

# HOUSING AFFORDABILITY INQUIRY

## SUBMISSION ON DRAFT REPORT

by

david willmott

CENTRE FOR URBAN AND TRANSPORT STUDIES

10 February 2012

### PART A

THE AUCKLAND METROPOLITAN URBAN LIMITS (MULs)  
ARE NOT ONLY A SIGNIFICANT FACTOR  
IN THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC UNSUSTAINABILITY  
OF RESIDENTIAL AND OTHER LAND DEVELOPMENT COSTS,  
THEY HAVE NOT BEEN JUSTIFIED IN ANY SENSE, - AND CANNOT BE

YET THEY WILL NOT BE RELAXED BY THE CURRENT AE-PC PLANNING REGIME  
UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES SHORT OF WHOLESALE TOP-DOWN RE-ORGANISATION  
OF NEW ZEALAND'S ABSOLUTIST ENVIRO-PLANNING COMPLEX

---

**PART A** : Our MULs are an integral part of a reactive, counter-productive (anti-market) American Architect-driven town planning construct which uses the MULs to "stop sprawl" (ie natural, value- and economy-driven urban expansion) to enforce "urban implosion" to enable the creation of a monumental "designer city", in which apartment blocks are built around rail-based public transport. This construct is known in America as "Smart (sic) Growth" and known here as "Compact cities"

A1 : INTRODUCTION

A2 : MYTHS & FANCIES HELD TO "JUSTIFY" URBAN IMPLOSION (AND MULS)

A3 : FACTS AND REALITIES NEGATING THE MYTHS AND FANCIES

**PART B** : The American test-bed enables comparison of "Smart Growth" cities with the cities which are more commerce- and enablement-oriented, build roads rather than railroads and allow expansion. Result : Implosion cities are collapsing socially and economically, with young home-seeking families, businesses & investment migrating to progressive, commerce-friendly cities with affordable homes.

**PART C** : Land development process impositions, standards, fees, charges & "mitigations" also contribute very substantially to land prices. Coupled with (i) inflation plus associated capital gains and (ii) artificial scarcity imposed by MULs, the effect has been to increase the land/income ratio TEN-FOLD over the forty years since centrally-planned environmentalism began to displace markets. Current land prices result directly from cost-push, enabled but not propelled by cheap finance.

**PART D** : What must be done if Auckland – and New Zealand – is to avoid killing off the "goose" (private sector opportunity, initiative and choice) which lays the golden eggs of work and wealth.

## A1 : INTRODUCTION

### AUCKLAND'S SPATIAL PLAN IS (OLD ARC's) "URBAN IMPLOSION" AROUND RAILTRANSIT IN DIRECT OPPOSITION TO MAJOR SOCIO-ECONOMIC FORCES DRIVING EXPANSION. THE RESULTING ECONOMIC DEBILITATION IS BLAMED ON BANKS, BUT THE REAL CAUSE IS FORCING THE PUBLIC TO SPEND MORE ON (RE-)DEVELOPMENT THAN WE CAN AFFORD.

**Meaning of "spatial plan"** : However it's purpose is defined, the current belief amongst central planners throughout the western world is that their role in society is to reverse the "natural tendency" for growing cities to expand rather than contract, requiring society to observe a peri-urban straight-jacket and accept forced implosion of new development on top of existing neighbourhoods, heritage areas, and mini-wildernesses, requiring premature destruction of those existing assets, wasting the (still valuable) resources invested in them, and thereby increasing the cost of the subsequent development to pay for the wasted resources.

**That "natural tendency to expand"** : Throughout history, cities have developed primarily by expansion for good reasons which are evident to anyone studying historical urban development, and which remain relevant today. Those "good reasons" are satisfaction of massive social and economic forces seeking "best value within affordability limits". They maximise choice and value (ie the economy) by allowing for progressive development of peri-urban communities (thus the city as a whole), as well as individual sites as/when personally affordable.

Note 1 : Low-income people in new peri-urban neighbourhoods typically apply sweat equity and mutual self-help, including barter, while their skills, work and wealth improve towards their becoming fully assimilated into formal (monetised) society

Note 2 : Poverty is not a fixed attribute unless trapped below "glass ceilings" suppressing "upward mobility" and engendering hopelessness and frustration. Rather, when possible, poverty can be and mostly is overcome within half a lifetime. Initial basic development of peri-urban land can support low cost cottages capable of being progressively upgraded as creditworthiness allows without over-borrowing to eventually become today's highly desirable and valued older suburbs.

**The established "comfortable classes"** : from which planners, Enviro-NGOs and Councillors are mostly drawn seek to obliterate (comparative) poverty by precluding it's ability to exist in the likes of lowest-cost (most remote, least developed/serviced/advantaged) lands and in low-cost forms of housing (such as caravans, toileted garages with a mezzanine bedroom as the first stage of owner-driven house construction, self-erected kitset cottages, trans-located old houses, or even mud-brick thatched-roof whares), such as those in which our own parents & grand-parents got their start in life. But (comparative, mostly temporary) poverty does exist amongst students, single parent families, solo mums, immigrants etc as well as amongst the old, handicapped and sick. Many, even most, of these people want nothing more than a legal opportunity to lift themselves up by their own bootstraps, to earn and own "an (affordably acceptable !! to THEM, not council!!) home (and car) of our own", not necessarily perfect at first, but capable of progressive improvement over time as affordable, with sweat equity.

