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Quality of Urban Life and Intensification:
Understanding Housing Choices, Trade-Offs, and the Role of Urban Amenities

Natalie Allen

“It’s more than just building”

– Resident interviewed as part of this study
Abstract

Many New World cities in New Zealand, Australia, and the Pacific Northwest have urban growth management policies and strategies in place to promote intensification as a way to avoid sprawl while continuing to absorb population growth. Enhancing the quality of urban life of residents has also become a fundamental component in the urban growth management strategies of many cities seeking to prioritise intensification. In spatial terms, fulfilling a directive for a compact city will require the intensification of town centres and existing neighbourhoods by increasing the availability of a variety of multi-unit, multi-use, and multi-storey attached housing typologies. It will also require social changes in terms of the lifestyle expectations and aspirations of residents. In order to understand the impetus for residents to buy into this mandate for intensification, it will be important to research the housing choices and aspirations of residents who are living in attached forms of housing and to investigate the role of the neighbourhood in their perceived quality of urban life.

This thesis makes a contribution to housing and urban intensification research. The findings provide insights into two critical areas: firstly, higher density housing choices and the trade-offs residents make when deciding where to live; secondly, the significance of neighbourhood amenities in relation to neighbourhood satisfaction. In order to address the aims of this research, fifty-seven-structured qualitative interviews were conducted with residents who currently live in attached typologies across four established neighbourhoods in the case study city of Auckland, New Zealand. The interviewees were asked to define their neighbourhood, express what ‘quality of life’ and ‘quality of urban life’ meant to them, and to discuss their housing experiences, housing choices, and housing aspirations. Data was also gathered about their perceptions of density and intensification. They were asked to identify which neighbourhood amenities they used, how often, how they accessed them, and the role these amenities played in their neighbourhood satisfaction. Following a Constructivist Grounded Theory approach, the data was evaluated using Substantive Coding methods, conducted both manually and through NVivo, the qualitative data analysis software.

The research concludes that if higher density living is to be embraced in established neighbourhoods, what must be understood is the role of urban amenities both within the neighbourhood, and within the wider city, in meeting the quality of urban life expectations of residents. The apparent risk of not considering urban amenities in this way is to misunderstand the nature of contemporary urban life and the effects of changing demographics and household structures on housing choices.
For my family
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“Change is the end result of all true learning” — Leo Buscaglia

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# Table of Contents

Abstract 3
Acknowledgements 5
Table of Contents 6
List of Figures 9

## Chapter 1 Introduction 11
1.1 Urban growth management 11
1.2 Auckland as the case study city 15
   1.2.1 The context of urban growth in Auckland 16
   1.2.2 The spatial implications of Auckland’s projected intensification needs 20
   1.2.3 Growth pressures and supply and demand in Auckland’s housing market 21
1.3 Thesis structure 23

## Chapter 2 Literature Review 25
2.1 Quality of life in cities 25
   2.1.1 Objective and subjective quality of urban life approaches 26
   2.1.2 A conceptual model for a subjective approach to quality of urban life 27
   2.1.3 Summary 31
2.2 Housing choices 31
   2.2.1 Trade-offs in the process of housing choices 32
   2.2.2 Summary 34
2.3 Neighbourhood satisfaction 34
   2.3.1 Resident perceptions of density and intensification 36
   2.3.2 The role of urban amenities 39
      2.3.2.1 Urban economics and urban amenities 41
   2.3.3 Summary 43
2.4 Literature review conclusion and the emergent research aims 43

## Chapter 3 Research Design and Methodology 45
3.1 Research questions 45
3.2 A complex issue requires a complex methodological response 46
3.3 The qualitative interview process 47
3.4 Ethical considerations 49
3.5 The data coding process 50
3.6 The selection of case study suburbs 53
   3.6.1 Takapuna 56
   3.6.2 Kingsland 57
   3.6.3 Botany Downs 58
   3.6.4 The Te Atatu Peninsula 58
3.7 The selection of case study developments 59
   3.7.1 Case study developments in Takapuna 62
   3.7.2 Case study developments in Kingsland 63
Chapter 4 Results

4.1 Interviewee profiles

4.2 Results section 1: Understanding quality of urban life
   4.2.1 Describing quality of life
   4.2.2 Describing quality of urban life

4.3 Results section 2: Perceptions of higher density living
   4.3.1 Perceptions of the terms ‘density’ and ‘urban intensification’
   4.3.2 Perceptions of higher density living environments
   4.3.3 Perceptions of density changes in interviewee’s neighbourhoods
   4.3.4 Perceptions of the acceptability of higher density typologies

4.4 Results section 3: Housing choices
   4.4.1 Housing experiences
   4.4.2 Factors influencing current housing choices
      4.4.2.1 Life stage
      4.4.2.2 Lifestyle preferences
      4.4.2.3 Location convenience
      4.4.2.4 Typology features
      4.4.2.5 Affordability
      4.4.2.6 Place attachment
      4.4.2.7 Summary about the factors influencing housing choices
   4.4.3 Trade-off hierarchies in the housing choices process
      4.4.3.1 Primary trade-off factors
      4.4.3.2 Secondary trade-off factors
      4.4.3.3 Balancing trade-offs
   4.4.4 Housing aspirations
   4.4.5 Reasons for housing aspirations
   4.4.6 Everyone needs a backup plan

4.5 Results section 4: Neighbourhood satisfaction
   4.5.1 Concepts of neighbourhood
   4.5.2 Neighbourhood likes
   4.5.3 Neighbourhood dislikes
   4.5.4 Neighbourhood improvements
   4.5.5 The relationship between quality of urban life and neighbourhood satisfaction

4.6 Results section 5: Urban amenities
   4.6.1 Defining urban amenities
   4.6.2 The experiences of interviewees with different categories of urban amenities
      4.6.2.1 Food related amenities
      4.6.2.2 Public spaces and natural amenities
      4.6.2.3 Recreation amenities
      4.6.2.4 Community facilities
      4.6.2.5 Education amenities
      4.6.2.6 Services
      4.6.2.7 Retail amenities
List of Figures

Figure 1. Map of Auckland showing the Metropolitan Urban Area and the current Rural Urban Boundary 18
Figure 2. Locating this research within the five-dimensional framework for quality of urban life research adapted from Pacione (2003b, 20) 28
Figure 3. Sirgy and Cornwell’s (2002) conceptual model to explain how satisfaction with neighbourhood features affect residents’ quality of urban life (life satisfaction) 35
Figure 4. Diagram of Constructivist Grounded Theory Substantive Coding (adapted from Jones and Alony 2011, 104) 50
Figure 5. Information about the chosen case study suburbs 55
Figure 6. The location of the four case study suburbs in Auckland 55
Figure 7. Takapuna case study area: interviewees were from the case study developments shown in orange, the town centre is shown in yellow 56
Figure 8. Kingsland case study area: interviewees were from the case study developments shown in orange, the town centre is shown in yellow 57
Figure 9. Botany Downs case study area: interviewees were from the case study developments shown in orange, the town centre is shown in yellow 58
Figure 10. The Te Atatu Peninsula case study area: interviewees were from the case study developments shown in orange; the town centre is shown in yellow 59
Figure 11. Information about the chosen case study developments 61
Figure 12. Case Study Development A, 73 Anzac Street, north façade 62
Figure 13. Case Study Development B, 130 Anzac Street, north façade 62
Figure 14. Case Study Development C, 7 Killarney Street north façade 63
Figure 15. Case Study Development D, 39 Sandringham Road, north façade 63
Figure 16. Case Study Development E, 435 New North Road, north façade 64
Figure 17. Case Study Development E, 435 New North Road, south façade 64
Figure 18. Case Study Development F, the north façade of Armoy Road Development A 65
Figure 19. Case Study Development F, view of the internal driveway at Armoy Road Development A 65
Figure 20. Case Study Development G, front access view at Armoy Road Development B 65
Figure 21. Case Study Development G, rear access view at Armoy Road Development B 66
Figure 22. Case Study Development F, internal cul-de-sac view at Armoy Road Development B 66
Figure 23. Case Study Development H, west façades on Puma Drive as part of the Spalding Rise Development 66
Figure 24. Case Study Development H, typical west façades in the Spalding Rise Development 67
Figure 25. Case Study Development H, typical north façades in the Spalding Rise Development 67
Figure 26. Case Study Development I, east façades on Kirikiri Lane as part of the Oneroa Road Development 67
Figure 27. Case Study Development I, west façades in the Oneroa Road Development 68
Figure 28. Case Study Development J, the southeast façade of 84 Gunner Drive 69
Figure 29. Case Study Development J, the southeast façade of 84 Gunner Drive 69
Figure 30. Case Study Development K, northeast façade of the Tuscany Way housing as part of the Vinograd Drive development 69
Figure 31. Case Study Development K, internal view of number 16 at the Vinograd Drive development 70
Figure 32. Case Study Development K, southwest façade of the Rhone Way housing as part of the Vinograd Drive development 70
Figure 33. Case Study Development K, northwest façade of the Vinograd Drive development 70
Figure 34. Case Study Development K, southwest façade of the Provence Esplanade housing as part of the Vinograd Drive development 71
Chapter 1 Introduction

This thesis is concerned with how residents make housing choices in cities where intensification is promoted as a way for the city to avoid sprawl and facilitate quality of life experiences for residents. Many New World cities in New Zealand, Australia, and the Pacific Northwest have urban growth management policies and strategies in place to promote intensification and attached housing typologies. Typically, this intensification is directed in varying proportions into existing neighbourhoods around town centres and transit nodes, and into greenfield areas within urban boundaries. As well as market viability, this form of intensification requires an increasing number of people to choose to live at higher densities in environments where lower density standalone housing has traditionally been the norm. The question that arises from this context is whether or not the higher density living environments promoted in urban growth management strategies will provide the quality of life expectations of residents. This thesis investigates the housing choices and trade-offs that residents of higher density housing make when deciding where they want to live. This is investigated in Auckland, New Zealand, from the perspective of residents living in attached forms of housing within established neighbourhoods.

1.1 Urban growth management

The urban growth management policies and strategies in many New World cities in New Zealand, Australia, and the Pacific Northwest have been developed to prioritise intensification, primarily in an attempt to avoid further sprawl. These intensification models include approaches such as smart growth (Ingram 2009), new urbanism (Gordon and Richardson 2007), and transit-oriented development (Searle, Darchen, and Huston 2014) which seek to concentrate growth in compact walkable neighbourhoods that are networked by high frequency transit (Sepe 2009, Wey and Chiu 2013).

The sustainability of cities is a key concept at the core of these models, and seeking to become more sustainable has become an overarching modus operandi for many cities (Rydin 2010, Newman and Kenworthy 1999, Wheeler 2004, Kenny and Meadowcroft 1999, Heng and Malone-Lee 2010, Cheng 2010).
It is also aligned to the emergence of urban resilience thinking (Eraydin and Taşan-Kok 2013, Newman, Beatley, and Boyer 2009).

The prioritisation of sustainability issues emerged out of the post-depression and post-war environmentalist movements. This was in part as a response to the escalating urban growth and sprawl experienced in the 1950s and 1960s as cities expanded and access to both motor vehicles and public transit meant that residents could move away from crowded downtowns and industrial centres. In the 1970s, in cities such as Portland, Oregon and Vancouver, British Columbia there were concerns that expanding cities would have a negative environmental impact and that sprawl posed a significant threat to the agricultural land that surrounded them. Stimson et al. thus notes that “the 1972 United Nations Stockholm Conference, and the 1980 World Conservation Strategy, later the Brundtland Commission (1987), placed the concept of sustainable development… firmly on the international agenda” (1999, 149).

During this time, “the sprawling nature of the metropolis and its attendant automobile dependency was problematised” (Alves 2004, 2) in urban planning. One of the preeminent solutions pursued was to restrict outward sprawl with an urban growth boundary. Placing a boundary to limit greenfield sprawl protects agricultural land at the edge of cities and requires growth to be absorbed within the existing metropolitan area through intensification and regeneration projects.

In the 1980s, sustainability added economic concerns to its environmentalist agenda. Simpson et al. comment that, “during the late 1980s and early 1990s the issue of sustainable development gained further momentum as it became the concern of a host of conferences and meetings culminating in the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development” (1999, 149). Known as the Rio Earth Summit, this conference produced Agenda 21, a sustainable development action plan developed to encourage consideration of, and action on, sustainable issues across international, national, regional and local levels. Guided by Agenda 21, sustainability in the 1990s came to encompass environmental, economic, as well as social sustainability factors (Heng and Malone-Lee 2010, 41, Wheeler 2004).

