Considering this it is important to plan the timing of consultation programmes and for there to be co-ordination between different council units;
- importance of engaging the community in defining and monitoring urban amenity – ie this work “must” be a bottom-up rather than top-down process;
- councils want step by step processes to follow (and a variety of approaches seems to work well). A workbook format would be good structure to adopt for the ‘good practice guide on urban amenity’;
- using only statutory instruments (ie rules etc in resource management plans) alone will not give the full answer (need design guides, work with the community etc);

- an approach that only focuses on the most measurable things is not desirable it is important to find a way of capturing and tracking the least measurable but most important things;
- some councils have found it very useful to use visual images like photos of what people do and don't like;
- visioning exercises with the community build trust and provide councils with a good sense of what the community aspiration are in relation to urban amenity;
- there is no "one" correct way of managing urban amenity;
- use of public satisfaction surveys may be a good means of collating information about people's views on urban amenity from across the country; and

5.3 Conclusion

It is important to record the lessons learnt to date on this project. The lessons learnt will assist in the development of the 'Good Practice Guide for Urban Amenity'.

6. The national perspective on urban amenity

6.1 Initial Approach

This project initially considered the issue of urban amenity and plan effectiveness monitoring from a national perspective. Consequently, the management, and especially the monitoring, of urban amenity was considered from a national viewpoint. However, after the consideration of this approach by the members of the Urban Amenity Focus Group, it was decided that the approach to defining, managing and monitoring urban amenity first needed to be evaluated at the local level and a common approach established. Following that it was the view of the Urban Amenity Focus Group that a process could be established that would perhaps be able to be used at the national, and potentially international, levels.

At present there are no environmental indicators for urban amenity that can be used at the national level. Furthermore, the indicators that are being used at the local level have generally been developed by individual councils and may be different to indicators developed by other councils. Furthermore, the indicators may be of a form and nature that they can not be easily used by other councils. This project aims to develop a set of indicators for monitoring urban amenity that may be able to be used consistently by councils throughout New Zealand. The next step is to develop the indicators and processes in such a way that they can be nationally aggregated.

6.2 Present Approach

The present approach focuses on the development of indicators at the local level. This approach will lead to the adoption of a consistent approach to the monitoring of urban amenity. This will allow measurement to be undertaken in several different ways:

- Monitoring of the level of urban amenity at one point in time in one locality;
- Monitoring of urban amenity in one place over time to record change over that period.

If a consistent set of can be developed at the local level then it is possible that the following can be undertaken:

- Potential comparison between distinct geographic areas within New Zealand;
- Potential comparison between distinct geographic areas between New Zealand and in other places around the world.

Additional projects funded by the Ministry will build on the work undertaken as part of this project. One of these projects is likely to be the development of a draft set of national urban amenity indicators that will allow the above goals to be achieved. This will involve taking the indicators developed for use at the local level and ensuring that they are robust enough to be used at the national level. Part of this process will involve the identification of urban amenity issues that are significant at the national level – some of the issues that are significant at a local level may not be able to be compared at a national level or may be irrelevant on the larger scale.

It is possible that if the confirmed methodology is robust enough so that international monitoring and comparisons can eventually be undertaken between different urban areas, the success of New Zealand's Resource Management Act as a tool in managing urban amenity could be measured!

There will also need to be a clear identification of which indicators are intangible and which indicators are tangible together with the need to establish clear and concise methodologies when using the urban amenity indicators.

One of the keys to these comparisons will be the development of a robust set of "community characteristics" for each of the urban typologies compared. In order to compare the results of different areas (but similar urban typologies), it will be necessary to compare areas with similar "community characteristics". The community characteristics will consist of key sociological indicators such as age, gender, race, etc. These will need to be established at the outset of the monitoring (or as part of it) for each of the areas monitored.

In essence, lists and methodologies for the following components that can be consistently applied across New Zealand will need to be established:

- community characteristics;
- raw attributes;
- tangible indicators;
- intangible indicators; and,
- sampling methodologies.

It would be the function of the new project on National Urban Amenity Indicators to identify these lists and methodologies.

6.3 Conclusions

This paper focuses on defining, managing and monitoring urban amenity (including indicator development) at the local level. It is suggested in this Chapter that once the ideas presented in this paper have been trialled and the 'Good Practice Guide on Urban Amenity' has been finalised then it is possible to explore methods for developing a national set of indicators for urban amenity. Some ideas for the development of urban amenity indicators at a national level have been outlined here.