Note 3 : Chinese say "when you finish your home, it is time to die". Aspiration, enablement & progress are life itself.

Note 4 : Any society which seeks to achieve "equal outcomes" for people of different ages, energy levels, aptitudes, abilities, motivations and financial standing by denying equal access, equal opportunity, and personal choice in the satisfaction of basic human wants and needs at standards acceptable to the chooser (that is, until "equal opportunity" enables them to improve their incomes and status) builds a resentful "underclass" intent on overwhelming oppression.

**The "urban implosion" style of development is driven by an informal coalition of special interest groups** : who are empowered by (their interpretation of) the Resource Management Act to create a mutually-self-satisfying aesthetics-based monumentalist "vision" of an aesthetically ideal form of future urban development which purports (incorrectly) to achieve environmentally-friendly outcomes. The coalition's high priests are town planners cloaked with "green" objectives. Other principal special interests include those - such as Enviro-NGOs, other collectivised activists and the media - who identify with central planning's "heart over mind" absolutes and support collectivised action, regardless of facts & realities, or of detrimental effects including costs & unaffordabilities, commercial inefficiencies, and developmental and commercial "DIS-enablement". The coalition is somewhat analogous to the American "Military-Industrial Complex", thus describable as the "**Absolutist Enviro-Planner Complex**" (AE-PC).

**Urban implosion is, in effect, class warfare** : conducted by AE-PC on behalf of "The Establishment" against anyone less wealthy whose living standards are necessarily "lower" than their own. Warfare is conducted by setting development standards (especially for land!) at an ever-higher "world's best" level, and steadily increasing the process complexities, consultations, costs and uncertainties/barriers deemed necessary for their attainment. "Detrimental effects" include : (i) new housing costs increasing far faster than incomes, (ii) lifting existing house values (and rates!) by induction to effect a nice capital gain for "the establishment" (necessarily at the expense of all future generations; hardly "inter-generationally equitable"), (iii) erection of a glass ceiling over an ever-increasing percentage of youngsters aspiring to "a home of our own" but losing hope of ever affording one, (iv) creation of a resentful underclass who can't afford to rent, far less to save for a house deposit, (v) decay and/or insurrection.

Note 5 : Other detrimental effects compound net Auckland cost to around \$5 billion p.a. - and rising. Refer attachment

## A2 : MYTHS AND FANCIES HELD TO “JUSTIFY” THE ANTI-AUTOMOBILITY “URBAN IMPLOSION” DEFINING AUCKLAND PLANNING FOR THE PAST 20 YEARS

*“Most of the greatest evils that man has inflicted upon man have come through people feeling quite certain about something which, in fact, was false.” - Bertrand Russell*

*“The whole aim of practical politics ... (as is today instigated promoted & controlled by a burgeoning bureaucracy and symbiotic special interest groups – Ed) ... is to keep the populace alarmed [and hence clamorous to be led to safety] by menacing it with an endless series of hobgoblins, all of them imaginary.” – H.L. Mencken*

*“The urge to save [the planet] is almost always only a false-face for the urge to rule it.” - H.L. Mencken*

**Foreword** : An “Urban Myth” is an easily-popularised but simplistic presumption, often encapsulated in a slogan, which is (wrongly!) presumed to reflect an “urban reality”. The presumption usually takes the form of “A causes B”, taking no cognisance of other parameters, and assuming there are no side-effects, confounding feedbacks, or detrimental consequences downstream. Urban myths often presume easy comparability between cities, which however can have very different social, economic, physical, trade, demographic, migration etc characteristics. Urban realities are invariably complex, requiring respect for that complexity, extensive ad-hoc research, and careful, often extensive explanation. Such an approach, if truly independent & impartial (as CUTS aspires to be), confounds many of the presumptions underpinning “implosion planning”, and calls into question its labelling as “sustainable development”. **The primary urban myths and fancies held to “justify” urban implosion include :**

**Super Fancy 1** : In an era of socio-economic and (especially) technological complexity, dynamism, progressivity & volatility **it is sensible to plan** urban development and land use both physically and functionally for the “long-term” (originally about 50 yrs, during which the population will about double)

**Super Fancy 2** : **Governments** (including Local Governments) **are appropriate agencies** to go well beyond discerning and satisfying a society’s real, underlying current wants & needs to plan centrally for future societies’ wants & needs, values, morals, economies, technologies, populations, demographics etc (including determining preferences between options such as densification v. expansion, public transportisation v. automobilisation etc)

**Super Fancy 3** ; “**Integrated planning**” of all aspects of land development and use by a single centralised planning agency is necessary and constructive, and can achieve better outcomes overall than “the free market”

**Super Fancy 4** : An (effective) coalition of visionaries and idealism-driven Special Interest Groups (SIGs) is an **appropriately representative group of interests to determine** (in effect if not intent) : the nature of urban society (goals, attitudes, moralities, lifestyles), it’s dispositional development (how owners are required to use/mis-use their land), it’s functionality (relative inter-accessibilities, time-costs and cross-subsidisations thereof), and it’s productive efficiency (previously subject to and assured by (relatively) free market choices), thus it’s socio-economy

**Super fancy 5** : **Environmental protections and the “sustainability” of development** (as adjudged subjectively by the AE-PC) **are more important than human wants and needs**. Therefore, any detrimental effects (and costs) back on society and it’s economy deriving from the AE-PC’s (wholly subjective) judgements on what is “sustainable development” need not be addressed, far less quantified. Alternatively, any such effects and associated costs can and will be overcome by the public adjusting to meet planning and regulatory requirements before any significant costs and effects develop. In either case, RMA S.32 requirements can be (effectively) ignored.