Urban intensification policies and their sustainability underpinnings have raised spirited debates in urban studies (Neuman 2005, 17). Cox (2006), for example, argues that sprawling cities reflect consumer preferences and criticises anti-sprawl policies for being anti-market and adversely affecting affordability due to higher housing and consumption costs. Likewise, O’Toole (2001, 20) focuses his arguments against anti-sprawl policies on “the folly of smart growth,” asserting that the urban growth management policies that support intensification increase “traffic congestion, air-pollution, consumer costs, taxes and just about every other impediment to urban liveability” (ibid.). In turn, Litman (2015a) and Ewing and Hamidi
counter these arguments by citing selective data use as a methodological issue and arguing that these and other pro-sprawl proponents ignore the complex reality of how people live in cities.

Neuman (2005) emerged as a prominent figure in the urban growth management debate about intensification and questioned a broad range of issues, ranging from the link between reduced automobile trips and increasing transit use (a cornerstone of transit-orientated development), to the links made between travel and energy demands. However, much of the essence of Neuman’s (2005, 23) critique questions the linearity of intensification strategy and why it is necessary to revert to historic European models of development along the high street and in town centres, rather than to view the development of cities as a processual outcome of modern life. Neuman also questions the debate in urban growth management about sustainability and the way it is used as a justification for intensification. He asserts that the influential work by Williams, Burton, and Jenks (2000) asks whether urban form is sustainable when it should instead be asking whether “the processes of building cities and the processes of living, consuming, and producing in cities are sustainable” (ibid., 22).

The cyclical critique and affirmation of anti-sprawl policies continue to coexist along with both some sprawling and some intensified development within cities. It is acknowledged in this thesis that a compact city approach to urban growth management is not without its critics. However, rather than focusing on the nuances of this critique, this research deals with housing choices in cities where the decision has been made by regional and local authorities to promote the intensification of existing urban form and endorse the increase of attached housing typologies in their growth management strategy.

Many New World cities in New Zealand, Australia, and the Pacific Northwest, in particular, have embraced anti-sprawl growth models over the last two to three decades. Despite structural differences in their governmental and institutional arrangements, these cities have comparable low-density spatial histories. Similarities can be drawn between the planning documents of Vancouver, Portland, and Seattle in North America and Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne, and Auckland in Australasia, among others. In considering the growth management strategies and policies of these cities it became evident that, at a metropolitan scale, each has adopted an urban growth boundary to contain sprawl. These boundaries have encouraged the redevelopment of city downtowns, former industrial sites, and other large scale brownfield areas into mixed-use neighbourhoods. In many instances the redevelopment of downtowns has also coincided with waterfront redevelopment, since these are all port cities. Many of these cities have demonstrated compact city success through the redevelopment of their downtowns, water fronts, former industrial sites, and greenfield developments at the peripheries. However, these cities are facing an increasing pressure
to implement and encourage intensification in existing neighbourhoods at a rate that is in line with their projected growth rates (Searle 2007, Randolph 2006). The intensification of town centres across metropolitan areas and at transit nodes poses issues in terms of fragmented land titles where amalgamation is often required for housing projects of a scale that is financially worthwhile for developers. While higher density attached housing developments, such as “terraced housing, cluster housing and low-rise apartment buildings” (Dixon, Dupuis, and Lysnar 2001b, 1) are occurring in these areas, in many cases they are not meeting the intensification targets set out in growth management policy and strategy.

The growth management policies of all the aforementioned Australasian cities call for 50% or more of their future residential growth to be accommodated by intensifying established town or activity centres spread across the metropolitan regions. For example, Melbourne’s growth strategy is premised on a 53:47 ratio split between new dwellings in existing neighbourhoods and growth at the urban peripheries (Victoria Department of Planning and Community 2008, 3). In Sydney, the goal is for a 70:30 split (New South Wales Government 2010) and in Auckland it is a 60:40 ratio between new dwellings in existing neighbourhoods and growth at the urban peripheries (Auckland Council 2012a).

Over the past two decades, newer iterations of urban growth management strategies have found new justifications for promoting intensification. The notion that quality of life can be enhanced by living at higher densities has come to the forefront of urban growth debates in many cities, in part to counter the criticisms of anti-sprawl policy. Building on this rationale, new urban development strategies have focussed on distributing density across metropolitan centres within existing neighbourhoods (Woodcock et al. 2010). Hence, transit-oriented developments and development around existing infrastructure have been prioritised in urban growth management strategy. This requires living at higher densities than those of traditional detached or standalone housing, in a range of attached housing typologies that create walkable catchments around nodes or clusters of urban amenities.

Moreover, the idea of enhanced quality of life has, in part, been informed by the notion of making cities globally more competitive by enhancing quality of life as a competitive element (Glaeser, Kolko, and Saiz 2000, 494, Clark et al. 2002, Rogerson 1999a, 1999b). Rogerson (1999a, 967) argues, “the fundamental context in which cities are currently acting is the heightened mobility of capital.” This shift is generally described in urban research as the phenomenon of competitive cities (Boddy 2003, Musterd and Murie 2010, Glaeser and Ghani 2015, Musterd and Kovács 2013) and is aligned to the creative class agenda (Florida 2002, Perry 2011). Cities are therefore trying to balance their sustainable development with their
desire to attract increasing numbers of mobile residents who can develop their knowledge economies. Herrschel (2012, 2332) argues that “the practical and conceptual coexistence, or fusion, of these two agendas is not always easy” because of their inherently complex nature.

A key issue at the core of this research is the expectation, in current urban growth management strategies, that higher density attached forms of housing in existing neighbourhoods will lead to enhanced quality of life. It is not yet clear whether this is the case. Should these strategies not result in enhanced quality of life experiences, the justification for intensification and anti-sprawl urban growth management policy will be challenged.

Alves (2006) contends that the provision of higher density typologies in existing neighbourhoods is one of the most contentious urban growth management issues for cities today. There are a variety of factors at play. Randolph (2006, 489) argues that the “complexity of the social, institutional and local contexts into which this new higher density urban future is to be injected needs to be fully factored into the planning process to avoid the pitfalls of past urban consolidation policy.” This study responds to the urban intensification debate by investigating the acceptance of higher density housing in traditionally low density neighbourhoods. In essence, this thesis is concerned with investigating the extent to which higher density living and attached forms of housing lead to the urban growth management aim of quality of life experiences for residents. This is investigated from the perspective of residents living in attached forms of housing within established neighbourhoods.

1.2 Auckland as the case study city

Auckland, with its urban growth management strategy requiring intensification, has been selected as a case study city for this investigation. Auckland is a New World city located in Australasia. It is New Zealand’s largest city; the metropolitan area has a population of 1.42 million people (Statistics New Zealand 2015). Framing development is Auckland Council’s quality compact city approach to urban growth management (Auckland Council 2013b, 2011a, 2011e, 2011f, Auckland City Council 2003, 12, 25, Knox and Smith 2007, 89). This approach reflects Auckland Council’s desire that Auckland be “the most liveable city in the world” (2012b, 1,8,24) as the population increases to 2.5 million people over the next twenty years. It is competing with, among others, its regional neighbours of Sydney, Brisbane, and Melbourne for this title. As with many cities in this region, Auckland’s growth context has been shaped by a “legacy of low density development” (Auckland Council 2012b, 111, Dixon, Dupuis, and Lysnar 2001b). Today the
city’s polycentric urban form is made up of 208 suburbs with complex patterns of movement between them. These characteristics led to Auckland being chosen as a suitable case study city in which to base the research.

1.2.1 The context of urban growth in Auckland

An understanding of the evolution of Auckland’s urban form is needed to understand the city’s current growth context. Boon (2010, 297) relates the evolution of Auckland’s form to Harris and Ullman’s (1951) ‘multiple nuclei theory’ because the city began as a series of independent settlements that amalgamated, due to the development of transport connections, into a more singular conurbation over time. Three concentric fringe belts mark key growth phases in the city’s history: “The inner fringe belt surrounds the kernel of the city. A discontinuous middle fringe belt marks the edge of the late Victorian and Edwardian growth, and an outer fringe belt marks the edge of the interwar development” (Gu 2010, 49).

Following the economic expansion of the 1880s, Auckland as a city began emerging in the 1900s. The electric tram network initially enabled the City to sprawl and “bay-villa suburbs” were developed along the tram lines (Petry 1996, 21). State housing through the 1930s and 1940s played a significant role in shaping many suburban areas and the city was characterised by continued outward growth throughout the 1950s and 1960s (Auckland Regional Council 2010a). This period was also characterised by mass consumption (Filion and Hammond 2003, 272) and saw significant growth management decisions coming to fruition. Key pieces of infrastructure were completed during this time – including the Auckland Harbour Bridge in 1959, which significantly opened up the north of the city for development. Additionally, during post-war growth “a discontinuous collar of industry” developed “in a broad arc around the perimeter of the isthmus” (Whitelaw 1971, 70). This decentralisation of industrial employment meant that wage earners living in the outer fringe belt suburbs no longer needed to commute to the central city for employment, indelibly changing commuting patterns in the city (Whitelaw 1971, 71).

Further sprawl was supported by government policy during this period through subsidised mortgages being made available to first-home buyers. The proviso was that they purchased their new house within a relatively low price limit; this naturally “encouraged the development of new houses on the fringe of the conurbation” (Boon 2010, 297) and saw the growth of many outlying suburbs. These areas then needed to be connected to the city through large scale infrastructure expenditure. This is not dissimilar from the KiwiSaver scheme introduced in 2007, which enables first home buyers to access a government subsidy of up to NZ$5,000 per individual if they are purchasing their first home for under NZ$550,000.
(KiwiSaver 2016); by no means an easy task given that the average sales price for a three-bedroom home in Auckland is NZ$853,180. The average weekly rent for the same size dwelling is NZ$507 (Barfoot and Thompson 2016).

In spite of the subsidisation of sprawl, several strategies were developed to address urban growth, including the 1999 Auckland Regional Growth Strategy 2050, the 2008 One Plan for the Auckland Region, and the 2013 Auckland Plan. Units or ‘blocks of flats,’ some multi-story terraced housing, as well as some medium rise apartments up to six storeys have been appearing more frequently in existing, traditionally low density, suburbs in Auckland since the 1960s and 1970s, a trend seen also in Sydney, Melbourne, and Brisbane (Page and Ryan 2010, 3). Auckland’s Downtown has seen the majority of high rise apartment development.

Intensification through infill housing increased significantly in city-fringe suburbs throughout the 1980s (Auckland Regional Council 2010a). This is most notable in the pre-1980 suburbs around “the Whangaparaoa Peninsula, the Eastern Bays of North Shore City, throughout Auckland City (with the exception of heritage zones) and in and around Howick, Papatoetoe and Manurewa” (Auckland Regional Council 1999b, 31). This intensification trend continues today. However, data from Statistics New Zealand (2015) indicates that attached dwellings as a percentage of total dwellings have increased by only one percentage point, from 22% to 23%, between the 2006 and the 2013 censuses. When compared to the 70% of dwellings that are detached typologies, attached dwellings, at 23% of the total number of dwellings, continue to constitute a relatively small, but not insignificant, proportion of Auckland’s housing stock.

To contain the city’s urban growth and prevent sprawl, Auckland has in place a Rural Urban Boundary, containing the area marked in black in Figure 1. The first version of the current Rural Urban Boundary was established in 1951, known then as an urban fence. Since this time the city has maintained, albeit in different forms and under different names, a containment line as a growth management policy to control development within a designated urban area.
Figure 1. Map of Auckland showing the Metropolitan Urban Area and the current Rural Urban Boundary
Since the 1990s Auckland Council (2003, 12) has identified that “building a compact city means focusing growth around town centres that can provide the services, shops and jobs the growing population needs.” The current Auckland Plan aspires to 60% of all new urban development to occur within the Rural Urban Boundary, with up to 40% on greenfield sites at the urban peripheries (Auckland Council 2012a). However, because most growth since the 1990s has occurred outside the designated growth centres and corridors (Auckland Regional Council 1999b, 29) the realism of this aspiration has been questioned (Udale 2012). In existing neighbourhoods, dwelling patterns continue to predominantly take the form of single-storey detached houses, despite declining rates of ownership (Boon 2010, 297, Dixon and Dupuis 2003, 353). Therefore, while housing patterns are changing in Auckland, the changes have been considerably slower than forecast or identified in the planning documents by numerous previous councils.