7. Conclusions and way forward

7.1 Common approaches to managing urban amenity

This report has stressed the importance of developing some examples of common approaches that can be used by local authorities in New Zealand to define and monitor changes in urban amenity. Some key qualities and attributes for the management of urban amenity have been presented and some suggestions have been provided on how these qualities and attributes could be developed to assist local authorities in the important task of managing urban amenity.

As highlighted in chapter 2, urban amenity is perceived to be an important issue by councils but there are gaps in terms of having a clear framework for the development of urban amenity indicators that can be used by local authorities. This report aims to fill that gap, and provides a framework for the development of useful urban amenity indicators and some recommendations on approaches to assist councils with defining, managing and monitoring urban amenity. This report is a draft “living document” in that it is the beginning of a process that will be used to test ideas on approaches to urban amenity that will eventually be written into an urban amenity good practice guide for councils (to be completed by 30 June 2001).

The approaches to defining, managing and monitoring urban amenity outlined in this report have been influenced by the range of people who have contributed to thinking about how urban amenity should or could be managed. This has included the Urban Amenity Focus Group, Case Study councils, the councils that responded to the survey, and the people previously involved in the Ministry for the Environment work on urban amenity (i.e. 1998 workshop participants).

It is important to assign priorities for defining, managing and monitoring urban amenity values at the local level. The development of processes to establish what communities want in terms of their urban amenity is critical. Communities need to identify the most significant amenity issues. On going communication is a key to defining, managing and monitoring urban amenity and this must happen at a local level. Councils have a critical role to play in the overall management of urban amenity.

Central government also has a critical role to play in managing and monitoring the urban environment. There is a lot of data about the social, economic and biophysical aspects of the urban environment, but this data is dispersed, variable in quality, sourced from many different organisations and for many different purposes. Central government has a role to play in regular reporting on the state of our urban environment in New Zealand. In order to ensure this work is useful to councils and understood, it will be important to disseminate the information and run training sessions with key council people.

7.2 Where to from here – trialling of urban amenity approaches

Following the completion of this report, an additional report will be prepared (by the end of October) for the councils involved in the urban amenity trials and the trialling will begin. The trialling of the ideas outlined in this report will mark a new phase of this project.

Purpose of the trialling

The overall purpose of the trialling is to apply different approaches to defining and monitoring urban amenity at a local level including the key urban amenity qualities outlined in this report.

Objectives of the council trials are to

- develop methods to assist councils define locally relevant indicators for urban amenity;
- evaluate different approaches to defining, managing and monitoring urban amenity and highlight the advantages and disadvantages of each; and
- provide real life examples for the ‘Good Practice Guide on Urban Amenity’ that will be developed by 30 June 2001.

Key output

The key output will be a draft report from each council. It is envisaged that the draft report will contain the following:

- description of community where the trial occurred;
- an outline of the methodology that was used;
- a description of the results of the trial;
- an assessment of the advantages and disadvantages of the methods used;
- a list of key lessons learnt; and
- an indication for other councils of the resources required to complete this work.

Timing of the Trials

It is envisaged that council trials will occur between October/November 2000 to February 2001.

Who is involved and what will be trialled?

Rotorua District Council (Stephen Colson)

Rotorua District Council (RDC) is currently involved in that are linked to urban amenity:

- An in-depth study of Ngongotaha a traditional service centre using the participatory appraisal approach. This work focuses on: town centre revitalisation (business and community surveys), the provision of reserves, and what people think generally about Ngongotaha.
- A city-wide youth survey has been conducted. This survey focused on facilities and programmes for youth in Rotorua.
- Tourism impact study (conducted by Lincoln University)

Testing the ‘quality’ of urban amenity in Ngongotaha was seen as providing a useful starting point for the development of an urban amenity ‘trial’.

Waitakere City Council (Philip Brown)

Waitakere City has taken a strategic approach in creating a vision for the City:

- a place based approach in that it focuses on specific areas.
- charettes are used as a means to gather information. Philip explained that these meetings are held as public meetings where people are typically asked three questions: What do you like?

What don't you like? How would you like to see it changed? Slides of different issues are also presented to the community.

- in order to be assured that all views from the community have been captured stakeholder meetings are also held.
- from this information a 'map' or 'diagram' of the communities vision is created and this map is then presented back to the community.

Philip explained that this vision sits outside and separate from regulatory documents. Philip suggested that a possible trial could be a review of the work that has already been done by Waitakere to engage the community in defining the important urban amenity issues for them.