**Super Fancy 6** : Environmentally, the (“brownfield”) “**urban footprint**” is **irretrievably compromised**, and can be densified without regard for : (i) ratepayer values as expressed in current lifestyles, attitudes, neighbourhoods and heritage areas, or (ii) urban ecologies resident in private gardens and wildernesses. In contrast, the (mostly highly-modified but “green field”) ecologies and aesthetic qualities of **peri-urban farmlands warrant protection** from developmental effects. (“Sustainable development” is the “integration” of these two AE-PC value-judgements)

**Super Fancy 7** : (Consequence of Super Fancies 4 and 5) **Any future increase in human wants and needs**, especially those involving “rights” in development and use of land, **must therefore be contained within the MUL-delimited “urban footprint”** and constrained to support the reverse-engineering (ie wholesale reconstruction) of what has become an excessively automobilised and decentralised city. The aim is to create a “designer city”, built around a re-centralising rail-based public transport system reliant for patronage on densification and travel performance which, after sufficient and appropriate funding, will attract people out of cars, resolving congestion.

**Super Fancy 8** : **Urban implosion is “evidence-based” to achieve all of the objectives as well as ensuring “the environment” is sustained**. Achievable objectives include (i) any development or use will be sustainable (ii) material resources including energy will be conserved, (iii) “The environment” will be cleansed of human rubbish, (iv) “inter-generational equity” will be achieved.

**Super Fancy 9:** The Planning process is “evidence-based”, rational and objective. **The Plan’s stated objectives reflect what the public should want and need, and have all been shown to be all achievable with the plan**

**Super Fancy 10 :** In particular, urban implosion accelerates re-construction of existing commercial areas and suburbs, providing much more scope for “designer city” vision-driven “**urban designers**” to apply the principles of “**New Urbanism**” (*aesthetics/architecture-based, “quality-assuring”, centrally planned, re-centralising, car-free*) to improve the “**liveability**” of the “**urban environment**”. Façade-and sign-controls, cafes and car-free streets from “main street” do-overs, are instrumental in attracting the arts and artistes necessary for urban “**vibrancy**”.

**Super Fancy 11 :** **The public has “consented”** – or will consent – to The Plan through consultation processes which are adequate because : they take time, they are repeated at every step of the way, they include for special interest such as the “stakeholder” groups regularly invited to contribute submissions, they are cumbersome, time-consuming and expensive and therefore presumed to be effective, and they are organised, overseen and summarised for Councillor consumption by planners who are (*necessarily... but really?*) competent and impartial

**Mega Myth 1 : Reconstructing the city within a MUL straight-jacket is necessary and desirable as it will :**

- (a) Reduce Council’s servicing costs, ie enable allocation of funds to social services without raising rates, and without imposing any significant costs on the private sector, far less costs greatly exceeding any Council savings
- (b) Effectively prevent otherwise “catastrophic, runaway” global overheating AND urban immobilisation from imminent oil exhaustion by replacing auto-mobility with a rail-based transit system, without detrimentally affecting choice of destination, convenience, efficiency of city-wide (market) inter-accessibility, and affordability (refer 3)
- (c) Preserve our ability to feed ourselves (and, in future, a starving world dependent on us for food).
- (d) Protect the (highly modified) ecology and visual amenity residing in “our (current) rural environment”, with favourable outcomes more than significantly offsetting any detrimental effects on intra-urban ecologies, greeneries & amenities, and without causing significantly detrimental effects on residential living space, privacy, lifestyles, housing affordability, automobility, interaccessibility, urban productive efficiency, and gross & net wealth production

**Mega Myth 2 : Densification is necessary and desirable :**

- (a) to reduce travel distance, thus to avoid running out of energy or oil, which would render something or other (the planet? a crucial ecology? the city? current lifestyles?) “unsustainable”, thus unacceptable
- (b) to preserve peri-urban farmland to feed a future starving world.
- (c) to protect peri-urban greenery and farmland ecologies
- (d) to reduce dependence on foreign suppliers and the foreign exchange it requires.

**Mega Myth 3 : In any case, people prefer living in a consolidating/consolidated city**

**Mega Myth 4 : Public transportisation is necessary and desirable :** to reduce both energy consumption to sustainable levels, and the resulting emissions which are both toxic to humans and contribute substantially to potentially-catastrophic global over-heating. Provided a full and “proper” transit system is developed, it will attract people out of their cars in sufficient numbers to reduce congestion.

**Mega Myth 5 : It is not necessary to plan for road network development, or even to seek it.** Why build roads, they only fill up with automobiles. From Mega Myth 4, automobility should be discouraged to stabilise the climate and protect the environment from unsustainable change. In any case, there is no room for any more roads.