Auckland Council acknowledges that if intensification is going to be feasible “there will have to be major changes to the urban form of the city, and a major reshaping of the planning system” (2011g, 52), and that it will need to look at “new and bold approaches” (2011d, 134) to deliver intensification across the metropolitan region. A review of nine previous Auckland housing studies by Mitchell (2011) found a key solution to encourage market-led intensification in the form of attached dwellings is the removal of existing legislative barriers that are impeding this kind of development.

The realisation of a higher density future for Auckland will need to be achieved through the use of a broad range of growth management strategies, including the statutory Unitary Plan funded through the Long Term Plan (LTP), public-private partnerships, and yet-to-be-considered development initiatives and incentives. It will also require issues surrounding “building height, design and aesthetics; building heritage; housing affordability; traffic congestion and parking space; open space and parkland; and additional infrastructure and services for incoming residents” (McCrea and Walters 2012, 193) to be addressed.

Auckland Council (2012b, 138) recognises that “providing high-quality housing in sufficient quantity to meet the needs and preferences of Auckland’s growing population is key to Auckland’s vision of becoming the world’s most liveable city.” The next big challenge for the city’s urban planners and designers, if the Rural Urban Boundary is to be maintained, will be to facilitate the transformation of Auckland’s existing neighbourhoods in a way that maintains and enhances their distinct character while also enhancing the perceived quality of life experienced by residents under conditions of intensification.
1.2.2 The spatial implications of Auckland’s projected intensification needs

In spatial terms, the 60:40 ratio split between brownfield and greenfield development favoured by Auckland Council means that of the 400,000 additional dwellings required by 2040, at least 240,000 will need to be built within existing neighbourhoods. The issue of where intensification needs to occur in Auckland requires a consideration of the impact of the Rural Urban Boundary on urban form, alongside acknowledgement that intensification must respond to the volcanic topography of the city (Auckland Council 2011g, 14, Gu 2010, 50). In the Unitary Plan, Auckland Council (2013b, 2012b, 31) aims to increase the density of existing neighbourhoods that are:

- within moderate walking distances from the city or nearest town centres,
- connected to the public transport network,
- in market-attractive areas or in close proximity to urban amenities,
- serviced by existing infrastructure or where infrastructure can be upgraded efficiently, and
- low-risk for natural hazards and environmental impacts.

The intensification of existing areas will mean more urban amenities are required in areas that are currently predominantly residential. There will also be pressure on the existing infrastructure in these areas. Auckland Council (2011g, 14) has indicated that it would like to ensure that dwelling patterns in the northern, southern, western and eastern sectors of the city are carefully developed and connected by efficient public transit corridors around the central isthmus. Typologically, the consequences of this directive for a quality compact city in Auckland will mean increasing the supply of multi-unit, multi-use, and multi-storey typologies (Auckland Council 2012a, 53).

Turner et al. (2004) argue planning strategies that embody a compact city approach to growth presuppose the feasibility of attached typologies in existing neighbourhoods, their uptake through the market and their ability to deliver enhanced quality of life outcomes for residents. While the realism of this desired intensification scenario is assiduously debated in Auckland, the fact remains that such targets are a firm strategic goal of the amalgamated Auckland Council (2012a). The proposed increase in higher density intensification that prioritises a mix of attached housing forms has been acknowledged by Auckland Council as typologically new for many Auckland residents (Auckland Council 2011b, 12, Dixon and Dupuis 2003). This is despite the fact that it has been a growth management goal of Councils in Auckland since the 1967 Regional Master Plan, which recommended 50% of future development be detached standalone housing and 50% be attached housing no more than four storeys high. This vision does not match the
lower density development reality that occurred in Auckland; however, higher density developments across a variety of typologies subsequently have been built in the city in steadily increasing numbers.

1.2.3 Growth pressures and supply and demand in Auckland's housing market

Housing demand in Auckland undoubtedly is becoming more diverse than in previous decades, “driven by population growth, migration, changing household formation patterns, an ageing population, greater ethnic diversity, and changing family and household structures” (The Centre for Housing Research New Zealand 2008, 20). A better understanding is needed regarding how various household types are making their housing choices (Beattie and Haarhoff 2012b, 5). It has been predicted that future housing demand in Auckland will be characterised by an increasing reliance on and acceptance of the rental market, not only for single occupants but also for families with young children (Beacon Pathway Ltd 2010). It is predicted that demand for semi-detached and multi-units will accordingly also rise as families face an “ongoing trade-off between housing performance and price in both the home ownership and rental sectors” (Beacon Pathway Ltd 2010, 117).

However, a general view expressed in much of the Auckland-centric literature says that, for many Aucklanders, intensification and higher density living means only poorly designed high-rise development, rather than quality mid-rise (three- to five-storeys), mixed-use, and mixed typology development. Syme et al. (2005, 2), for example, found through their analysis of New Zealand based surveys and media reports that intensive housing is frequently “associated with poor quality design and low amenity” (See also Department of Building and Housing 2011a, 23, Vallance, Perkins, and Moore 2005, 730-737). Preval, Chapman and Howden-Chapman (2010, 47) assert that these prejudices against higher density development may have been caused by the leaky building crisis\(^1\). Similarly, Auckland Council (2011a, 134) affirms that:

Bad examples of new styles of housing, such as apartments, have put many Aucklanders off investing and wanting to live in this form of housing. This problem has been

\(^1\) The leaky building crisis in New Zealand is a major liability crisis and an ongoing legal, public policy, and construction industry issue affecting a number of timber framed buildings that suffer from weather-tightness (Alexander 2011). In particular, homes constructed between 1994 and 2004 have generally been affected (New Zealand Law Commission 2012, 32). The scale of the problem has resulted in successive governments implementing “special legislative apparatus to deal with the sheer volume of cases and litigants” (New Zealand Law Commission 2012, 32), including the development of the Weathertight Homes Resolution Services Act 2006.
heightened by the serious nature of leaky buildings that particularly affected townhouses and apartments.

Furthermore, it is becoming more and more difficult for the market to meet diverse housing needs in an affordable and timely way. It has been acknowledged that currently there is a shortfall of approximately 10,000 homes to meet the basic housing needs of Auckland residents and there will need to be an average of 11,000 homes built per year between 2012 and 2040 to meet projected growth targets (Auckland Council 2012b, 137). Given that 24,000 homes normally are built each year in all of New Zealand, the ability of the current market to meet housing needs is not assured (Auckland Council 2012b, 137). Consequently, Auckland Council considers that Auckland is facing a housing crisis (2012a). To address the shortage, Udale (2012, 4) argues that “to assist the industry to meet the targets for supply, the Unitary Plan should be permissive and enable widespread infill housing with a range of typologies to occur.” He goes on to argue, “the most viable and prolific forms of infill housing for at least the next decade will be small lot/attached/terraced housing delivered by a multiplicity of projects” (2012, 4, see also Auckland Council 2011g, 51). In addition, when linking the supply and demand trends of the housing market to the goal of a quality compact city, Gray and Hill (2010, 51) reason that “the supply chain should follow demand by offering housing at a quality and price point that incentivises a wider range of households to live in intensive housing.”

Equally, housing selection is constrained not only by income, financial commitments, and market driven housing supply issues, but also “by a multiplicity of considerations around the different places household members need to be for work, for education, for their families and their friends” (Beacon Pathway Ltd 2010, 106). The successful delivery of a quality compact city in Auckland will, therefore, inevitably require a developed understanding of the complex trade-offs that residents make when deciding where to live. It will require more residents, who have the choice, to express a preference for attached forms of housing. The demand for higher density projects will need to increase and, in turn, the market-delivered supply of such projects will need to meet this increasing demand. If urban lifestyles emerge as a strong demand, the market may be more willing to make the necessary investments into the higher density development of existing neighbourhoods.

How these trade-offs are currently considered by residents, and how they may be considered in the future, have not been comprehensively addressed in Auckland. Housing choices and the trade-offs residents make, alongside the contribution neighbourhoods make to their quality of life experiences is, therefore, the focus of this research.
1.3 Thesis structure

In the Introduction this study has been contextualised by discussing the urban growth management of cities seeking to avoid sprawl and intensify their existing neighbourhoods. The case study city of Auckland has been identified.

The literature review that follows in Chapter 2 sources relevant research that has addressed the issues of the relationship between living at higher densities and the enhancement of residents’ perceptions of their quality of life. Objective and subjective quality of life approaches are identified and the study is located with existing conceptual models to focus the scope of the research. Relevant housing choices and neighbourhood satisfaction literature is then reviewed. This results in the identification of a research framework for investigating the complex trade-offs residents make when deciding where to live and the role urban amenities play in the quality of urban life experiences of residents.

In Chapter 3 the choice and value of using Constructivist Grounded Theory as a guiding methodology for the research are discussed. The interview methods employed in this study are described and the associated ethical considerations acknowledged. The data coding process is also explained. The selection of the case study suburbs and case study developments from which residents were interviewed are elucidated and described. To conclude the chapter, the research challenges are identified.

In Chapter 4 the results identified through data coding are presented. Interviewee profiles are identified and explained to frame the subsequent presentation of the results. The coded interview data is in five sections. The first identifies the results related to quality of life and quality of urban life observations. The second is focused on exploring interviewees’ perceptions of higher density living in Auckland. The third presents the results related to housing experiences, housing choices, and housing aspirations. The trade-offs made by interviewees when they decided where to live also form part of this discussion. In the fourth section the data on neighbourhood satisfaction is presented, including how interviewees identify their neighbourhood likes, dislikes, and the neighbourhood improvements they think would enhance their perceived quality of urban life. In the fifth section how residents use and value the urban amenities in their neighbourhoods and throughout their city are explored. The relationships between urban amenities, quality of urban life perceptions, and neighbourhood satisfaction are also discussed.

In Chapter 5, the core findings from this study are critically evaluated by reflecting on the research questions. The contribution to knowledge made by this thesis to housing and urban intensification studies...
is described and the implications of this contribution are indicated. Chapter 5 concludes with a critical reflection on the use of Constructivist Grounded Theory. This flows into the Conclusion, Chapter 6, where the future research possibilities and challenges are identified. Recommendations for urban design and planning practice are presented and concluding remarks about the study are made.
Chapter 2 Literature Review

This chapter reviews relevant literature on how people make housing choices in the context of higher density living, alongside the contribution their neighbourhoods make to their quality of life experiences, and is divided into three sections. The first identifies how the scope of this study was narrowed and how a quality of urban life research focus was established. Both subjective and objective quality of urban life research approaches are explored and a conceptual model for a subjective approach is described. The second section presents research related to the relationships identified between housing choices and quality of urban life, including the trade-offs residents make when deciding where to live. The third section discusses neighbourhood satisfaction. This includes a review of how residents’ perceptions of density and intensification are discussed in the literature, as well as the role of urban amenities in housing choices and quality of urban life experiences. The key aspects from the literature review are drawn together in summaries, which are presented, at the end of each section to trace the progress of this research.

2.1 Quality of life in cities

In order to locate this research within the field of study, approaches to researching quality of life in cities must be considered. Broadly speaking, “quality of life is the perception each person has of his/her own place in life, within a cultural context and the system of values he/she conforms to, as related to expectations, interests, and achievements” (Tonon 2015, 5). In other words, quality of life is a term used to express the lived experiences of residents across a range of scales from national to local regions, cities, and neighbourhoods. Quality of life is a complex, multi-faceted construct and approaches from different theoretical perspectives have been used across multiple disciplines (Nakanishi 2015, 74, Yuan, Yuen, and

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The term quality of life is sometimes used separately, and other times used interchangeably, with the term liveability in the literature (Timmer and Seymour 2006). Partners for Livable Communities, for example, describes liveability as “the sum of the factors that add up to a community’s quality of life—including the built and natural environments, economic prosperity, social stability and equity, educational opportunity, and cultural, entertainment and recreation possibilities” (2015). Yuan, Yuen and Low (1999, 3) comment on the interchangeable use of these terms, adding that they have identified over 100 definitions of quality of life and liveability in the literature. In some cases, liveability is considered to be a subset of quality of life pertaining to the wellbeing of residents related to their local environment (van Kamp et al. 2003). This thesis refrains from using the term liveability to reduce the risk of any misconceptions about its meaning.
This thesis is specifically centred on understanding quality of life in terms of the contribution neighbourhoods make to the quality of life experiences of their residents. As a result, rather than being concerned with broad conceptualisations of quality of life, this research is focused on a place-based understanding of quality of life as the perceived level of satisfaction that residents experience in their neighbourhoods (Wagner and Caves 2011, Marans and Stimson 2011).

