

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

- **Title:**

Planning our city neighbourhoods and homes with a place for a kiwi* in every garden

- **Format:**

Written paper

- **Author(s) Name:**

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- **University or Company Affiliation:**

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- **Abstract:**

Meeting New Zealand's housing challenge: a kiwi in every garden

Seven-eighths of NZ's population lives in urban areas and most growth will be city based. Demands for cheap housing at higher densities, increasing infill development and hard landscaping are reducing the vegetated spaces in the local home environment. Will the pressure to accommodate more people mean fewer spaces for native wildlife? We argue that it need not be like this. We propose that cities can act as wildlife sanctuaries, a place where people and wildlife can coexist. We illustrate the case for more biodiverse living environments with findings from two studies. Detailed interviews were carried out with city children (n=187 children, ages 9-11, across 3 cities) and older adults (n=72, ages 56-99) living independently and in rest homes, together with detailed biological analyses of participants' home and nearby living environments. Both studies demonstrated the importance of nature in people's lives. For most children and older people the home and nearby neighbourhood is their primary source for nature contact. To support their nature needs requires creating more biodiverse settings in and around the home, bringing nature to where people live. To date the emphasis has been on larger

public greenspaces in biodiversity enhancement. We put the case for a more localised home based focus. We show how this new biodiverse future city, based on increasingly biodiverse homes and neighbourhoods might look and the processes by which it can be realised. With an engaged population that has easy access to biodiverse spaces, and committed biodiverse-aware planning, cities can function to support native biodiversity. In doing so it is possible to foster people's well-being while simultaneously enhancing a sense of national identity. Let's create spaces for New Zealand's unique and threatened wildlife, including the kiwi in all urban neighbourhoods and gardens. Their needs can and should be part of the urban development process.

*New Zealand's national bird, it is flightless with conservation status for the five species ranging from critical to recovering. New Zealanders also describe themselves as kiwis after the bird.

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

Claire Freeman is Professor in the Department of Geography, University of Otago, New Zealand where she teaches on the Master of Planning programme. Her interests are in environmental planning including; sustainable communities, planning for children and young people and planning with nature. Today's paper derives from three studies conducted by the team, namely the Dunedin garden study, the Natural neighbourhoods for city children Marsden funded study and an in progress study on ageing and nature.

Yolanda van Heezik is Associate Professor in the Zoology Department at the University of Otago where she teaches wildlife management and conservation biology. Her research examines birds and other wildlife in urban areas, biodiversity of gardens, resident attitudes and knowledge about biodiversity, and most recently, children's connection with nature across three NZ cities. She is currently part of the team exploring how ageing affects nature in our lives.

This paper presents an ambitious and personal view of the authors on the potential for challenging the current Euro-centric urban character of New Zealand's cities. It proposes ways to create homes and neighbourhoods that reflect New Zealand's own unique character and biota where the city works for people and wildlife.