**Mega Myth 6 : Subdivisional development, automobility and roads are heavily subsidised** compared with apartment blocks and public transport, and are therefore (comparably) uneconomic.

**Mega Myth 7 : The implosion mode of urban (re-)development has already been approved**, having been extensively consulted upon, and approved by the public’s representatives in former Councils. It is therefore the appropriate determinant for decisions on current development and resource use applications. Consultation processes will continue to demonstrate how much the people want and need apartment dwelling and rail-based public transport. (And even if they don’t want them, that’s what they should have in the interests of sustaining their environment.)

**Mega Myth 8 : The urban implosion model will remain appropriate and applicable throughout the +/- thirty remaining years within which city’s original population will double.** The effects accumulated since implosion was first applied through the original (1994) Auckland Regional Policy Statement are not significant (and especially not massively distortional and detrimental) and accelerating; rather they are indicative of the plan’s effectiveness. The current progressive financial failure is the fault of American bankers’ greed and corruption.

**Mega Myth 9 :** By enforcing urban implosion, and substituting public transport for automobility, **Auckland will be fulfilling it’s moral obligation to save the planet from unsustainability.** If everyone else does likewise, the planet will be saved (sustained) (*And if they don’t, as least we will go down knowing we did “the right thing”*)

### A3 : FACTS AND REALITIES NEGATING THE MYTHS AND FANCIES

**Super Fancy 1 :** In an era of socio-economic and (especially) technological complexity, dynamism, progressivity & volatility **it is sensible to plan** urban development and land use both physically and functionally for the “long-term” (originally about 50 yrs, during which the population will about double)

**Reality :** *Over the next 30 to 50 years, current beliefs, perceptions, values, resources, technologies, populations, demographics etc can be expected to change radically and unpredictably even without the likes of major “black swan” events (galactic, solar, tectonic, geo-political, pandemic etc), ensuring any Plan will quickly lose it’s validity*

**Note 1 :** *This does not reduce the value of planning, whether for land use or infrastructure, only it’s nature, useful life and characteristics. Land use changes occur every day; major land uses can become redundant well within 15 yrs ; housing lasts in form or use from 15 to 150 years, but infrastructures (especially road networks) are there for keeps. To be useful rather than restrictive, long-term planning should seek to retain all conceivable options for land development and use, not close them out with definitive intentions for size, form, and interconnectivities pre-deter-mined by the “needs” of a fixed rail transit structure or any preconceived pattern of land use development. Decisions must be made for short-term infrastructure development within a framework of options developed (and kept open) for the mid-term. It is not sensible to take all decision-making away from future generations by prematurely imposing on them a definitive long-term Plan conceivable and conceived in today’s circumstances alone.*

**Note 2 :** *Interconnectivity of infrastructures however should not rely solely on random unitary ad-hoc additions, as occurs today in the wide-spread ABSENCE of competent – if any - planning for civil services, especially road network development.*

**Super Fancy 2 : Governments** (including Local Governments) **are appropriate agencies** to go well beyond discerning and satisfying a society’s current real, underlying wants & needs to plan centrally for future societies’ wants & needs, values, morals, economies, technologies, populations, demographics etc (including determining preferences between options like densification v.expansion, transitisation v.automobilisation.

**Reality :** *Today, special interest groups unified by collectivised ideologies - including all government departments , NGOs, commercial-interest groups, belief- and ideology-based interest groups and Council planning machines - have intruded into the space between governors and the governed, supplanting the latter as the primary sponsor of “public interest” legislation. Governments buy block votes. Naturally, group interests and the power to impose them then displace the government’s primary function, which once was to enable and protect the public’s primary interests in (internal &external) “peace & (comparative) prosperity” as primary justification for the society-government contract*

**Super Fancy 3 ; “Integrated planning” of all aspects of land development and use by a single centralised planning agency is necessary and constructive,** and can achieve better outcomes overall than “the free market”

**Reality (i)** *This simple presumption was proven wrong by the economic failure of USSR, and is being proven wrong again by the impending failure of the Western world who are following in USSR’s wake with ever-bigger governments increasingly restricting the ever-smaller (private sector opportunity, motivation and initiative) geese struggling ever-harder to lay ever-less golden eggs. Nobel Economist Freidrich Hayek anticipated “the road to serfdom” of the whole (factually- and affordability-) unconstrained central planning process in his 1944 book of the same name. But such a perspective can not be sold to those enthused with the power to centrally plan (effectively) the whole socio-economy. .*

**Reality (ii) :** *“Integrated planning” is code for “planning and control (by the AE-PC) of all aspects of urban develop-ment and land use in support of urban implosion. Such implosion is to be compelled by MULs and structured by a cyclic argument requiring the mutual support of densification along transit routes and a rail-based transit system. The latter has the additional benefit of (presumed, - incorrectly) displacing road use, thus obviating any need for any more roads AND the associated inconvenient fact-obsessed, nit-picking, cost-counting and evaluating engineers and economists).*

**Super Fancy 4 : An (effective) coalition** of visionaries and idealism-driven Special Interest Groups (SIGs) **is an appropriately representative group of interests to determine** (in effect if not intent) : the nature of urban society (goals, attitudes, moralities, lifestyles), it’s dispositional development (how owners are required to use/mis-use their land), it’s functionality (relative inter-accessibilities, time-costs and cross-subsidisations thereof), and it’s productive efficiency (previously subject to and assured by (relatively) free market choices), thus it’s socio-economy

