

ISSUES

Urban Environment Effects provides a policy framework for managing the effects of urban growth, urban design and development. It is the most extensive topic in the District plan and primarily contained in chapter 6. The provisions divide into two groups: (i) district-wide urban objectives and policies, and (ii) settlement specific policies. This first summary addresses the general district-wide urban objectives. The second summary addresses the settlement policies.

General Urban Development Outcomes

The results are positive, with evidence that intended outcomes for urban environment effects largely are being achieved - or are ‘on-track’ for achievement.

The rolling review of the TRMP has resulted in these provisions being subject to a large number of integrated urban development plan changes designed to accommodate growth in the district’s larger settlements (Richmond, Motueka, Mapua/Ruby, Brightwater and Wakefield). The plan changes have adopted an integrated approach to key urban issues like providing additional land for residential and business growth, infrastructure provision, reserve networks and coastal protection. These changes also introduced the opportunity for greater residential density and housing choice in some locations.

Growth planning for urban development has been managed in combination with other Council plans and processes like the Long Term Plan. The integration of infrastructure servicing with land tagged for growth using the ‘Deferred zone’ method has been successful albeit with some significant delays for infrastructure provision in some locations such as Richmond South, Mapua and parts of Motueka.

The fast rate of growth is pressurising Council’s capacity to roll out serviced land. Other consequences of this fast growth include urbanisation of the rural areas; out-of-zone residential and business development; and the increasing unaffordability of housing.

The fast rate of growth also affects issues of specific interest to Māori such as pressure on precincts and sites of special significance and increased pressure on urban waterways.

Residential Development Outcomes

Residential development outcomes largely reflect the Residential zone ‘Permitted and Controlled rule framework’ and the intended minimum lot sizes. However, there has been limited higher density development and diversification within locations anticipated for that purpose. This indicates that the Plan provisions that ‘enable’ medium density housing in such locations may not be as effective as they could be, and that existing residential land could be used more efficiently (such as in Richmond South Development Area (RSDA) and Richmond West Development Area (RWDA)). Recently, in 2019, policy was amended to both ‘enable and encourage’ medium density development. For Richmond Intensive Development Area (RIDA), all recent redevelopment applications show a trend toward higher densities, indicating that Plan objectives may be met in time.

Residential character objectives have been partially achieved, largely where the policies define particular aspirations for a settlement and the rules then regulate for that outcome – e.g. St Arnaud. However, for most of the settlements, there is little differentiation in the rules for different settlements, meaning it is difficult to achieve distinct character and amenity outcomes. Looking forward, it will be important to work with the communities in our settlements to determine settlement priorities for urban design and development, i.e. how communities want them to look and feel.

Commercial and Industrial Development Outcomes

The TRMP has enabled a wide range of commercial and industrial activities to occur in suitably zoned locations. The collective grouping of activities with similar effects within industrial and commercial zones has reduced the opportunity for cross-boundary effects. Ongoing issues with noise and odour usually result from historic or ‘out of zone’ development.

Despite the loss of 50ha business land in a strategically located ‘consolidated regional business park’ in Richmond West (resulting from Special Housing Area decisions made under Housing Accords and Special Housing Areas Act) recent assessments conclude that the region has enough business land to meet future demand provided the existing land is used efficiently. However a strategic assessment of the location and suitability of this land is required.

Coastal Urban Development

Generally, the objective is being achieved in that new urban development is being contained or directed away from land in the coastal environment, other than established settlements such as Motueka and Richmond. Possibly this is for reasons relating to coastal hazard rather than protection of natural coastal character.

Looking forward, the provisions need updating and refining in response to changes in context such as increasing coastal hazard.

Inefficiencies and Gaps

There is a high degree of repetition of policy content across these provisions (and other parts of the Plan). This is due to rolling Plan changes combined with the scope of the urban development general objectives, which results in a duplication of policies under both the general and settlement specific sections. Consolidation is recommended.

Identified gaps include updating the content to give effect to the NPS on Urban Development Capacity (or the Proposed NPS on Urban Development), the NZ Coastal Policy Statement and a lack of strategic direction for the provision of business land in some locations.

The Plan lacks a commercial centre hierarchy that also takes into account the influence of Nelson City. This would be helpful for the District's larger settlements in that it would reduce the risk of inappropriate development compromising planned future growth outcomes and better coordinate infrastructure roll-out.

MANDATORY STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

The National Policy Statement on Urban Development Capacity (NPS-UDC), 2016 and Proposals for a National Policy Statement on Urban Development (NPS-UD), 2019.

