

## **Cities, Communities and Homes: Is the Urban Future Livable?**

- **Paper / Proposal Title:**

Special Housing Areas: a practical pathway to livable homes?

- **Format:**

Written paper and verbal presentation

- **Author(s) Name:**

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- **University or Company Affiliation:**

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- **Abstract (300 words):**

New Zealand's housing unaffordability has been worsening for well over a decade. The 2017 *Demographia International Housing Affordability Survey* identified eight NZ cities as seriously or severely unaffordable.

Despite the apparent desire to provide affordable homes, NZ's policy responses are piecemeal and have yet to deliver. This paper looks at one of the few policies aimed at addressing housing unaffordability, Special Housing Areas (SHAs). SHAs are sites deemed suitable for new housing, where development can be fast-tracked under special legislation intended to increase affordability by facilitating the supply of residential land.

This paper describes the concept and rationale of SHAs. It situates this intervention within an array of international responses to housing unaffordability, considers why the SHA intervention has been established, and how this can be understood in the context of NZ's very lightly regulated housing system, and its effects-based planning system.

Whether a SHA intervention could work is explored in Tauranga-Western Bay of Plenty, one of the fastest growing urban areas in New Zealand, and the second least affordable with housing costing 9.7 times the median household income. Seven Special Housing Areas were approved in the region by the Minister of Housing in 2014. The target is to provide an additional 1,600-1,700 residential sections by 2019.

The paper describes the key stakeholders that have emerged, how the intervention has played out so far, some of the implications, as well as unintended consequences of the intervention, in particular whether the intervention is likely to result in affordable housing, inclusion and better livability of the urban environment.

The work that this paper reports on is part of Building Better Homes, Towns and Cities, a multi-disciplinary research programme to develop better housing and urban environments for New Zealanders in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

• **Author(s) Biography (200 words each):**

Dr James is Director of Public Policy & Research Ltd, with over 30 years' experience as a social researcher, policy analyst and policy manager. Bev works extensively with community-based organizations, and on developing evidence-based tools and information. Key research areas include: housing; ageing in place; community resilience; community development; and resource management. Housing-related research includes: decline in home ownership among the ageing population; housing downsizing; ageing in place policy and service delivery; older people's repairs and maintenance practices; older Maori housing needs; residential movement; housing affordability; housing needs of people with disabilities and monitoring retirement village legislation. Bev is a principal investigator in two New Zealand national science challenges: Building Better Homes, Towns and Cities; and Ageing Well, respectively.