Palmerston North City Council (Greg Vossler)

Palmerston North City (PNCC) are undertaking a number of projects that are directly relevant to the urban amenity project:

- PNCC conducts City Vision monitoring which is an annual survey conducted randomly of 1000 people. There are around half a dozen questions in this survey that are relevant to this project in particular questions related to open space and safety.
- In terms of plan effectiveness monitoring Greg explained that PNCC are currently involved in surveys and focus group workshops that relate to an inner city block. This work has focused on gaining an understanding of the different 'qualities' from an urban amenity perspective that people associate with this location.
- Greg also explained that he is involved in creating an urban design strategy for the City. The first stage of this project involves testing whether or not the key urban amenity qualities identified by the Council provide a sound basis for the strategy. He stated that four workshops are currently being held which focus on checking the validity of the principles against the values that people hold about Palmerston North. The workshops involve the following groups of people: design professionals, developers, residents and youth, councillors.
- He also explained that in 1999 the PNCC was involved in a pilot study that trialled the use of 'participatory appraisal' as an approach to determine what a range of people living in two separate geographic areas of the city valued about the city's natural and physical environment.

The result of the work that the Council is currently doing in the area of validating the key urban amenity qualities was seen as a potential trial.

Christchurch City Council (Bob Nixon)

The monitoring work Christchurch City (CCC) is involved in is similar to a lot of other councils in that it focuses on general information gathering rather than urban amenity monitoring. Bob noted that CCC would be particularly interested in 'trailing' within the inner city areas of Christchurch. The trialling of the urban amenity qualities in the inner city of Christchurch was seen as a potential trial.

The lessons learnt from the council trials will be included in the good practice guide on urban amenity. The timeframe from the completion of this paper to 30 June 2001 is listed below.

7.3 Timeframes for the rest of the project

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| 29 September 2000 | This draft paper on key urban amenity approaches Completion of current council case studies |
| 31 October 2000 | Paper for four selected trialling councils on what to trial in relation to key urban amenity approaches Workshop in Wellington for the five urban amenity and plan monitoring case study councils (Waimakariri District, Christchurch City, Tasman District, Palmerston North City, and Auckland City councils) |
| November - February | Council trialling of urban amenity ideas by Palmerston North City, Rotorua District, Christchurch City and Waitakere City councils. |
| 20 February 2001 | Deadline for council reports on trialling of urban amenity approaches |
| 24 March 2001 | Report collating all council trials on urban amenity |
| 30 March 2001 | Draft good practice guide on how to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define • Manage • Monitor urban amenity and • Develop indicators to measure changes in urban amenity. |
| 5 or 6 April 2001 | Third full Urban Amenity Focus Group workshop |
| 30 April 2001 | Workshop report |
| 30 June 2001 | Final good practice guide for councils. |

In conclusion, this report is a major step forward in discovering ways in which urban amenity can be defined, managed and monitored (including the development of indicators) at the local level. This report also suggests that there may be ways in which national indicators on urban amenity can be developed. The next stage of the project, which involves the trialling of the ideas contained in this report, will provide practical feedback. This feedback will then be incorporated into the 'Good Practice Guide on Urban Amenity' programmed to be finished at the end of June 2001.

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Appendix 1 – Members of the Urban Amenity Focus Group

Members of the Ministry for the Environment Urban Amenity Focus Group are:

Graeme McIndoe – Urban Design, Wellington

Paul Honeybone – Sustainable Cities Trust, Christchurch

Rewi Thompson – Architect, Auckland

Greg Vossler – Palmerston North City Council

Philip Brown – Waitakere City Council

Phillipa Robertson – Office of the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment (previously Porirua City Council)

Bob Nixon – Christchurch City Council

Steven Colson – Rotorua City Council

Robyn Fisher – Hutt City Council (previously Brendon Marshall)

James Corbett – Manukau City Council

Clive Anstey – Landscape Architect, Wellington

Previous member was Bruce Halligan Southland District

Appendix 2 – P-S-R Framework

Environmental Performance Indicators (EPI) Programme: Part 1 - Indicator Development EPI PROGRAMME STRAND: Urban Amenity

ISSUE: Open Space

- MAIN POLICY GOALS:**
- G1)** Accessible open space
 - G2)** Good quality open space
 - G3)** Provision of adequate open space
 - G4)** Good range of different types
 - G5)** Good distribution throughout urban area

Condensed goal: To achieve an integrated network of open space areas which fulfil the community's needs for areas for recreation.

