

Committee report for 2021 Annual General Meeting Held online, 7 pm 9 May 2022

It has been another purposeful year for the committee of the Grey Lynn Residents' Association, complicated by Covid, lockdowns and its impact on our families and businesses. The pandemic and lack of availability of key members has delayed our Annual Meeting until May 2022. This report covers activities for 2021.

Planning issues

These have continued to loom large.

Resource Management (Enabling Housing Supply and Other Matters) Amendment Bill

We submitted in opposition to the above bill in late 2021. It was part of a push by central government to increase housing supply and required Auckland Council to amend its Unitary Plan.

This bill brought forward the implementation of the National Policy Statement on Urban Design (NPS-UD) of 2020 and also introduces new medium density residential standards (MDRS). Together the NPS-US and Resource Management (Enabling Housing Supply and Other Matters) Amendment Bill required councils in New Zealand's larger urban areas to change the zoning in their plans to allow six-storey apartment buildings close to urban centres, and three houses, three storeys high, on other residential sites, unless there were compelling reasons not to (known as qualifying matters - these are quite limited).

The GLRA has always supported housing intensification in appropriate places, but we felt that this bill threatened to destroy the heritage character of our neighbourhood, something that is valued highly by our residents. The ad hoc intensification that the bill proposed promised to have a serious negative effect on the integrity of our much-valued special character streetscapes.

We opposed the bill and noted in our submission that:

- The bill was unnecessary as there is already an abundant supply of land zoned for medium and high density housing which is yet to be developed in this way, and there is now clear evidence that building on this land is accelerating in pace. In the year to September 2021 the number of new homes consented in Auckland rose to a record high of 19,886, a 29% increase on the previous year and accounting for around a third of all new-home consents in the country. The number of houses consented nationally per 1000 people in September 2021 reached 9.3, the highest number since 1977.

- Not only was the bill not needed, we argued, but the effect on Special Character areas could also be devastating. Auckland has the largest collection of late nineteenth and early twentieth century timber dwellings in the world. They are a valuable, tangible link to our city's history and have been carefully preserved for decades through Auckland's District plans and now through the Auckland Unitary Plan, but the legislation threatens all of this.

At the time that time that submissions were invited on the bill, Auckland Council was reassessing special character dwellings individually and giving them a high, medium or low-value rating. Council intended to only keep the high value ones and they proposed exempting them from the requirements of the legislation as a qualifying matter.

It wasn't clear how this would play out and we feared that if some houses in a street retained the special character overlay and others did not, the integrity of the streetscape could be destroyed by developers building imposing three-storey, multiple dwelling developments amongst special character homes where currently any new development is required to sit quietly amongst its neighbours.

In the end the bill passed on December 20 2021 with some amendments to height and setback, and since then, as it is required to do, Auckland Council has recently released its Preliminary Response Maps which are open for feedback until 9 May. The maps show a massive upzoning across Auckland and a significant decrease in the areas covered by the Special Character overlay. Fortunately in Grey Lynn all the areas that had been covered by the Special Character overlay have retained it in the Preliminary Response maps.

We will be submitting feedback applauding the Auckland Council for retaining the Special Character overlay in Grey Lynn and Arch Hill but we remain concerned about the devastating effect that the new Mixed House Urban zoning will have on other parts of Grey Lynn which exhibit the same high quality heritage streetscapes that are found in the Special Character overlay areas.

Since our very first submission on the Draft Unitary Plan in 2013 we have repeatedly asked that the areas of Grey Lynn not currently covered by the Special Character overlay be assessed for inclusion. To date this has not occurred.

We are also concerned about the lack of infrastructure for the massive increase in population that the Preliminary Response maps show. For example, our schools are all on confined sites that simply won't cope with as massive rise in rolls and with no spare land to build new schools on, it's hard to see how enough school accommodation can be provided.

We will soon be meeting with four other inner-west residents' associations to discuss our feedback to the Auckland Council's preliminary response by the May 9 deadline.

Environment

In July we held a meeting of interested locals to share information about the transformation of the Hakanoa and Wellpark reserves, so that other local groups could be inspired to come together to 'adopt' and improve their local parks and reserves and carry out weed and animal pest control.