The NPS-UDC directs local authorities to provide sufficient development capacity in their resource management plans, supported by infrastructure, to meet demand for housing and business space. It contains objectives and policies that local authorities must give effect to in their resource management decisions.

Council currently is addressing the requirements of this NPS but TRMP Chapter 6 requires updating to give effect to the NPS requirements in the TRMP.

RECOMMENDATIONS

High Level Directions of Change

General Urban Development

Urban land supply to align with FDS Strategy and roll out in conjunction with Council funding and infrastructure programmes.

Update planning for 19 settlements focusing on smaller rural settlements - as some not reviewed for over 20 years and others only from growth perspective.

Business Development

Ensure business land, including industrial land, is provided in right locations to support regional economic development over the next 30 years.

Residential Development

Simplify standards and approval processes for housing:

- this may include allowing for increased density and reducing parking standards, but retaining bulk, location and amenity standards.

Enable more affordable housing options by:

- encouraging a greater variety of housing types (e.g. permit two dwellings/housekeeping units per site in specified urban areas)

- encouraging/requiring (?) higher density in identified locations
- enable more subdivision in existing or 'new' unserved rural residential zones.

Apply stronger requirements for good quality urban design where housing intensification enabled:

- including linking development to Council plans for reserves and infrastructure.

Recommendations

General

1. Reduce duplication between district-wide and settlement-specific policies.
2. Update content to give effect to NPS – UD/C and include provisions that address residential development.

Sustainable Urban Design and Development

3. Review and update the Urban Design Guide and consider options for its wider application and for the more consistent use of Urban Design Panel.
4. Introduce policies relating to older person and affordable housing.
5. Introduce policy for Papakainga development in urban areas to support the existing rule framework for such development in the Residential zone.

Land Effects from Urban Growth

6. Retain policies relating to avoiding the loss of productive land to urban development and to cross-boundary and reverse-sensitivity effects. In addition, refine plan methods relating to buffering through zoning, specific area and setback rules.
7. Enable and encourage more effective and efficient use of existing urban land and infrastructure by: (i) Streamlining the three TRMP forms for medium density housing into one (in line with National Planning Standard requirements); (ii) Reviewing minimum lot sizes for the Residential zone across the district with the aim of enabling denser development; (iii) Requiring rather than encouraging or enabling intensive housing in specified locations; (iv) Permitting more than one dwelling on sites subject to certain conditions; (v) Extending locations in and across urban settlements where intensive development is specifically enabled and encouraged; (vi) Monitoring whether methods used in PC66 - RIDA to encourage intensive development by reducing cost and uncertainty are assisting to achieve Plan objectives more effectively.

Urban Infrastructure Services

8. Retain mechanisms for deferring the zoned end use of land for services but improve collaborative planning within Council, specifically with Engineering Services, to help reduce the timeframe and extent of deferred zones.

Coastal Urban Development

9. Update provisions for containing new settlement in the coastal environment by: (i) Reviewing extent of coastal environment area to exclude locations and minor building activities that do not affect the coastal environment; acknowledging the New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement, 2010 and new approaches to coastal hazard management.

Land for Industrial and Commercial Activities

10. Provide for a business or town centre hierarchy for the District that accounts for Nelson.
11. Update plan provisions relating to suitable land for industrial activities to account for the requirements of the NPS-UDC and changes to Richmond West regional business park. Also review suitability of business land identified by FDS for future business development with a strategic perspective due to issues relating to densification and sub-optimal location of some of the land.
12. Introduce policy that discourages out of zone business development in urban areas to better support the discretionary level consent status for such activity in the Residential zone.

13. Introduce policy for home occupations in urban areas to support the existing rule framework for home occupations in the Residential zone.

Settlement Character and Design

14. Rationalise the chapter so that all settlement policies are located within the settlement area provisions and the general objectives 6.1 - 6.7 contain only general policies.
15. Consult with communities to develop objectives for each settlement with aligned policies that better reflect and support the 'distinctive' character of the settlement.
16. Address policy gaps (design of settlement gateways, natural and built character values).
17. Introduce policy to help protect and manage the use of locations with significant heritage, cultural and natural values under pressure from tourism such as the coastal environment between Motueka and Marahau.
18. Develop new policy that acknowledges the impact of the Tasman Great Taste Trail and supports the provision of small-scale guest accommodation, attractions and commercial opportunities (with appropriate limits) along the trail.