As introduced by Grayson and Young (1994) and set out by Marans and Stimson (2011), this form of quality of life can be termed ‘quality of urban life.’ As a subset of quality of life research, quality of urban life research is focussed on understanding the experiences and satisfaction of residents within a neighbourhood (van Kamp et al. 2003, 15). Henceforth, quality of urban life research is the field of study in which this research is located.

### 2.1.1 Objective and subjective quality of urban life approaches

Quality of urban life is predominantly investigated in two ways, either through an objective approach “using secondary data and relative weights for objective indicators of the urban environment” (McCrea, Tung-Kai, and Stimson 2006, 79), or through a subjective approach “using surveys of residents’ perceptions, evaluations and satisfaction with urban living” (McCrea, Tung-Kai, and Stimson 2006, 79).

Marans and Stimson (2011, 2-3) distinguish between objective and subjective approaches to quality of urban life:

(a) The *objective* approach which is most typically confined to the analysis and reporting of *secondary data* – usually *aggregate data* at different geographic or spatial scales – that are available mainly from official governmental data collections, including the census. This is an approach that is often associated with *social indicators* research.

(b) The *subjective* approach which is specifically designed to *collect primary data* at the *disaggregate or individual* level using *social survey* methods where the focus is on the peoples’ behaviors and *assessments, or evaluations* of aspects of quality of life in general and of quality of urban life in particular.

This study engages a subjective quality of urban life research framework because this approach facilitates the examination of how quality of urban life is perceived and evaluated by residents within the context of how they view and respond to intensification. This approach includes how their perceptions are
subjectively affected by their sense of satisfaction with their neighbourhood and by the housing choices they make. Yang (2008, 309) argues that the subjective nature of quality of life has not been adequately addressed in urban planning and urban design literature; this research therefore offers a contribution to this knowledge gap by considering quality of urban life and exploring the subjectivity of housing choices and neighbourhood satisfaction.

2.1.2 A conceptual model for a subjective approach to quality of urban life

A broad conceptual model of subjective quality of urban life was first developed by Marans and Rodgers (1975). This model seeks to understand the notion that how residents ‘feel’ about their environment affects how they perceive their satisfaction (Stevens 2009, 375, Yuan, Yuen, and Low 1999, 3). This can include:

- satisfaction with housing
- satisfaction with neighbourhood, and
- satisfaction with the wider community (or broader region) (Marans and Stimson 2011, 7).

Subsequently, it also affects how residents make choices about where to live. Housing, neighbourhood, and community attributes are seen to contribute to both housing and neighbourhood satisfaction and result in housing choices (Marans and Rodgers 1975). This is closely tied to the notion that residents “do not passively accept the environments they live in. If they can afford it, they tend to move to an environment that better fits their expectations and needs” (Del Rio, Levi, and Duarte 2011, 104). Building on the work of Marans and Rodgers (1975), Grayson and Young (1994) identify a conceptual model of subjective quality of urban life which measures the satisfaction of residents by gathering primary data through surveys or interviews which ask them directly about their perceptions of the environment in which they live. This model facilitates the examination of perceived quality of urban life and results in the development of theories about how quality of urban life experiences affect both neighbourhood satisfaction and housing choices.

In addition, both Campbell, Converse, and Rodgers (1976) and Frick et al. (1986) argue that a conceptual model of subjective quality of urban life must be shaped by a consideration of the sum of residents’ perceptions and experiences and by an investigation into the judgements and choices in which these perceptions result. This argument introduced the idea that understanding the underlying perceptions and experiences that shape housing choices is a critical component of understanding perceived quality of
urban life. In learning from Campbell, Converse, and Rodgers (1976) and Frick et al. (1986), this research became more focussed on investigating housing choices and neighbourhood satisfaction as core components of quality of urban life, rather than endeavouring to investigate all aspects of quality of urban life superficially. Similarly, Cummins (1999, 34) finds that within a conceptual model of subjective quality of urban life it is possible to consider how residents weigh “the individual domains of their lives” according to their personal notions of satisfaction. This alludes to the idea that residents make trade-offs between their different priorities. Therefore, for this study to engage with subjective notions of quality of urban life, it became clear that it would be fundamental to clarify how residents conceptualised and defined both their perceived quality of urban life and the satisfaction they felt with both their housing choice and their neighbourhood experiences. While Cummins does not expand on this notion of trade-offs, his allusion to it did serve to steer this research towards other studies that deal more overtly with the issue of trade-offs in housing choices. Section 2.2.1 explores this notion of trade-offs in greater detail.

Furthermore, identified in the literature is the idea that the impact of subjective perceptions on the lived experiences of residents is best researched at a local or neighbourhood scale (Del Rio, Levi, and Duarte 2011, 101, Randolph 2004, Alves 2006). Pacione (2003b) developed a five dimensional model of quality of life research. In Figure 2 Pacione’s (2003b, 20) diagram shows how both objective and subjective elements are core dimensions of quality of urban life, connected to geographic scales and time-specific life experiences.

Figure 2. Locating this research within the five-dimensional framework for quality of urban life research adapted from Pacione (2003b, 20)
How this research is located within Pacione’s broader model of understanding quality of life is shown in blue. Pacione’s model was adopted by McCrea (2007, 40), and then by McCrea, Marans, and Stimson (2011, 79), to express the domains of quality of urban life in their subjective studies. This research follows a subjective approach to understand quality of urban life at a local scale from the point of view of individuals, based on the impact of the neighbourhood on their daily life experiences. This approach is aligned with the conceptual model adopted by McCrea (2007, 26), “where satisfaction in urban domains and subjective evaluations of various attributes of the urban environment are seen to be originally stemming from the objective environment.” This is despite the fact that quality of urban life is ultimately viewed by McCrea as subjective.

Pacione’s framework diagram, shown in Figure 2, identifies three levels of specificity: whole life, domain, and subdomain. McCrea (2007) holds that “whole life may be conceptualised as satisfaction with overall life, which consists of satisfaction across a range of important life domains.” These include concepts such as satisfaction with work, with relationships, with personal health, and with community experiences (Yang 2008, 309). These domains in turn have subdomains that can include factors such as “housing conditions, employment or access to public facilities” (Pacione 2003b, 22). Domains and subdomains are all interrelated. In this research, rather than attempting to predefine domains that might be found as data collection unfolded, they emerged as a fluid component embedded into the research. Which domains are relevant to residents in the context of their housing choices and neighbourhood experiences, and how these domains are interrelated, was an outcome of coding the research data rather than a presupposed input into the research design, and is reported in Chapter 4 of this thesis.

Broader whole life sociological understandings of quality of urban life at a regional or national scale are beyond the scope of this research. Instead, the scope is shaped by concentrating on residents’ experiences in the physical or built environment at a local scale. In a similar way to Pacione (2003b), Marans and Stimson (2011, 60) found that “levels of satisfaction at explicit levels of spatial scale relate to the environment in which people live.” They add that satisfaction at a local scale specifically includes the subjective satisfaction residents have in their housing, the neighbourhood in which they live, and the community to which they relate.

In this study, satisfaction is related to intensification. The need to better understand the complex relationships between residents’ perceived quality of urban life and their experience of intensification on a local scale has been highlighted by a number of researchers (García-Mira et al. 2005, Compton 1994, Grayson and Young 1994, Ancell and Thompson-Fawcett 2008). Randolph (2004, 483), argues that “the
language of community has come back with a vengeance in policy areas that ignored it for many years.” He goes on to comment that “cities are becoming, perhaps more than ever before, collections of distinctive communities and neighbourhoods, all the more differentiated as the cities grow in size and complexity” (ibid.). He attributes this to the ever-evolving complexities of everyday life and the focus modern society places on the value of lifestyle opportunities and the availability of a multitude of activities and amenities in a community. He argues that an understanding of the choices made by residents at a local scale is essential if the true complexity of broader issues at a city-wide scale is to be later understood.

At a local scale, “the interaction between the multi-scaled dynamic forces of urban change are played out – housing markets, jobs markets, household change, the impacts of planning policy, for example – and the importance of the household itself as the nexus around which all these forces play out socially” (492). Randolph (ibid.) concludes that “a strong line of research is needed to explore how our cities are changing from the local level upwards.” His research introduced to this thesis the idea that the housing choices made by residents are some of the most important factors that contribute to perceived quality of urban life. Housing choice contributes to a resident's level of satisfaction, which influences the decision to stay in a particular location or to move (García-Mira et al. 2005).

Similarly, a key finding by Ancell and Thompson-Fawcett (2008) was that developing an understanding at a local scale of the complex issues associated with quality of urban life and its sub-aspects, such as neighbourhood satisfaction, is important when applying compact city policies in cities. They set their research in a social sustainability context before questioning the promotion of intensification, in light of projected urban growth in cities. They conducted qualitative face-to-face interviews with twenty-one inner city residents who live in higher density housing typologies in Christchurch, New Zealand. Their research provides further evidence that the process of interviewing residents to collect data about quality of urban life experiences is an appropriate research method for this qualitative research.

Furthermore, McCrea et al. (2011, 2012), in their examination of the impacts of intensification on quality of urban life experiences in the suburbs of Brisbane, emphasise that subjective quality of urban life research can be broadly conceptualised as either:

- all aspects of quality of urban life experienced within an urban environment; or
- only those aspects of quality of urban life derived from an urban environment (McCrea, Western, and Tung-Kai 2011, 296).
They choose to focus their research on the latter. These aspects, they argue, are most strongly aligned to consideration of how domains of satisfaction are derived from housing and neighbourhood experiences at a local scale (McCrea and Walters 2012, 192). This thesis is equally concerned with the impact, whether positive or negative, that intensification has on shaping residents’ subjective perceptions as they are derived from their housing choices. McCrea et al. (2011, 2012) affirmed the importance of researching at a local scale and questioning residents about their neighbourhood experiences and perceived satisfaction.

2.1.3 Summary

In summary, section 2.1.3 has identified the two predominant approaches to quality of urban life – objective and subjective – and how they can co-exist in quality of urban life research by asking subjectively about objective features within the built environment. It has also discussed conceptual models of subjective quality of urban life and how they are shaped by a consideration of the sum of residents’ perceptions and experiences and by an investigation of the judgements or choices from which these perceptions result. The conclusion reached is that subjective quality of urban life is an emergent construct of the research process. As a result, this thesis has been located within Pacione’s (2003b) five dimensional model for quality of urban life research and follows the thinking of McCrea et al. (2011, 2012) in researching at a local scale the subjective experiences of residents as they are derived from their housing and locational choices and their neighbourhood experiences and satisfaction.

Yang (2008, 309) argues that the subjective nature of quality of urban life has not been adequately addressed in urban planning and urban design literature. The chosen conceptual model will enable this research to add to a growing field of housing choices literature as part of addressing the shortage of subjective quality of urban life research in the urban planning and urban design disciplines.

2.2 Housing choices

Choosing a home is an important life decision and requires both the choice of a location and the choice of a housing typology. In this study, housing choices are approached from an urban planning and design perceptive where the interest is in understanding how choices relate to neighbourhood satisfaction and ultimately to quality of urban life experiences. In this context, housing choices are framed in the literature as trade-offs between housing needs and housing preferences, and constrained by price (Mead and McGregor 2007, 15, Yeoman and Akehurst 2015, Kelly, Weidmann, and Walsh 2011). Because many
residents cannot always afford their aspirational housing and locational preferences, trade-offs are required in terms of housing type, build quality, and neighbourhood desirability. Over the last thirty years, significant economic, social and technological changes have reshaped how residents conceptualise their dwelling and locational aspirations and, as a result, how they make their housing choices. Consequently, these choices have also affected how the urban form of cities has developed (Darroch Ltd 2010, 46, Preval, Chapman, and Howden-Chapman 2010, 34).

Research into housing choices illuminates demand issues in the housing market. Housing choices create housing demand in cities; an increasing demand for higher density attached housing typologies is necessary if intensification is to be delivered in cities trying to avoid sprawl. A key area of interest in this research is how people make these housing choices and how these choices are conditioned by a complex set of issues.