**Reality:** It isn't.. Yet, western world-wide, the AE-PC <sup>1</sup> coalition has united under the umbrella provided by traditional Town Planning <sup>2</sup>, expanding its role and reach to encompass, command and control every facet of land development (previously market demand-responsive) and use (previously free, ie "enabled") which can be conceivably be construed to be an "integral" part of "sustainable development". The AE-PC effectively redefines that term to include all parts of the "designer city beautiful", their deliberate creation of which they believe will be testament (and monument) to :

(i) their aesthetic virtuosity,  
(ii) their supplanting of the market (choice) economy with centrally planning and control,  
(iii) society's respect for (what the AE-PC defines as) "environmental sustainability" above free choice of purely material things (such as standard of living, an affordable home of our own, optimum urban inter-accessibility (ie automobility) and choice of lifestyle). Sustainability is also essential for attracting the smart artist set, the "vibrancy" of which attracts big spending tourists, rendering the city "liveable" and "top ten" (?).

**Super fancy 5 : Environmental protections and the "sustainability" of development** (as adjudged subjectively by the AE-PC) **are more important than human wants and needs.** Therefore, any detrimental effects (and costs) back on society and its economy deriving from the AE-PC's (wholly subjective) judgements on what is "sustainable development" need not be addressed, far less quantified. Alternatively, any such effects and associated costs can and will be overcome by the public adjusting to meet planning and regulatory requirements before any significant costs and effects develop. In either case, RMA S.32 requirements can be (effectively) ignored.

**Reality:** *The Chinese concept of the essentially balanced complementarity of Yin (eg progress) and Yang (eg stasis) applies to all forms and aspects of life and its environment. In the context of "vibrant" (successfully viable) cities, progress must occur (or the urban socio-economy will perish), and the environment must change sustainably for humans (or it will cease to succour humanity). Thus a balance must be everywhere struck between economic development AND mitigation of its environmental effects. This can not occur when absolutist environmental stasis is used as a tool to preclude progress, stalling the economy (as is evidently occurring today throughout the western world).*

**Note :** *The environment has always been in a state of change, both physically and ecologically, creating "vacant niches" for existing species to flourish in, or for new species. Species over-growths have always created natural reactions towards a re-balancing, and species have always come and gone, being replaced with better-adapted forms of life. Doubtless humanity will continue to face challenges to its success, mostly from wholly-unexpected quarters. Environmental change, whether ecological or physical, is natural, resulting from planetary and biospherical evolution..*

**Quote :** "As long as (the Ministry of) Works existed, the Ministry for the Environment would never have control" ... Cath Wallace, ECO Chair & VUW Lecturer in Environmental Economics & Public Policy, quoted in "Values As Law – the History and Efficacy of the RMA" by David Young, Policy Advisory Unit VUW (2001)

**Super Fancy 6 :** Environmentally, the ("brownfield") "**urban footprint**" is irretrievably compromised, and can be densified without regard for : (i) ratepayer values as expressed in current lifestyles, attitudes, neighbourhoods and heritage areas, or (ii) urban ecologies resident in private gardens and wildernesses. In contrast, the (mostly highly-modified but "green field") ecologies and aesthetic qualities of **peri-urban farmlands warrant protection** from developmental effects. ("Sustainable development" is the "integration" of these two AE-PC value-judgements)

**Reality:** *The AE-PC promoted its own empowerment to engage in "integrated planning" in response to (i) the RMA's S.5-intended "enablement of people and communities" (including private companies) to make their own decisions on land development and use subject only to "environmental bottom lines", and (ii) the RMA's S.30 call for the "integrated management" (not command and control styled development planning) of the region's "natural and physical resources"*

**Quote :** "Environmental things are really a constraint on economic development.; they are not something that should be balanced but they should constrain economic development" ... Guy Salmon, Exec. Dir. Ecologic, quoted in "Values As Law – the History and Efficacy of the RMA" by David Young

**Super Fancy 7 :** (Consequence of Super Fancies 4 and 5) **Any future increase in human wants and needs**, especially those involving "rights" in development and use of land, **must therefore be contained within the MUL-delimited "urban footprint"** and constrained to support the reverse-engineering (ie wholesale reconstruction) of what has become an excessively automobilised and decentralised city <sup>3</sup>. The aim is to create a "designer city", built around a re-centralising rail-based public transport system reliant for patronage on densification and travel performance which, after sufficient and appropriate funding, will attract people out of cars, resolving congestion.

<sup>1</sup> This coalition is an Absolutist (single-minded) Enviro-Planning Complex (AE-PC) analogous to USA's "Military-Industrial Complex"

<sup>2</sup> In NZ when the old TCP Act was replaced by the (ostensibly) "more market" RMA, our town planners happily adopted "green justifications" and the "resource (mis-)manager" label while continuing the same old architect-driven town planning construct known today as "smart (sic!) growth" or Urban Implosion. This directly opposes market-driven developments and land uses which naturally "sustain" the socio-economy.

<sup>3</sup> This has occurred not because traffic engineers diverted transit-generated profits into roads, and civil engineers promoted subdivisions, but for very good "user pays" reasons driven by personal and family wants and needs, values, affordabilities, and productive efficiencies.

