

Conversations

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Heritage zoning should be voluntary

PHIL BARRY

Voluntary Heritage convener

OPINION: Two changes to suburbia being considered by the Hutt Council – housing intensification and heritage zones – will create contrasting types of urban blight.

The Government's intensification rules will lead to dramatic changes in urban areas like the Hutt. Homeowners can cash in by building cheek-by-jowl residential buildings three to six storeys high.

A possible barrier is the Hutt council's plan to designate some people's homes and streets as "heritage".

Homeowners would be prevented not just from replacing their old homes, but even modernising them.

The perceived special character of these places will exclude them from intensification.

Suburban New Zealand is being squeezed by two incompatible and unenviable changes to the fabric of their communities.

On one side homeowners could live next to apartment blocks of many storeys where anything goes.

On the other side, homeowners



Voluntary Heritage convener Phil Barry says new intensification rules will lead to dramatic changes in urban areas.

JERICO ROCK-ARCHER/STUFF

could be forced into ageing houses, where nothing changes.

Our group, Voluntary Heritage, was set up to resist enforced heritage listings.

We love old homes; many people in our group live in them. But we do it voluntarily and want to maintain control over our homes.

Council planners want to smother certain streets in heritage blankets.

Owners won't be able to change their perceived historic character, stopping extensions, additions and of course

replacement. Maintenance would be severely controlled, and building quotes show heritage homeowners face twice the materials cost, and work takes twice as long.

That's nice if you can afford it. But the people living in these homes have varying ability to keep the homes in pristine historic condition.

There's elderly in their long-held home, first time buyers of doer-uppers, wealthy in historic villas, and families getting by the best they can.

Adding sting to the burn, an

Auckland study in 2020 found values of heritage homes go down by 10%, while a Canadian study has shown values decrease by up to 30%.

Ironically, those living adjacent to heritage homes enjoy an increase in their value.

The condition of the homes inside the proposed heritage zones vary wildly.

Some properties have newer buildings or major modifications without the slightest historic or architectural value.

Some homes need significant repair or are so far degraded that

repair is impossible.

This hodgepodge creates dozens of unfair situations.

The owners of an in-zone house, bordering an area newly minted for intensification, can't make changes besides what they are allowed to and can afford.

But the house next door can be demolished, and the owner profit greatly from cramming in multiple apartments or town houses.

Homes lucky enough to have an exemption within the zone can also rebuild, but their neighbours cannot.

There's a terrible incentive for homeowners to bowl over their house to avoid being caught out.

Intensification and heritage zones are at the opposite ends of suburban planning, but combined, they are about to cause mayhem amongst our communities.

Our group believes heritage zoning should be voluntary, and our properties should not be excluded from intensification.

Hutt City Council's draft District Plan is now set for sign off in 2023, while councillors consider more areas to lock off. Consultation with the community on the central Government's new suburban intensification rules closes at the end of April.