2.2.1 Trade-offs in the process of housing choices

The review of housing choices literature found that the idea that residents make trade-offs when deciding where to live is a core aspect of a number of the studies considered (Yeoman and Akehurst 2015, Kelly, Weidmann, and Walsh 2011, Dunbar and McDermott 2011, Randall 2008, Thomas, Walton, and Lamb 2010, Beattie and Haarhoff 2012b, Haarhoff et al. 2012). Trade-offs relate to housing choices through the idea of neighbourhood satisfaction and are therefore an integral aspect of this study. In a survey of 369 residents conducted by Walton, Murray, and Thomas (2008, 418), it was suggested “that people trade-off elements of their environment against each other for their overall neighbourhood satisfaction.” Dunbar and McDermott (2011) address the market demand for higher density housing and discuss the trade-offs made by residents from five higher density developments across five contrasting neighbourhoods in the New Zealand cities of Auckland, Wellington, and Tauranga. Data is gathered through a series of focus groups and through face-to-face interviews with residents. The study concludes that the housing market is made complex because residents have increasingly diverse needs, so they are engaging in multifarious and increasingly individualised trade-offs. These trade-offs are constrained by both affordability and locational preferences. They are complicated further by mismatches between housing supply and demand.

The idea of a trade-off between private space and urban amenities when making housing choices is also revealed in the literature (Mead and McGregor 2007, Randall 2008, Syme, McGregor, and Mead 2005, Wilkinson 2006). Locational preferences feature strongly in such trade-offs particularly in access to
“amenities (shops and facilities), open space, schools, employment, and transport connections, including public transport, social and community connections” (Mitchell 2011, 40). As well as broad neighbourhood locational choices, residents also “undertake micro-scale decisions about a location which relate to perceptions of neighbourhood safety, access to desired schools, ease of access to public transport, … ease of access to commuting routes, and proximity to shops” (Beacon Pathway Ltd 2010, 107).

Other researchers who consider choices and trade-offs include Thomas, Walton, and Lamb (2010) and Randall (2008). Thomas, Walton, and Lamb’s research is set within a quality of urban life context. Their study involved a quantitative online survey with 106 homeowners in Lower Hutt, New Zealand, which addressed the idea of making trade-offs when deciding where to live. Their study concluded that the trade-offs residents make prioritise neighbourhood features and typology features, such as house size (Thomas, Walton, and Lamb 2010, 264). Similarly, Randall’s (2008) study of housing choices in the province of Ontario, Canada, focused on both housing and neighbourhood choices, as well as on trade-offs. Randall conducted face-to-face interviews in conjunction with mail-back questionnaires. A key component was a visual preference survey. He used photographs of detached and attached typologies and a 5-point Likert scale to identify how residents perceived different housing types. Randall (2008, 34) found a problem with his method: because images rather than diagrams were used, biases emerged based on the interviewees’ preferred architectural styles. Some typologies appeared to have skewed results on the Likert scale: while interviewees might have discussed liking terraced houses, their aversion to the terraced house illustrated in the survey might have caused them to give it a low score on the Likert scale. Learning from the critique Randall made of his own methods, in this research an attempt to avoid such bias has been made by using simple black and white diagrams of different typologies to represent a range of housing types, rather than photographs. These diagrams can be seen in Appendix 7.

In addition, Myers and Gearin (2001, 635-637) connected current demographic trends with existing data from housing preference surveys conducted across The United States of America. Their research aim was to forecast the likely changes in demand for denser, more walkable neighbourhoods. In all the surveys they considered, they found that between 70% and 80% of respondents preferred low-density detached typologies for both themselves and others. They contrasted this finding with the demographic issue of a declining proportion of households with children and the ageing baby-boomer population. Their research concluded that American consumers have conflicting housing preferences, desiring walkability and accessible urban amenities yet wanting a detached dwelling. For example, they found that “while 74% of respondents to the 1998 Vermonters Attitudes on Sprawl Survey preferred a home in the suburbs to one similarly priced near transportation, work, and shopping, 48% of respondents also claimed that they
preferred communities with houses, stores, and services within walking distance of one another” (Myers and Gearin 2001, 639). These conflicting preferences, Myers and Gearin argue, suggest that housing consumers make implicit trade-offs when deciding where to live. In large part these trade-offs are attributed to the idea that “neither traditional neighbourhood design nor conventional suburban development may be the housing consumer’s ideal” (2001, 639). Their study was not able to consider the nature of these trade-offs, or how residents dealt with conflicting preferences. With this in mind, open-ended questions about the housing choices process were included in this research, with the intention of investigating these trade-offs in greater detail.

Housing choices research in Auckland has reported on two trends; the preference for detached housing typologies (Haarhoff et al. 2012, Dixon, Dupuis, and Lysnar 2001b, Dixon and Dupuis 2003), and increasing average house sizes in the city (Thomas, Walton, and Lamb 2010, 254). Thomas, Walton, and Lamb (2010) point to the idea that residents make trade-offs between factors such as typology, size and neighbourhood satisfaction and access to key infrastructure and urban amenities. However, there is research gap regarding these housing choice and trade-off processes and a need to better understand how residents assess the trade-offs they make when choosing where to live (Haarhoff, Hunt, et al. 2013, Beattie and Haarhoff 2012a, 2014, Haarhoff, Beattie, et al. 2013, Beattie and Haarhoff 2011, 2012b).

2.2.2 Summary

This literature review has highlighted the complexity of housing choices issues and the knowledge gaps that exist around how residents make trade-offs in their decisions. The relationships between preferences, choices, and the acceptance of higher density housing typologies are constantly changing as society changes. To ensure that emerging trends are captured in urban planning and design strategy, new research into this relationship is useful. In conclusion, the review of the literature on housing choices is significant in framing this research. It guides core research issues around quality of urban life, the role of urban amenities, and the complex trade-offs that are part of housing choices.

2.3 Neighbourhood satisfaction

to which people perceive their residential environment as able to meet their needs and further the attainment of their goals,” a domain over which urban planners and urban designers have influence. In this section, a review of the relevant literature of neighbourhood satisfaction is presented and addressed. Gruber and Shelton (1987, 303) argue that housing cannot be separated from its surroundings and a key aspect of overall satisfaction is dependent on neighbourhood satisfaction, derived from where the housing is situated, as well as from its actual or perceived design qualities. Researching neighbourhood satisfaction therefore is a core strand of this research, alongside housing choices, to consider subjective quality of urban life issues.

Sirgy and Cornwell (2002) developed three prior conceptual models to explain how satisfaction with neighbourhood features affected residents’ quality of urban life, before the conceptual model, shown in Figure 3, emerged from their data.

Figure 3. Sirgy and Cornwell’s (2002) conceptual model to explain how satisfaction with neighbourhood features affect residents’ quality of urban life (life satisfaction)
This thesis is located within Sirgy and Cornwell’s conceptual model by focusing on elucidating the relationship between satisfaction with neighbourhood features and neighbourhood satisfaction as one aspect of overall quality of urban life. This focal area is shown by a blue box in Figure 3.

In searching for examples of how best to approach the research focus on neighbourhood satisfaction, the work of Buys and Miller (2012) was particularly relevant. They report on a four-year (2006-2009) High Density Liveability Study conducted by Queensland University of Technology (QUT). Part of the study comprised twenty-four face-to-face qualitative interviews with residents living in attached housing typologies in Brisbane, Australia. Residents were asked about their overall residential satisfaction, which included a neighbourhood satisfaction component. Importantly, they were also asked to define their neighbourhood, which is a point of difference in the work of Buys and Miller (2012). A comparison of results is problematic where interviewees are not asked to define their neighbourhoods because it is unclear whether they are talking about comparable geographic areas and urban scales. This led to the realisation that, in line with the QUT study discussed by Buys and Miller (2012), it is important to ask interviewees to first define their neighbourhoods, before asking about their neighbourhood satisfaction.

This notion was affirmed when the work of McCrea and Walters (2012) was considered. They also conducted interview-based subjective housing choices research in Brisbane, Australia. In their study, seventy residents in two suburban neighbourhoods were asked about neighbourhood likes and dislikes and the effect they thought their neighbourhood had on their quality of urban life experiences. Gathering both likes and dislikes from residents helped to build a more complete picture of the reasoning behind neighbourhood satisfaction. Their research also sought to develop a better understanding of the effects of intensification on the quality of urban life of residents in existing neighbourhoods. This study therefore cemented the way that quality of urban life and housing and locational choices are inextricably interlinked in this research. Furthermore, questions about neighbourhood likes and dislikes were included in the interviews conducted in this research (see Appendix 6).

2.3.1 Resident perceptions of density and intensification

association of low density environments with high quality of life experiences. This notion, Howley argues,
will need to change if population growth is to be contained and sprawl avoided.

The research by Howley is contextualised by discourse about sustainability versus liveability issues and
focuses on researching residential mobility and housing satisfaction in downtown Dublin, Ireland, through
270 questionnaires with residents across fifty developments. While Howley’s research focussed
exclusively on downtown areas, rather than considering neighbourhoods in the broader metropolitan
area as this study does, a key lesson is that the relationship between density and the idea of
neighbourhood satisfaction is all too often taken for granted and not interrogated in subjective housing
choices research. Investigating subjective perceptions of density, it was discovered, is an essential aspect
of linking neighbourhood perceptions to residential satisfaction. A section of questions about perceived
density was therefore included in the interview questions (see Appendix 6).

Additionally, much subjective housing choices research discusses an entrenched preference for detached
typologies and the resultant resistance to increased densities and intensification (Dunbar and McDermott
that preferences are changing and encourage further research into how intensification is perceived by
residents (Preval, Chapman, and Howden-Chapman 2010, Dixon and Dupuis 2003, Yeoman and Akehurst
with twenty-one residents of low density detached typologies, who are neighbours of infill development,
to research local perceptions of intensification in Christchurch, New Zealand. A Likert-scale based
questionnaire was then conducted with 261 residents to also gauge their perceptions of infill housing in
Christchurch. The research was contextualised within the sustainability debate but focussed on exploring
the entrenched social preferences for ownership and traditional forms of low density living that exist in
Christchurch. Ultimately, it was found that the residents interviewed were ambivalent towards higher
density typologies.

Alongside discussions of anti-density sentiment and entrenched preferences for detached typologies, the
growing need for an increasing quantity of higher density housing to be incorporated into existing
neighbourhoods was considered by a number of researchers (Ancell and Thompson-Fawcett 2008, Alves
density is also often connected to housing aspirations research by considering the supply side of housing
Alves (2006), for example, addresses the issue of why providing more higher density housing in Australia’s metropolitan regions has been so hard to achieve. He conducted surveys of the designers, developers, and council officials, and some residents, who were involved in the development processes of two case study projects in an eastern municipality of Melbourne, Australia. Another example is Dixon, Dupuis and Lysnar (2001a, 2001b, 2002, 2003) who published a series of articles about their qualitative interview-based research into higher density housing experiences. They conducted fifty-one face-to-face interviews with residents of higher density housing in New Lynn in Auckland, to ask them about their housing experiences and neighbourhood perceptions. Their key findings focused on a concern about the construction quality of higher density housing and the deep-seated preferences among interviewees for detached typologies.

The research by Dixon and Dupuis was used as a precedent in the work of Alves, although he is critical of the lack of detail presented in the published material that came out of their research. Alves (2006, 71) comments that “while Dixon and Dupuis clearly identify some of the key questions that higher density development raises about urban governance and the management of urban development, one of the chief omissions from the study is any attempt to relate its findings to the operations of the housing market.” An understanding of both supply and demand ultimately contributes to an understanding of housing choices; after all, residents cannot buy, no matter how much they would like to, housing that does not exist. It is this failing that Yeoman and Akehurst (2015) try to correct in their study of housing choices in Auckland, by asking residents about both their aspirations and what choices are likely, given their actual earnings-based ability to pay. While the supply side of housing would be important to discuss when considering the results gathered in this research, focusing predominantly on the demand side of development was of greater relevance, because housing and locational aspirations and choices are a core aspect of understanding the acceptance of intensification.

Reporting on a Building Research Association of New Zealand (BRANZ) survey with 225 recent movers about their housing expectations and preferences, Page (2008) concluded that it seemed likely the housing currently being built in Auckland would not be suitable for the future population structure of the city. Tied to this was the notion that understanding demographic shifts was also a critical component of considering housing choices (Dunbar and McDermott 2011, Myers and Gearin 2001, Preval, Chapman, and Howden-Chapman 2010, McCrea and Walters 2012). The relationship between supply and demand...
issues as they are affected by demographics is key to understanding the analysis of any research into subjective housing choices.

2.3.2 The role of urban amenities

Embedded within both housing choices and neighbourhood satisfaction literature is the notion that urban amenities had a role to play in satisfaction and choices. Urban amenities are discussed in various ways and different terminology is used in different studies. In this research, urban amenities are understood to mean specific facilities that contribute to the living experiences of residents (Kelly 2006). The term ‘urban amenities’ is used in this thesis to mean amenities both within and beyond the residents’ neighbourhoods, amenities that contribute to their perceived quality of urban life.