**Reality :** Major social and economic forces drive urban expansion as the most affordable (least cost), choice-laden and resource-conserving (ie “natural”) way of accommodating an increase in urban population. Forcibly reversing such personal preferences detrimentally restricts personal developmental and use initiatives, thus motivation and wealth production, driving up costs & prices (reducing affordability), and mortgages & bank debt (reducing savings). This costs Auckland \$4 to \$6 billion annually in reduced net \$wealth creation <sup>4</sup>. Council does not accept it has such detrimental effects on the private (wealth-creating) sector, which is why it doesn't have an independent department undertaking the socio-economic evaluations required under RMA S.32. Instead, it's predecessor's (ARC's) staff promoted their provision of a LTCCP (now spatial plan) under the LGA 2002 revision to circumvent RMA S.32.

**Super Fancy 8 : Urban implosion is “evidence-based” to achieve all of the objectives as well as ensuring “the environment” is sustained.** Achievable objectives include (i) any development or use will be sustainable (ii) material resources including energy will be conserved, (iii) “The environment” will be cleansed of human rubbish, (iv) “inter-generational equity” will be achieved.

**Realities :** (i) Twenty years after “sustainable management” was made law, there remains no clear consensus amongst the lay public – or even amongst specialist professionals – as to just what it means, except as a permit for the AE-PC to judge what development or use will deliver an acceptably “sustainable environment” (whatever that might be). Indeed, while “sustainable management” has obviously meaning for un-owned biological resources such as forests, fisheries and groundwaters capable of being stripped, the nature of human life dictates that it can have no sensible meaning for a city if it doesn't involve sustaining it's society and economy, and their potential for growth & improvement.

(ii) Given the Brundland and all other definitions' wholesale inadequacy as a basis for rational decision-making and complete reliance of subjective opinion, the RMA effectively assigns sole responsibility to planners to determine meanings for “sustainability”, “sustainable management” and “sustainable development” by applying “good planning practice” – an equally elusive concept. which appears to rely on the AE-PC's collectivised, subjective and pre-determined opinions, necessarily coloured by their own collective predilections.

(iii) Imploding new development down on existing development is unnecessarily destructive of real human values and massively wasteful of resources, especially capital and energy – see MegaMyth 2.

(iv) Free-choice, betterment-seeking humans continue creating the same “rubbish” as before, except that they will find easier, better, faster, cheaper, less impactful ways of doing so, or will find easier, better, faster, cheaper, less impactful “resources” to create “rubbish” from <sup>5</sup>. That is the very nature of growth & progress.

(v) The artificial scarcity of land caused by MULs, together with a compounding of AE-PC-imposed processes, delays, uncertainties, cost-impositions, gold-plating requirements, charges, fees, “mitigations”, “contributions” and consultations now required for land development (coupled with inflation and the capital gains it enables) have conspired to deliver an average of around \$250,000 unearned capital gains to all those fortunate to own Auckland houses over the last 40 yrs. Such gains translate into a debt imposed on the next generation for the same amount. Planned (re-)centralisation attempts to reverse the ongoing decentralisation of land uses and value which improves both equity and accessibility, while distributing traffic more equally over the whole city, reducing congestion. So much for inter-generational equity !!!

**Super Fancy 9:** The Planning process is “evidence-based”, rational and objective. **The Plan's stated objectives reflect what the public should want and need** (rather than what it does want and need), and have all been shown to be all achievable with the plan

**Reality :** There is only one game in town; that of the AE-PC. Having responded to the public's desire for protection from change (but full access to the benefits it brings if applied elsewhere) for over 40 years, first by “stopping sprawl” then developing an easily-assimilable “vision” of a “designer city / city beautiful” as the one escape route to a “sustainable” future as driven by various enviro-alarms, compulsions and sloganised “solutions”, it is not about to allow itself to be de-railed by any competition for ideas. To that end, it ensures promotion of acolytes and supportive consultants, listening only to those with supporting data sets, analyses and conclusions. The rational and objective information available these past 50 years from sources within infrastructural engineering and market-oriented economics is routinely ignored in favour of the supportive sources (eg API, APTA, UKPI, IPCC, sundry town planners, chemists etc selling “transport consultancy” and “policy advisory” services). Such supporters now comprise an extensive industry dependent for it's succour on continued empowerment of – and employment by - the AE-PC.

<sup>4</sup> For a listing of major cost elements, refer p4 of “Auckland Congestion : Can We Fix It?” essay attached. This essay was published in two parts in IPENZ Transportation Group's “Roundabout” journal and in Dialogue journal Feb 2009 (?). The component costings have been assembled by CUTS from a wide variety of sources based on long experience in relevant sectors of planning, civil design and costing. Those in doubt should check out the costings and cost/benefit assessments provided by (ARC then) Council for it's “evidence-based” Plan.

<sup>5</sup> For example, “rubbish” created by car manufacture and use compares favourably with that created by the previously-dominant (and far less efficient) form of auto-mobility and commerce – the horse. Doubtless cars will continue to get cheaper (less resource-consuming) and better in every respect far faster than the city can be reconstructed around a far less efficient, resource consumptive transit system.