POLICY / ISSUE BASED 'PRESSURE - STATE - RESPONSE' INDICATOR FRAMEWORK

| P-S-R FRAMEWORK | PRESSURE | STATE (CONDITION) | RESPONSE |
|--|--|--|---|
| <i>Identify the 'state', 'pressure' and 'response' components of the issue in a general/broad sense.)</i> | <p>What causes the issue, what are the threats or pressures that influence the condition of the urban environment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An increase in population resulting in development pressure. • Inadequate funds for maintenance/development. • Ad hoc reserves acquisition. • Sale of public land. • Changing recreational needs. | <p>What is the condition of the environment, or the state of the urban environment that is affected by or relates to the issue:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low amount of open space in proportion to built environment. • Sub-optimal – quality, range, distribution and accessibility of open space. • Open space areas that are over-used or under-used. • Inappropriate development of facilities within open spaces. | <p><i>How can the issue be dealt with? What can we do to address the issue:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District plan provisions for open space areas. • Reserve acquisition. • Reserves rationalisation. • Parks Unit – maintenance and development. • Promoting open space covenants. |

| POTENTIAL INDICATORS | PRESSURE | STATE (CONDITION) | RESPONSE |
|---|---|---|---|
| Measures to best represent pressures/conditions/responses above | What do we need to measure to track pressures: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Monitoring recreation trends. 2. Loss and gain of open space. 3. Development within open spaces. 4. Demographic change. | What do we need to measure to track condition: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Change in proportion of open space to built environment. 2. Number of people using areas of open space, and survey of why people do or do not use these areas. 3. Public satisfaction with open spaces. 4. Complaints. | What do we need to measure to track response: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Loss and gain of open space. 2. Change in areas covered by covenants. 3. Change in character of open spaces following development of facilities. 4. Maintenance and development of open spaces kept up. |
| Main reasons for choosing above measures / what will the measures tell us: | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Whether current stock of open space still meets people's recreational needs. 2. Change in open space. 3. Whether character of open space is maintained. 4. Change in demands for type, location and size of open space. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Areas in which open space areas are adequate/ not adequate. 2. Demand for open space. 3. Whether existing open spaces meet people's needs or not. 4. Public dissatisfaction with open spaces. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Whether council's actions are meeting its policies regarding maintenance or gain of open space areas. 2. – 3. extent to which character is preserved following development. 4. – |

| Complete Part 2 : Assessment of potential indicators against indicator criteria | | | |
|---|----|----|----|
| Prioritise and rank assessed 'potential' indicators: <i>(based on Part 2: Assessment of potential indicators against indicator criteria)</i> | 1) | 1) | 1) |
| | 2) | 2) | 2) |
| | 3) | 3) | 3) |
| | 4) | 4) | 4) |

Environmental Performance Indicators (EPI) Programme: Part 2 - Assessing Potential Indicators Against Indicator Criteria

EPI PROGRAMME STRAND: Urban amenity

ISSUE: Open Space

| NAME POTENTIAL INDICATORS | CRITERIA | | | | | | |
|--|-----------------|------------|--------------------|----------------|-----------------|--|--|
| | Policy relevant | Measurable | Analytically valid | Cost effective | Understand-able | | |
| Monitoring recreation trends. | Yes | Yes | Yes | ? | Yes | | |
| Loss and gain of open space. | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | | |
| Development within open spaces. | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | | |
| Demographic change. | Yes | Yes | Yes | ? | Yes | | |
| Change in proportion of open space to built environment. | Yes | Yes | Yes | ? | Yes | | |
| Number of people using areas of open space, and survey of why people do or do not use these areas. | Yes | Yes | Yes | ? | Yes | | |
| Public satisfaction with open spaces. | Yes | Yes | ? | ? | Yes | | |
| Complaints. | Yes | Yes | ? | Yes | Yes | | |
| Change in areas covered by covenants. | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | | |
| Change in character of open spaces following development of facilities. | Yes | Yes | ? | ? | Yes | | |
| Maintenance and development of open spaces kept up. | ? | Yes | ? | Yes | Yes | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |

Appendix 3- Raw attribute analysis

| | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be measured • Public perception and understanding to use base indicators • Generic • Well understood by community | | | Things that influence how we use amenity (influencing factors) |
| | Irreducible | Recognisable attributes | | |
| Pitch Tone Frequency Duration - Static Moving Hue Reflectivity | Noise Vibration Solar access Wind reduction Vegetation Colour Dust Odour Glare Light spill Lighting Design Public transport Onsite parking | Traffic Urban design Streetscape Security Surveillance Transport options safety (not personal) | Neighbourhood Character Landscape Accessibility Facilities | Average income Culture Connective networks/Q/Intelligence Education Health Gender Employment Status Age Weather Sunlight Wind Precipitation |
| | Less defined Singular Objective Less value laden Real | | Conceptual Perceived/perception Aggregated Composite Subjective More value laden Judgements | |
| | More responsive to change Quantifiable Factual | | Conceptual Perceived/perception | Less responsive to change |