Schmitz (2003, 62) proposes that to consider urban amenities is to programme the urban environment to meet residents’ needs. Urban amenities make up the non-residential built form in a neighbourhood and are linked to the daily life needs of residents. Gallent and Wong (2009, 355) reason that the delivery of a quality compact city, in policy terms, is dependent on the provision of the urban amenities and services that contribute to the quality of urban life experiences of residents in their neighbourhoods. Some examples given by Randall (2008, 47) include supermarkets, convenience stores, schools and professional services – such as a medical clinic or a dentist. Public sector amenities provided by local government (such as parks, public squares and recreational facilities) stand alongside private sector amenities (such as cafés, restaurants, retail and other goods and services providers.)

In his survey of 125 residents in Ontario, Randall (ibid., 51) found “a substantial minority of respondents (i.e. one-fifth) are more receptive to living at modestly higher densities in exchange for proximity to urban amenities like convenience stores, coffee shops, specialty grocers, restaurants and better bus service.” His results suggest willingness to trade-off living at higher densities against enhanced urban amenities. There is little data available to help examine the possibility of this kind of trade-off occurring in Auckland.

A study by Beacon Pathway Ltd (2010, 98) for The Centre for Housing Research New Zealand looked at the determinants of tenure and location choices by twenty to forty year olds in the Auckland Region. The study found that, while dwellings are important, so too is their location. Similarly, Saville-Smith (2010) found that, for most of the 87 focus group participants in their research, location was a critical factor when deciding where to live. Location was defined by participants as including proximity to family and friends, proximity to parks, green spaces and recreational and education amenities (Saville-Smith 2010,
78). The study concluded that an important aspect of good housing design is access to urban amenities within a walkable distance. Similarly, Buys and Miller (2012) found that 94% of their survey respondents chose to live in a high density housing typology for its proximity to the city centre. A further 71% chose high density living for proximity to urban amenities in the neighbourhood and 71% because of facilities within the residential development. They described the role of urban amenities as providing a “lifestyle advantage” for residents. McCrea, Marans, and Stimson (2011, 81) are more overt in their view that urban amenities are tied to neighbourhood satisfaction, claiming that it is “predicated by the provision of services and facilities such as education services, emergency services, public transport, parks, shopping and leisure opportunities.”

However, not one of the aforementioned studies was able to identify how different types of urban amenities were used and valued by residents. This knowledge would have helped to build a more complex picture of the role of urban amenities in both neighbourhood satisfaction and housing and locational choices. This shortcoming, with regard to the role of urban amenities, led to the incorporation of various questions in this research that focused on addressing this knowledge gap.

Dunbar and McDermott (2011) link the role of urban amenities to the trade-offs residents make when deciding where to live. They state that “the nature and range of facilities within easy reach (of a resident’s home) also enter the trade-off, including shops, schools, banks, and public transport” (vii). They describe urban amenities as a “must have” to ensure the marketability of higher density housing (39). Equally, McCrea and Walters (2012, 196) discover a tension between wanting the additional amenities that could conceivably come with intensification and not wanting to become overcrowded. As a result, the accessibility of urban amenities is also a critical issue tied to the trade-offs residents make when deciding where to live (Dunbar and McDermott 2011, Lau Leby and Hashim 2010, Preval, Chapman, and Howden-Chapman 2010, McCrea, Marans, and Stimson 2011). McCrea, Marans, and Stimson (2011, 81) note that “it has been shown that access to services and facilities is an important component of subjective quality of urban life.” They also triangulate the relationship between neighbourhood satisfaction, access to urban amenities, and housing choices (ibid.).

Randall (2008, 31), observes that urban amenities can be perceived differently, depending on such factors as a resident’s age, education, household size, and income. Commenting on this idea, Schmitz et al. (2003, 13) consider there must be a range of urban amenities accessible because neighbourhoods are diverse places where residents “can make social connections, educate their children, obtain the goods and services that meet their daily needs, and even earn their livelihoods, all within the community.” Gray and
Hill (2010, 42) also confirm that “the right mix of public and private amenity is critical to promoting urban intensification.” As this research develops further, the issues associated with the subjective qualities of urban amenities and how they are valued will need to be explored in greater detail.

Among the few researchers to discuss urban amenities as a core issue, rather than as a research finding, are Mulligan and Carruthers (2011). They define urban amenities as “site- or region-specific goods and services that make some locations particularly attractive for living and working” (ibid. 108). They consider them to “influence the consumption decisions of households” (109). Mulligan and Carruthers (107) also argue that urban amenities “are key to understanding quality of life because they are precisely what make some places attractive for living and working, especially relative to other places that do not have them and/or are burdened with their opposites, disamenities.” The work of Mulligan and Carruthers clarified the validity of focusing on investigating the role of urban amenities, that it is a valuable and under-researched aspect of quality of urban life studies.

2.3.2.1 Urban economics and urban amenities

In addition to being embedded in subjective housing choices research, Clark et al. (2002) argue that the study of the role of urban amenities in neighbourhood satisfaction has emerged predominantly from urban economics research. Marans and Stimson (2011, 19) affirm this idea, commenting that, within the context of quality of urban life studies, the role of urban amenities and, more broadly, urban amenity, has typically been seen from an economic perspective.

Several economic studies have focussed on developing theoretical and hedonic models to identify economic frameworks that address the fiscal, rather than the spatial, impact of residential housing choices at neighbourhood and regional scales (Davies 1974, Cho et al. 2010, Ferguson et al. 2007, Kim 2006, Powe, Garrod, and Willis 1995, Partridge, Olfert, and Alasia 2007). Mulligan and Carruthers (2011, 110) argue that economists generally prefer a hedonic modelling approach, “because it is based on what people actually do, not on what they say they would do.” As well as residential choices, economic studies have

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3 A significant issue raised when considering the literature was the confusion between the terms “urban amenities” versus “urban amenity” in some studies. While urban amenities are specific facilities, urban amenity is a broad term that describes the perceived quality or character of a space or place which makes it appealing to residents. The convenience, accessibility, and design of urban amenities is only a contributing factor to the urban amenity experienced in an area. Urban amenity is also affected by environmental factors such as perceived noise levels, air or water quality, and socio-cultural aspects such as a sense of community. The Ministry for the Environment in New Zealand has conducted extensive urban amenity research (Bell 2000c, 2000a-b, Hill and Spargo 1998, Hill 1999, Bell 2000a-a, 2001). To look at the complete spectrum of factors that contribute to urban amenity is beyond the scope of this study, although factors such as noise were brought into the discussions by interviewees.
assessed the impact of urban amenities on residential pricing (Johnson Gardner Consulting 2007, Krumm 1980) and considered aspects of the demand for density in cities (Glaeser, Kolko, and Saiz 2000, Rappaport 2008). Some studies have also sought to identify the economic value of walkable neighbourhoods from within smart growth and new urbanism paradigms (Sohn, Moudon, and Lee 2012).

Studies that consider the economics of amenity alongside quality of urban life issues predominantly fall into three categories. Some are structured around the jobs vs. amenities debate and consider the role of urban amenities in attracting both firms and knowledge workers to cities (Ferguson et al. 2007, Chen and Rosenthal 2008). Others consider the broad concept of quality of urban life, including issues of noise and air quality, neighbourhood charm and notions of place in their models (McNulty, Jacobson, and Penne 1985, McNulty 1985, Bartik and Kerry Smith 1987, Luger 1996). A third group focuses on the quality of urban life delivered by a specific type of urban amenities, such as natural amenities (Rickman and Rickman 2011, Smith 1978, Moss 2006), leisure amenities (Lloyd and Auld 2003), or open spaces (Smith, Poulos, and Kim 2002).

Principally, hedonic studies of urban amenity and urban amenities have an inbuilt understanding that, when deciding where to live, residents are consuming urban amenities (Bartik and Kerry Smith 1987, 1207). These studies, like urban planning research, are similarly contextualised by considering urban growth management issues such as population growth, albeit from a specific viewpoint. They also have the same end goal of understanding quality of urban life experiences to better manage urban growth (McNulty 1985). It can be concluded that there are a number of similarities between subjective housing choices research and an urban economics approach to researching the role of urban amenities. Both research approaches argue “that the role of urban density in facilitating consumption is extremely important and understudied” (Glaeser, Kolko, and Saiz 2000, 1). Both approaches also comment on the importance of understanding demographics and how different "age groups respond differently to combinations of amenities" (Ferguson et al. 2007, 99). Within urban economic research, both Mathur and Stein (2005, 252) and McNulty et al. (1985, 30) refer to urban amenities as “quality of life factors”. Howie, Murphy, and Wicks (2010, 235) confirm that “urban amenities are generally accepted as being important to a household’s sense of place” and Clark et al. (2002, 494) identify urban amenities as "key to understanding the deficiencies in established theories of urban growth."

Critically, a number of urban economic research models are premised on the hypothesis also addressed in this research, that urban amenities affect the quality of urban life experienced by residents, and in turn
are also a component of their decision-making when deciding where to live (Frenkel, Bendit, and Kaplan 2013, Glaeser, Kolko, and Saiz 2000, Sirgy and Cornwell 2002, Mathur and Stein 2005).

### 2.3.3 Summary

While the overall significance of urban amenities becomes clear when multiple studies are reviewed together, their importance as a core issue appears to have been largely overlooked in most subjective housing choices research. Although a number of studies do discuss urban amenities in their findings, they are rarely a research focal point (Ancell and Thompson-Fawcett 2008, Bijoux, Lietz, and Saville-Smith 2007, Buys and Miller 2012, Randall 2008, Saville-Smith 2010, McCrea and Walters 2012, Stimson, McCrea, and Western 2011).

It was found that little research seeks to identify how different types of urban amenities were used and valued in relation to the perceived quality of urban life experienced by residents. Buys and Miller (2012, 232) found that “first-hand resident evaluation of the day-to-day experiences of living in higher density neighbourhoods remains extremely limited.” Developing this knowledge will help build a more complex picture of the role of urban amenities in both neighbourhood satisfaction and housing choices.

### 2.4 Literature review conclusion and the emergent research aims

Three areas of research have been bought together through the literature review. They are:

- subjective quality of urban life,
- housing choices and trade-offs, and
- neighbourhood satisfaction and the role of urban amenities.

A consideration of subjective quality of urban life necessitates research into both higher density housing choices, including the trade-offs residents make when deciding where to live, and neighbourhood satisfaction, including the value ascribed to and usage patterns of urban amenities. Therefore, each of the aforementioned sections is dependent on the others to develop a meaningful understanding of subjective quality of urban life as a whole. A conceptual model for a subjective approach to quality of urban life research was found by locating the research within Pacione’s (2003b) five-dimensional framework for quality of urban life research and Sirgy and Cornwell’s (2002) conceptual model to explain how satisfaction with neighbourhood features affects residents’ quality of urban life.
The literature review frames three interrelated research aims:

- To investigate current perceptions of density, intensification, and higher density typologies, to better understand how they inform perceptions of higher density living environments.

- To investigate the choices and trade-offs made by residents who have already chosen higher density attached typologies, in order to understand how and why they have made these choices.

- To investigate the role of urban amenities in the everyday lives of residents and the contribution they make to their neighbourhood satisfaction.

These aims lead to the development of three corresponding research questions which are subsequently introduced in Chapter 3, section 3.1.
Chapter 3  Research Design and Methodology

Chapter 3 develops from the introduction and literature review and outlines the research design. Initially, the research questions are identified and the methodological approach that guided the development of the research is discussed. The interview methods are outlined, along with the associated ethical considerations, and the data coding process explained. The Auckland case study suburbs and case study developments from which the interviewees were sourced are justified and described. To conclude the chapter, the research challenges are acknowledged. This leads to a discussion of the results in Chapter 4.

3.1  Research questions

The research aims framed three research questions. These questions are relevant to cities, such as Auckland, that are seeking to intensify existing neighbourhoods to accommodate growth and avoid sprawl, while also enhancing quality of urban life for their residents.

The research questions are:

1) How do perceptions of density, intensification, and higher density typologies\(^4\) inform perceptions of higher density living?

2) How are factors that influence higher density housing choices reflected in the trade-offs that residents make when deciding where to live?

3) How do urban amenities inform and shape the neighbourhood satisfaction that residents derive from their environs?