Following the meeting, GLRA members Jo Hurst and Nicola Legat, with the support of members of the Hakanoa Reserve group, established Friends of Grey Lynn Park. Through a series of working bees this group has transformed the Rose Road Gully from a weed-infested wasteland into an area which can now be rehabilitated into a thriving and important ecosystem. It is working with another local resident to persuade Council to create more 'no-mow' areas in the park.

Other local issues

- We submitted to oppose the sale of the small reserve in Cooper Street by Panuku. A decision on the disposal of this land is pending.
- WLB member Alex Bonham shares resource consent applications with us on a regular basis so that we can flag any concerns. We very much appreciate being able to have this input.
- We agreed to be part of wider grouping of inner-city residents associations along with the Freemans Bay, St Mary's Bay, Herne Bay and Western Bays associations. Together we can all draw on many years of experience at the coal face on key planning issues and our strong voice is an expert one.

Committee members

During the year we accepted with sadness the resignations of Rachel Brown and our longtime secretary and former treasurer Jamie Hosking, to whom we owe a huge debt of gratitude.

Local resident Paul Shortland has continued to act as our treasurer and also as our representative on the Western Isthmus Stormwater and Wastewater Upgrades Community Liaison Group, the working group formed by Watercare to provide resident input on the Western Interceptor project. We are very grateful to Paul.

Graeme Burgess has continued to lend his expert support and advice on heritage and planning matters.

Great North Road Community-led Vision Project

Work by David Batten and Brandon Wilcox has continued on this ambitious and important project.

In March 2021 they presented the completed Great North Road Community-led Vision to Waitemata Local Board, the funder and recipient of the plan, which was positively received and accompanied by coverage in *Ponsonby News*, on *RNZ*, and *Greater Auckland* transport blog and social media.

- The Grey Lynn Business Association (aka Grey Lynn & Around) has given us its full support and hosted very successful business meetings at Ozone and Liz Mitchell, where we and AT were able to present and answer questions. We have since jointly attended and spoken at a number of meetings hosted by AT.
- We have had the services of four different engagement team members since March last year. Shortly after we released the Community-led Vision for Great North Road, AT released its Connected Communities Great North Road strategy.
- We are pleased to see the community's wish for cycle lanes and peak-hour bus lanes incorporated into AT's plans. We are disappointed at the failure to create a 'boulevard of trees'. We have been able to negotiate small improvements in AT's streetscape plans (tree planting, street furniture).
- The wholesale loss of parking, however, will create major issues for the viability of small businesses already suffering from the effects of COVID. They now face up to 18 months of disruption during construction and loss of up to 80% of on-street parking, which their customers and delivery drivers rely upon. This conflicts with the community's desire for ground floor commercial premises to be included in new apartment developments. We have advocated strongly on behalf of the community on this matter.
- We are indebted to Prof Bill McKay from the University of Auckland for his support and advice. Developers have not responded to our efforts at communication.
- We identified the Army land on Great North Road as a potential community pocket park as far back as 2014. However, our constituent MP and the Minister of Defence have shown no interest in any land-use change. We have therefore abandoned that approach in favour of a proposal to turn the space into a memorial to the Maori Battalion with an appropriate mural and accompanying public space. The support of the Waitemata Local Board and Auckland Council will be sought to support a proposal to the NZ Army / MOD / government.

Home Street playground

David Batten worked with Council for several years on the redevelopment of this facility and it was pleasing to see the impressive new playground finally open in 2021. David is involved in ongoing liaison re maintenance as required.

Website and Facebook

The website has been well used and maintained by Brandon Wilcox. Nicola Legat and Jess Fowler, our blog content subcommittee, published a number of blog posts on key issues during the year.

The demands of the 2021 lockdown prevented our ability to issue further newsletters.

David Batten has maintained our Facebook page. Thanks to David and Brandon.

We are very grateful to the local branch of Ray White (formerly Custom Residential) for its sponsorship of our website?

Finances

The Association does not charge a membership fee and its only income is from the sponsorship of the website, which covers its hosting and support costs. As the financial report to be discussed later in the meeting will show, we have ended the year with a small deficit.

Many thanks to the Treasurer/Secretary Jamie Hosking for managing our finances during the year. And many thanks to Paul Shortland for preparing the annual financial report for us.

*GLRA Committee
May 1 2021*