**Super Fancy 10** : In particular, urban implosion accelerates re-construction of existing commercial areas and suburbs, providing much more scope for “designer city” vision-driven “**urban designers**”<sup>6 7</sup> to apply the principles of “**New Urbanism**” (*aesthetics/architecture-based, “quality-assuring”, centrally planned, re-centralising, car-free*) to improve the “**liveability**” of the “**urban environment**”. Façade-and sign-controls, cafes and car-free streets from “main street” do-overs, are instrumental in attracting the arts and artistes necessary for urban “**vibrancy**”.

**Super Fancy 11** : **The public has “consented”** – or will consent – to The Plan through consultation processes which are adequate because : they take time, they are repeated at every step of the way, they include for special interest such as the “stakeholder” groups regularly invited to contribute submissions, they are cumbersome, time-consuming and expensive and therefore presumed to be effective, and they are organised, overseen and summarised for Councillor consumption by planners who are (*necessarily... but really?*) competent and impartial

**Reality** : *Any plan constraining human activities devised for and signed off by any previous government or council, and thus held to be still relevant by it's fabricators, imposes almost irresistible pressures on new MPs or Councillors to “go with the flow” rather than presume to “kick against the pricks”. The public's wants, needs, abilities, affordabilities, available technologies etc may well have all changed, and substantially so, but any consultation process is doomed to confirm past Plans which are inevitably of diminishing relevance. Since the Plan is absolutist and uni-directional, requiring the full and on-going commitment of it's proponent AE-PC, that proponent become incapable of revising their own Plan, regardless of new evidence. The only way out then becomes re-organisation or revolution*

**Mega Myth 1** : **Reconstructing the city within a MUL straight-jacket is necessary and desirable as it will :**

- (a) Reduce Council's servicing costs, ie enable allocation of funds to social services without raising rates, and without imposing any significant costs on the private sector, far less costs greatly exceeding any Council savings
- (b) Effectively prevent otherwise “catastrophic, runaway” global overheating AND urban immobilisation from imminent oil exhaustion by replacing auto-mobility with a rail-based transit system, without detrimentally affecting choice of destination, convenience, efficiency of city-wide (market) inter-accessibility, and affordability (refer 3)
- (c) Preserve our ability to feed ourselves (and, in future, a starving world dependent on us for food).
- (d) Protect the (highly modified) ecology and visual amenity residing in “our (current) rural environment”, with favourable outcomes more than significantly offsetting any detrimental effects on intra-urban ecologies, greeneries & amenities, and without causing significantly detrimental effects on residential living space, privacy, lifestyles, housing affordability, automobility, interaccessibility, urban productive efficiency, and gross & net wealth production

**Realities** : (a) *Even if densification reduced overall servicing costs to the public (which it doesn't), the extra costs imposed on current owners, land developers, builders and suppliers to comply with Council requirements vastly exceed any conceivable savings accruing to Council. Eg, services cost only +/- 10% of new subdivisional housing, which in turn is only half the cost of (equivalent floorspace) concrete apartment construction on brownlands, mainly because of the much higher energy content. Alternatively apartment floorspace is halved to achieve equivalent cost. Also, per capita wastes (and high costs of Council removal and treatment) are almost identical for urban, suburban, peri-urban and rural living, but servicing costs can be deferred by substituting rainwater tanks, chemical toilets, natural soakage, gravel roads & driveways, minimal if any earthworks, pole foundations, fences & landscape later.*

(b) *Car use contributes negligibly to rising CO2 levels, GNS reports that NZ has extensive gas potential quite apart from +/-1000 years of known coal reserves and plenty of oil awaiting “discovery” (over 70% of earth surface + 98% of oceans unprospected); VW Volt travels 224 miles/gal, oil price bubble reflects incorrect market presumptions and high cost of capital (and uncertainty) delaying new refineries and pipelines; any real decline in oil supplies will affect whole economies not just the 15% used in all transport, many other sources of both energy and vehicular fuels are*

<sup>6</sup> This new “urban design” industry is, in effect, a pre-set style of centralised urban architecture applied city-wide to all forms of new development and use. It usurps a developer's own market-serving choices in terms of standards and qualities thus costs of design and construction, which previously enabled him to address his careful perception of market opportunities, ie real human wants and needs – and affordabilities. It was promoted by the AE-PC to add substance to its claims for implosion to create “liveable cities”, and led to the superposition of aesthetics over functionality and affordability. Since affordability is NOT a consideration, development has (naturally!) become unaffordable for too many.

<sup>7</sup> The new “urban design” industry (a) feeds off a ratepayer funded budget for beautification of streetscapes and public places (necessarily involving car-removal), (ii) “advises on” the compulsory adjustment of any proposed private development or change of use to ensure it's architecture conforms with “Council's” predilections, and (iii) has become the instrument for requiring developers and use-changers to satisfy the NIMBYs and BANANAs served up by the consultative process by providing the “mitigatory” (buy-off) freebies to contribute Plan-promised “vibrancy”. (Small wonder that developers are leaving Auckland for retirement, for bankruptcy, for jail or for Oz, rendering their builders, suppliers, and associated trades and professions under-employed. The AEPC is killing the initiative goose which once laid the golden eggs.)

known but more costly than oil (which flows out of the ground in Saudi Arabia for 6c per litre; taxes can exceed 70% of end price), 95% of vehicular trips are better served by automobility than transit, so most people would resort to using smaller, less consumptive vehicles rather than use transit, it can be shown that on average day-long, transit can access less than 1/20 the destinations accessible by car in the same time-frame; the Indian Tata vehicle selling for less than \$4000 is the harbinger of spring for developing countries, etc etc etc.