\(^4\) Higher density typologies in an urban context are understood to mean varied forms of housing that are at densities higher than the traditional single- or double-storey standalone home on a quarter-acre (1012m\(^2\)) section.
These questions involving resident perceptions relate to personal experiences of higher density living and so information was collected directly from a sample of residents through qualitative interviews. The purpose of data collection was not to gain representative resident responses from a structured large-scale survey. Rather, it was to gain an understanding of the complex issues related to the research questions. To achieve this, structured, in-depth, interviews were conducted with residents at a local venue they nominated, such as a café or library. Some quantitative data was also collected for the purposes of describing the resident profiles.

The issues at play in developing appropriate interview questions that would adequately yield data to address the research questions were challenging. Choosing an appropriate methodology to guide the researcher and underpin the research was critical. The relevance of a qualitative research approach in the study of quality of urban life issues is discussed by Tonon (2015, 4), who considers inductive research to be essential for developing an understanding of the perceptions and experiences of residents. Tonon identifies several inductive methodological frameworks to guide interview-based research and one of these, Grounded Theory, became particularly useful in developing the research design.

3.2 A complex issue requires a complex methodological response

Grounded Theory is a rigorous methodology that supports the study of complex urban phenomena and provides a responsive way to consider important contemporary urban growth management issues. There are three key iterations of Grounded Theory (See Appendix 1 for additional details). Constructivist Grounded Theory proved most appropriate for this study because it is designed to guide research that explores the paradoxical heterogeneity of lived experiences (Charmaz 2006) and the “multiple realities” (Diefenbach 2008, 892) of residents. The research questions present a complex, interrelated set of issues that create methodological difficulties. They required the use of Constructivist Grounded Theory as a guiding methodological approach, since it is designed for dealing with complex under-researched fields of study (O'Reilly, Paper, and Marx 2012, Sousa and Hendriks 2006).

Methodologically, Constructivist Grounded Theory argues that the nature of reality cannot be found by seeing it through a theoretical lens. Instead, to respond to the issues being faced, a researcher who elects to use Constructivist Grounded Theory must work to understand how actors interpret their subjective realities (Suddaby 2006, 636). Charmaz (2005, 509), the “leading proponent” (Mills, Bonner, and Francis 2006, 6) of the theory, argues that “constructivist grounded theorists take a reflexive stance on modes of knowing and representing studied life.” As a result, their studies naturally draw from several substantive
areas (Suddaby 2006, 635); this is aligned to the way that studying the acceptance of higher density living sits at the nexus between a number of overlapping urban research areas, including urban growth management, quality of urban life, housing choices, and neighbourhood satisfaction research.

In addition, this approach suited the cognitive style of the researcher — it is “ontologically relativist and epistemologically subjectivist” (Mills, Bonner, and Francis 2006, 6) — and gave the researcher a clear set of tools to guide her through multiple topic iterations and refinements. The methodological considerations when engaging a Constructivist Grounded Theory approach are outlined in Appendix 2.

Therefore, because it is methodical in extracting pertinent data, Constructivist Grounded Theory was chosen as the guiding approach for this research. It informed all aspects of the research process from shaping how the scope of the study evolved, through to how the literature was integrated, to the development of the interview questions and the subsequent analysis of the data. The ways that Constructivist Grounded Theory informed the research process is outlined in Appendix 3, which talks through the research process step-by-step and provides transparency by elucidating the research design and showing how the research was organised around eight research tasks or phases.

### 3.3 The qualitative interview process

Interviewees were recruited through mailbox letter-drops in chosen case study suburbs and housing developments. The process of choosing these suburbs and developments is outlined in section 3.6. Mailbox letter-drops were made only to residents living in selected case study developments and it was then their choice to respond to the mailbox-drop letter and arrange a suitable time to be interviewed. No willing volunteer was rejected as an interviewee and any member of the household who was over eighteen years of age could respond. This resulted in a mix of responses from home owners, renters, and flatmates. Interviewees who were members of a couple or family spoke primarily about their own preferences and perceptions when it came to quality of life and intensification questions. However, most naturally wove in commentary about how their family or partner had been involved in making their housing choices and trade-offs. That the interviewees constituted such a wide demographic range was fortuitous. In total, thirty-six females and twenty-one males responded to the mailbox letter-drops. It is unclear as to why there were a greater number of women respondents. As the researcher did not seek the interviewees’ reasons for responding to the mailbox letter-drops, it would be speculation to comment on them. During the data coding process, the researcher did conduct a sorting of the responses in NVivo.
according to gender, in order to identify if any patterns existed among the findings. However, no gender-based patterns were evident.

The fifty-seven interviews, which were an hour or more in duration, followed a structured interview method (White 2011, 259) with “open-ended questioning” (Creswell 2009, 8). This was aligned to Constructivist Grounded Theory interviewing practices, which encourage the in-depth exploration of ideas and experiences (Charmaz 2006, 25). Questions were developed using the literature review data and by reviewing previous studies in the field. A copy of the final base list of interview questions is provided in Appendix 7. The questions were designed to focus on exploring the following aspects:

- Household structure, dwelling tenure, current employment and travel habits
- Housing experiences and aspirations
- Housing choices and trade-offs when deciding where to live
- Perceptions of quality of urban life, neighbourhood likes and dislikes
- Perceptions of urban intensification and density
- Perceptions of the value of and the role of urban amenities in daily life experiences
- The use and accessibility of urban amenities

During the process of discussing the above aspects, interviewees were also asked to define key terms used in the research. Charmaz (2005, 511) asserts that “locating the data strengthens the foundation for making theoretical insights and for providing evidence for evaluative claims” (2005, 511). Charmaz (ibid.) also recommends the juxtaposing of “participants’ definitions against academic or sociological notions” as part of this process. Following this advice, the researcher asked interviewees to define the terms ‘quality of life,’ ‘quality of urban life,’ ‘density,’ ‘urban intensification,’ and ‘urban amenities’ in order that their definitions could be compared to those found in the relevant literature and policy and strategy documentation. This also enabled the researcher to generate comparisons between how these concepts have been theorised in the literature and how they were considered by interviewees.

While the interviews were conducted, the literature review continued, enabling the researcher to review and refine the interview process. Coding the data, described in section 3.5, led the researcher to modify and expand the line of questioning as the initial interviews were conducted. The instances where questions were added or modified for interviewees are identified in the results chapter of the thesis. This ensured the research was responsive to the emerging themes in the data and framed by the views and experiences of the interviewees as they were expressed. This iterative process came to be valued greatly
by the researcher in terms of ensuring that the research was both robust and useful, because it was responding to current urban issues that could be addressed by professionals rather than being confined to academic theory.

### 3.4 Ethical considerations

This research was conducted in full compliance with the requirements of the Human Participants Ethics Committee (HPEC) at The University of Auckland. Approval was given to conduct the required interviews under reference number 10005 on the third of September 2013 and was valid for three years.

Interviewees, recruited by direct mail advertising through mailbox-letter drops, were interviewed by the researcher between the twenty-third of September 2013 and the third of April 2014 at local cafés or libraries they chose in their neighbourhood. Participation in the research was voluntary and interviewees were not subjected to coercion in any way. Each interview was an hour long and was recorded and transcribed with the written consent of the interviewees.

The mailbox-drop letter delivered to potential interviewees identified the researcher, why the research was being conducted, and what the research was about. Issues of confidentiality and anonymity were addressed in the letter. It also explained the time involved and that a NZ$50 supermarket voucher would be given to each participant at the end of the interview to thank them for their time in taking part. The funding for this part of the research was provided by The University of Auckland Faculty Research Development Fund (Grant No. 3703932). A copy of the mailbox-drop letter is included in Appendix 4.

Before each interview began, interviewees were given a one-page participant information sheet that outlined the purpose of the study, who was undertaking the study, the project procedures, data collection, data storage and use, confidentiality, and the right to withdraw from participation in the research. The participant information sheet also included the researcher’s contact details if participants wanted to clarify any information before consenting to take part in the study. A copy of the participant information sheet is included in Appendix 5. Each interviewee then signed a consent form to participate. A copy of the consent form is included in Appendix 6.

To maintain anonymity, interviewees’ names have not been recorded in this thesis (or in any other published documentation) and the interview transcriptions and information were not viewed by any second or third parties, other than the thesis supervisory team. The transcribers were required to sign a
confidentiality agreement (see Appendix 8). Interviewees were able to choose to have the recorder turned off at any time during the interview, although no interviewees exercised this right. They also had the right to withdraw from participation at any time during the interview and for a period of two weeks after the date of the interview, although no interviewees did so.

In total, fifty-seven residents responded from a total of 1012 mailbox letter-drops. The process of identifying potential case study developments and doing mailbox letter-drops continued until no new information was discovered and data saturation was reached (Jones and Alony 2011, 106).

### 3.5 The data coding process

Charmaz comments that “coding is the first step in taking an analytic stance toward the data” (2005, 517). There are three key stages of coding in Constructivist Grounded Theory – Open Coding, Selective Coding, and Theoretical Coding. Collectively, these stages are known as Substantive Coding. The three stages are diagrammed in Figure 4.

![Figure 4. Diagram of Constructivist Grounded Theory Substantive Coding (adapted from Jones and Alony 2011, 104)](image-url)
The analysis of the interview data began as the first resident interviews were conducted and continued for a year after the final interview. Initially, the Open Coding of the interview data was done manually, line-by-line by the researcher, as each interview was transcribed. The close reading of the data enabled the researcher to develop a strong familiarity with the views that interviewees had expressed and the stories they had shared, not only in isolation but also collectively when their stories were compared and contrasted with each other. The researcher also re-listened to all the interview recordings as an added step of familiarisation. This is in line with the Constructivist Grounded Theory recommendations of Charmaz (2005, 517) who identifies that researchers should “give their data multiple readings and renderings.” By this stage the researcher had created a matrix of core categories and was familiar enough with the data that it became manageable to reorganise and begin comparing the initial categories with one another. At this point the researcher realised that the second stage of coding could begin. The matrix of core and sub categories is recorded in Appendix 9.

The second stage, Selective Coding, began when the initial core categories or themes became apparent during Open Coding. Selective Coding is characterised by the constant comparison of these core categories until strong patterns form among the findings. As Selective Coding began, all the interview data was transferred to the qualitative analysis software programme NVivo, to manage the complexity of the comparative analysis. Further line-by-line coding, as a measure to ensure that no aspects of the data had been overlooked, was conducted. This is in keeping with the Constructivist Grounded Theory practices discussed by Glaser and Holton (2004, 14), who identify that line-by-line coding enables the researcher “to verify and saturate categories,” adding that “the result is a rich, dense theory with the feeling that nothing has been left out” (ibid.). The researcher also re-read critical passages of the interviews during Selective Coding to analyse key sentences and words so as to better connect data with the categories and ensure there were no key ideas being overlooked. Text-search-coding, a function of the NVivo software, was used as an additional check for key terms and themes.

The process of coding and comparison must continue until no new patterns or dimensions emerge from the data, when “data saturation” is reached (Holton 2010, 21, Suddaby 2006, 637). Jones and Alony claim data saturation is “both a peculiarity and strength of grounded theory” (2011, 107) because, “unlike other methods of qualitative analysis which acquire rigor through multiple levels of confirmation or triangulation Grounded Theory builds an analytical case by constantly seeking new categories of evidence” (ibid.). The robustness of Constructivist Grounded Theory therefore relies on data saturation being achieved. In this research, 203 categories and four core categories were identified before saturation
was reached during Selective Coding. These categories can be seen in the nodal diagrams that were exported from NVivo (see Appendix 10).

When no new categories emerge from the data, Selective Coding can transition into the third and final stage: Theoretical Coding. In this stage the categories identified through Open and Selective Coding are re-analysed and compared to one another to test their validity and identify the causal relationships between them. This process “provides the researcher with analytical criteria for the development of conceptual relationships between categories and their relevance to the literature” (Jones and Alony 2011, 108). In this research the layers of detail embedded within each of the subcategories was explored during Selective Coding. This meant that the researcher was able to develop a clearer understanding of the nuanced reasoning behind the perceptions and preferences expressed by interviewees.

In addition to coding the data, the researcher also coded the interviewees by assigning them attributes using the NVivo software. Attributes included factors such as age, previous housing experiences, and geographic location. A full list of the interviewee attributes is provided in Appendix 11. During Theoretical Coding the researcher returned to the attribute divisions to determine whether key demographic and geographical factors affected how residents responded about particular core and sub-categories. These observations were used to compare the validity of certain categories and to test whether or not the opinions recorded in the data were from a broad or narrow grouping of interviewees. For example, by considering the attributes of interviewees who spoke positively about intensification it could be determined whether these positive opinions were held by various interviewees or only specific age groups or ethnic backgrounds or other key attributes. This allowed the researcher to explain certain opinions; if playgrounds were only discussed by the interviewees who had families, their value could be linked to this life stage, rather than it being a more widely held opinion.

