

Participatory Research Study on the Social Impacts of Intensification  
on the traditional dwellers of the Inner City East / Linwood West  
Neighbourhoods of Christchurch – August 2022

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A participatory research study was undertaken by Te Whare Roimata Trust in 2022 involving a group of second year social work students from ARA Polytech. The purpose of this study was to explore the social implications of intensification on the traditional dwellers of the marginalised neighbourhoods of the Christchurch Inner City East/Linwood West.

Historically the Inner City East/Linwood West neighbourhoods have provided essential low cost, private rental housing for the city's poor, in particular single people, couples and sole parent families with 1-2 children.

The study sought to hear from residents impacted by intensification as well as local social service organisations working with people from these neighbourhoods on issues relating to housing. 10 local residents with experience of housing insecurity were interviewed along with 5 men staying in an inner city night shelter and a focus group was held involving 5 social service workers drawn from 4 local community agencies whose work involved supporting residents from these neighbourhoods with housing related issues. While most residents who were interviewed were single people the focus group gave clear insight into the issues experienced by couples and sole parent families.

The findings from this work were presented to elected members of the former Waikura-Linwood-Central-Heathcote Community Board in late August 2022.

The aim of this deputation was to make visible the social implications housing intensification is having on older inner city neighbourhoods such as the Inner City East/Linwood West neighbourhoods stemming from the then Labour Government's directive to implement the NPS on Urban Development in Tier One City District Plans.

While small in scale, the housing study identified the following emerging themes for low-income, private renters of the ICE/Linwood West neighbourhoods.

- Profit-making developers are buying up the older, affordable, private rental housing stock which traditionally has housed low income people, to create more intense housing developments.
- Replacement housing is targeted at higher incomes reducing the pool of affordable, low-cost rental housing available.
- While public housing has resulted in a number of social housing complexes being built these are targeted at people with high needs. Unless you are rated highly on the social housing register most low income people are forced back to the private rental housing market.
- Growing demand is pushing up rents on the existing housing stock making rents unaffordable for the single poor, low-income couples and sole-parent families.

- The loss of affordable, private rental housing is resulting in people being displaced from the ICE/Linwood West neighbourhoods where a number of social service agencies have been strategically located.
- The single poor are:
  - being pushed to the outskirts of the city to be housed in hostels or lodges away from their networks and social supports;
  - being holed up in dormitory-style backpackers, living in night shelters or emergency motel accommodation; or
  - rough sleeping or couch surfing in and around the neighbourhood.
- Couples and families are pushed into emergency housing and languish there until rental housing becomes available.

The study also highlighted the ripple-effect of intensification:

- a pending demolition of a dwelling may result in multiple people being displaced as a consequence of people couch-surfing at a tenants place;
- once displaced people are prone to being displaced again increasing a person's housing vulnerability;
- the impact on health and wellbeing with the loss of social supports and networks, and
- housing vulnerability is creating increased anxiety and depression along with the return to less helpful ways of coping such as drugs and alcohol.

Added to these impacts are:

- the emergence of slum landlords (Daffodil House);
- the overt racism most keenly experienced by Maori and Pasifika;
- the size and scale of developments – whereas once there was a single house on the piece of land with room to play, grow a garden, enjoy your privacy there are now multiple units on that same land with nowhere to do these things, and
- the changing dynamics within the community as newer, high income residents and older residents learn to live together.

### Comment on the Findings

The study concluded that market-driven intensification comes at the expense of the existing affordable housing stock, benefiting one group of people at the expense of another very vulnerable group. Without intervention the reality is the group being displaced has very limited housing options available and invariably risks homelessness or very insecure housing. Such is the paradox of unchecked intensification, raising issues around equity, fairness and justice, and sustainability.