(c) Food is everywhere abundant or creatable, even in deserts for hardy peoples. Water is plentiful in New Zealand. 1842 sections were sized at ¼ acre as a family could subsist on it. 1842's 22 yard (one chain) road reserves are still adequate in today's mega-cities except for the 2% of urban land required for motorways and expressways (compare 70% for densification!!).

### **Mega Myth 2 : Densification is necessary and desirable :**

- (a) to reduce travel distance, thus to avoid running out of energy or oil, which would render something or other (the planet? a crucial ecology? the city? current lifestyles?) "unsustainable", thus unacceptable
- (b) to preserve peri-urban farmland to feed a future starving world.
- (c) to protect peri-urban greenery and farmland ecologies
- (d) to reduce dependence on foreign suppliers and the foreign exchange it requires.

**Realities :** (a) Without increases in arterial roads space, densification (with no offsetting urban expansion) increases congestion, reducing inter-accessibility between (thus choice of) co-operating land uses within previous travel times, or increasing travel times to achieve previous inter-accessibilities. Stop-start travel on congested arterials uses up to twice the fuel required (and produces twice the emissions) for uncongested travel, and up to four times the fuel per vehicle-kilometres needed for steady 70kph travel on expressways. Congestion reduces travel certainties and requires uneconomic lags to be built in to journey times to ensure "in time" and especially "just-in-time" arrivals. Worst of all, congestion and increased travel times wastes our primary resource, productive human time.

(b) A residential lot supports +/- \$600 p.a. profit when farmed, or +/- \$55,000 p.a. urban productivity. Urban areas occupy only 1.5% of NZ's area. The world is capable of producing food far more efficiently than it does; - quarter acre sections were sized in 1840 to alone "sustain" a household. Farming is capable of substantial intensification.

(c) Densification destroys urban greenery and ecologies. Farmland ecologies are already highly modified. Nature is dynamic in response to major solar, galactic, tectonic, volcanic etc effects and is forever constantly renewing itself, whatever species are currently dominant.. All life forms live off and thereby transform their environments; one's waste is another's succour; life IS the filling of vacant niches caused by enviro-change.

(d) In fact, urban reconstruction considerably increases the energy required for construction of, and habitation in, densified areas, quite apart from the reduced energy-efficiency per person-km delivered, DAY-LONG, deriving from increased use of (especially rail) transit. (The AE-PC relies for its energy-saving claims on European data sources where population is ten times that of "new world" (low density auto-mobilised) cities,

### **Mega Myth 3 : In any case, people prefer living in a consolidating/consolidated city Realities yet to be added**

**Mega Myth 4 : Public transportisation is necessary and desirable :** to reduce both energy consumption to sustainable levels, and the resulting emissions which are both toxic to humans and contribute substantially to potentially-catastrophic global over-heating. Provided a full and "proper" transit system is developed, it will attract people out of their cars in sufficient numbers to reduce congestion.

**Mega Myth 5 : It is not necessary to plan for road network development, or even to seek it.** Why build roads, they only fill up with automobiles. From Mega Myth 4, automobility should be discouraged to stabilise the climate and protect the environment from unsustainable change. In any case, there is no room for any more roads.

**Mega Myth 6 : Subdivisional development, automobility and roads are heavily subsidised** compared with apartment blocks and public transport, and are therefore (comparably) uneconomic.

**Mega Myth 7 : The implosion mode of urban (re-)development has already been approved**, having been extensively consulted upon, and approved by the public's representatives in former Councils. It is therefore the appropriate determinant for decisions on current development and resource use applications. Consultation processes will continue to demonstrate how much the people want and need apartment dwelling and rail-based public transport. (And even if they don't want them, that's what they should have in the interests of sustaining their environment.)

**Mega Myth 8 : The urban implosion model will remain appropriate and applicable throughout the +/- thirty remaining years within which city's original population will double.** The effects accumulated since implosion was first applied through the original (1994) Auckland Regional Policy Statement are not significant (and especially not massively distortional and detrimental) and accelerating; rather they are indicative of the plan's effectiveness. The current progressive financial failure is the fault of American bankers' greed and corruption.

**Mega Myth 9 :** By enforcing urban implosion, and substituting public transport for automobility, **Auckland will be fulfilling it's moral obligation to save the planet from unsustainability.** If everyone else does likewise, the planet will be saved (sustained). (And if they don't, as least we will go down knowing we did "the right thing" - ???)

The AR-PS also demonstrably have no knowledge of, or concern for, the effects of their planning back on the ability to undertake private development and the costs thereof, commerce, productivity and living standards, or respect for the requirement of RMA S.32 "to consider (all significant, not just Council-budgeted) alternatives, and assess benefits, costs etc before adopting any objective, policy or rule or other method". Consequently, environmental & aesthetic ideals become ubiquitous high jump barriers for any development proposal or use "not conforming" with Plan requirements, displacing the RMA's intended "enablement of (the social and economic aspirations of the) people and communities" (including companies), supposedly subject only to "environmental bottom lines".