Throughout this three-part coding process, a simultaneous process of researcher note-taking, known as memoing, occurred. Memos can be described as “theoretical notes about the data and the conceptual connections between categories” (Holton 2010, 32). Writing memos enriches the research process because it encourages the researcher to engage immediately with the data collected and enables the early generation of conceptual theoretical ideas (Glaser and Holton 2004, 8). It also affords analytical flexibility to the researcher, unique to Constructivist Grounded Theory (Evans 2013).

In this research, the researcher wrote memos about her thoughts on each core and sub-category and used them to collect notes about the key findings of the research. As part of memoing, diagramming was also
carried out. Firstly, the diagrams created were used to focus on the macro scale of understanding how the aspects of this complex topic were interconnected (Hernandez 2009, 57). Secondly, the diagrams were used to explore those categories that were identified during the coding process that spanned multiple interview questions. In addition, because diagramming was already a familiar process for the researcher, it created an instant affinity with Constructivist Grounded Theory coding methods and gave the researcher confidence to use them. Some examples of the memos and diagrams created by the researcher are available in Appendix 12.

To be most effective, memos need to be ‘sorted’ and integrated back into the data through the constant comparison process as part of coding (Hernandez 2009, 56); by taking this approach, memos inform the way the researcher analyses the data. Glaser and Holton (2004, 19) comment, “with sorting, data and ideas are theoretically ordered” to ensure the completeness of the data analysis. During each stage of coding, but particularly during Theoretical Coding, the memos were compared with the categories created in NVivo and used to restructure how the categories were arranged and considered.

Ultimately, the three-tiered process of Constructivist Grounded Theory coding provided a clear structure with which to analyse the data gathered throughout the research. It provided a comprehensive set of analytical tools with which the researcher could identify and engage. The results presented in the subsequent chapter are the completed outcome of this coding process.

3.6 **The selection of case study suburbs**

The question that arose following the selection of a guiding research methodology was how to choose where to source interviewees who currently lived in attached housing typologies in Auckland. Two decisions needed to be made:

- How could case study suburbs be chosen in order to gather data from interviewees from a range of differing suburbs?
- How could case study developments be chosen in order to gather data from interviewees from a range of attached typologies?

This section is about how the case study suburbs were selected. The next section, 3.7, is about how the case study developments, from within which interviewees were sourced, were selected.
The process of deciding how and from where to collect the data is known in Constructivist Grounded Theory as Theoretical Sampling (Denzin and Lincoln 2011). Jones and Alony (2011) identify two main steps involved in Theoretical Sampling. The first is maximizing differences. This requires varied characteristics to be encouraged in the sample size to gain alternative points of view on the same subject. This ensures that coding categories can be fully developed and that data saturation can occur (Charmaz 2006, 113). Maximising differences was encouraged by choosing case study suburbs that had key variances among them, in addition to their underlying similarities. Potential case study suburbs needed to have varied conditions in their built form and urban structure. Choosing suburbs at varying distances and in varying directions from the CBD ensured the suburbs were from a representative range of morphological periods in the city’s spatial evolution (Gu 2010), and have varied urban character and heritage. Interviewees would therefore have varied experiences in terms of the types of urban environments they were accustomed to, including their scale and urban grain. The suburbs would also have varied public transport offerings in terms of type and frequency depending on the scale and location of their suburb. Also for the purpose of maximising differences, residents from a broad range of demographics were interviewed, as discussed further in section 4.1.

The second step is to minimize differences where the researcher chooses to target interviewees who share similar experiences and associations to the subject under examination. It was for this reason that all the case study suburbs had an established town centre with a range of urban amenities so that all the interviewees would be able to discuss how they engaged with these facilities. The chosen suburbs already had a range of attached typologies within walking distance of the town centre, to ensure that there would be suitable options for case study developments to be chosen: interviewees all had experience living at higher densities than was the norm around them. Lastly, the selected suburbs had experienced growth for a sustained period over the last fifteen years or more. This meant that all the interviewees were living in environments that had changed while they had been living there, albeit to varying degrees.

Following the logic of Theoretical Sampling set out by Jones and Alony (2011), a list of criteria was compiled to guide the selection process. The aim was to select suburbs that met the criteria described below. Case study suburbs needed to be:

- located in different areas of the city, including being in differing directions and at differing distances from the CBD to provide a variety of urban conditions,
- an established suburb with an established town centre,
- an area that already has a range of attached typologies within walking distance of the town centre, and
- suburbs that have experienced growth for a sustained period over the last fifteen years or more.

After considering a variety of options and combinations, four areas were selected as case study suburbs in Auckland: Takapuna, Kingsland, Botany, and the Te Atatu Peninsula. Their alignment with the selection criteria is shown in Figure 5 and their location in Auckland is shown in Figure 6.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case Study Suburb</th>
<th>Map #</th>
<th>Direction from the CBD</th>
<th>Distance from the CBD (km)</th>
<th>Has a town centre</th>
<th>Has a range of attached typologies within walking distance of the town centre</th>
<th>Has experienced sustained urban growth for fifteen years or more</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Takapuna</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>North</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kingsland</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Southwest</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Botany Downs</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Southeast</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Te Atatu Peninsula</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>West</td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 5.** Information about the chosen case study suburbs

![Map of Auckland showing case study suburbs](image)

**Figure 6.** The location of the four case study suburbs in Auckland
The four chosen case study suburbs are located in the north, west, southeast, and southwest of Auckland and are between 4.3 kilometres and twenty kilometres from the CBD. All are established, as opposed to greenfield suburbs. They have established town centres with access to a range of urban amenities. All have a range of attached housing typologies within walking distance of their town centres. They represent different morphological periods in the city’s spatial evolution (Gu 2010). All have experienced strong increases in both rental and owner-occupier higher density developments. Therefore, they have attached housing options that could be chosen as suitable case study developments, from within which interviewees could be sought. Although the availability and proximity of a range of urban amenities was a similarity between the suburbs, the type of amenities available did differ. For example, Takapuna and the Te Atatu Peninsula were in closer proximity to natural amenities than the other neighbourhoods. Kingsland was close to a regional sporting facility, Eden Park. Takapuna and Botany were the closest to shopping malls, whereas Kingsland was a five-minute drive or thirty-minute walk to the nearest mall, St Lukes. The Te Atatu Peninsula residents were living a ten- to fifteen-minute drive or a one-hour walk to the nearest shopping mall, Westfield WestCity. The following sections from 3.6.1 to 3.6.4 describe the suburbs individually to determine their attributes.

### 3.6.1 Takapuna

Takapuna is a suburb in the north of Auckland, 9.6 kilometres from the CBD. Figure 7 is a map of the area showing the town centre relative to the case study developments.

![Figure 7](image.png)

**Figure 7.** Takapuna case study area: interviewees were from the case study developments shown in orange, the town centre is shown in yellow
It was considered for intensification by the former North Shore City Council and Auckland Regional Council. It has also been identified as a key growth area in the *Auckland Plan* (Auckland Council 2012a) and the *Unitary Plan* (Auckland Council 2013b). Takapuna was also identified by Fontein, Ray, and Robinson (2011) as an area well placed for market-led intensification, due to its access to a range of amenities – including transit, employment opportunities, mixed use residential and business land, and natural amenities (Auckland Council 2011b, 33-35). Takapuna residents have both beach and lake access within walking distance of their town centre. The area experienced a housing boom in the 1960s and 1970s following the completion of the Auckland harbour bridge, which connected the suburb to the CBD. As a result there are a range of typologies from this time period alongside the newer dwellings that have continued to be built as the suburb has continued to grow.

### 3.6.2 Kingsland

Kingsland is a city fringe suburb 4.3 kilometres from the CBD. Figure 8 is a map of the area showing the town centre relative to the case study developments.

![Figure 8. Kingsland case study area: interviewees were from the case study developments shown in orange, the town centre is shown in yellow](image)

While it has grown in popularity due to its proximity to urban amenities and access to the CBD, it remains predominantly suburban: its housing is mostly single-storey detached dwellings in a villa-style and it has a noticeably smaller town centre than the other chosen areas. The numbers of attached typologies in the area are increasing; particularly in the form of apartments up to six storeys.
3.6.3 Botany Downs

At twenty kilometres southeast of the CBD, Botany Downs is the furthermost suburb from the centre of Auckland considered in this research. Figure 9 is a map of the area showing the town centre relative to the case study developments.

![Figure 9. Botany Downs case study area: interviewees were from the case study developments shown in orange, the town centre is shown in yellow.](image)

It has seen considerable growth in the last five to ten years. This has frequently been in the form of two-storey attached dwellings in large scale, partially gated communities. The urban structure of Botany Downs is considerably different from the other case study suburbs, containing many more cul-de-sacs than the other neighbourhoods. Botany Downs is also the newest of the case study suburbs; the majority of the residential development in the area occurred in the 1990s and 2000s. The town centre has a similar footprint to that of Takapuna but the urban grain is much coarser, because the centre is an open air mall, with surrounding big-box retail. Botany Downs has the most public parking of any of the areas chosen for this research.

3.6.4 The Te Atatu Peninsula

The Te Atatu Peninsula is 15.3 kilometres to the west of Auckland’s CBD. Figure 10 is a map of the area showing the town centre relative to the case study developments.
While it is dominated by low density single-storey detached dwellings, its popularity and increasing levels of gentrification have seen developments of attached and semi-attached two-storey townhouses to the east of the town centre since the 1990s. It is geographically different from the other case study suburbs; there is only one point of arrival and departure on the small peninsula. This affects the movement patterns of residents and visitors and results in everyone being directed down the main street of the town centre. There are fewer commercial amenities on the Te Atatu Peninsula than in Takapuna and Botany Downs but the area is well-served by amenities provided by Auckland Council, including a public library and community centre. The area is near natural amenities: a large coastal walkway and adjoining park spaces are within a five-minute walk from the town centre.

### 3.7 The selection of case study developments

Within the four case study suburbs attached housing typologies were chosen as the case study developments from within which to source interviewees. The criteria for selecting the developments within the case study suburbs are that each development must be:

- an attached form of housing at a Net Residential Density (NRD) greater than 35 d/ha,
- in a location that provides local amenities; for example, a town centre,
- established in their communities for a period of more than three years, and
- accessible for mailbox letter-drops.
This resulted in a mix of typologies being chosen, from three- to five-storey apartment complexes to attached townhouses and units. This balanced the maximisation and minimisation of features as part of Theoretical Sampling. Figure 11 describes key attributes of the selected developments: lot size, number of units, Net Residential Density (NRD), their typology, number of storeys and the year built. It also shows the total number of mailbox letter-drops conducted and the number of interviews conducted in each area. The developments at 130 Anzac St in Takapuna, 435 New North Road in Kingsland, and 84 Gunner Drive in Te Atatu required approval from building managers for the mailbox letter-drops as their mailboxes were concealed within the developments.

The following sections from 3.7.1 to 3.7.4 identify the case study developments chosen from each suburb.
## Figure 11. Information about the chosen case study developments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case study suburb</th>
<th>Case study development</th>
<th>Map #</th>
<th>Development lot size (m²)</th>
<th># Units</th>
<th>Net residential density of dwellings per hectare (d/ha)</th>
<th>Typology</th>
<th>Storeys</th>
<th>Year Built</th>
<th>Total number of mailbox letter-drops*</th>
<th>Total number of Interviews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Takapuna</td>
<td>130 Anzac St</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>7,980</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>167.9</td>
<td>Apartments</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>73 Anzac St</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>6,910</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>60.8</td>
<td>Apartments</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7 Killarney St</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>4,750</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>35.9</td>
<td>Terraced houses</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kingsland</td>
<td>39 Sandringham Rd</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>875</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>285.7</td>
<td>Apartments</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>435 New North Rd</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>3,200</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>281.3</td>
<td>Mixed use with Apartments</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Botany Downs</td>
<td>Armoy Drive development A</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>7,700</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>76.6</td>
<td>Terraced houses</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>460</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Armoy Drive development B</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>29,290</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>52.2</td>
<td>Terraced houses and Apartments</td>
<td>2 and 3</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spalding Rise development</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>29,990</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>49.7</td>
<td>Terraced houses</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2000-2003</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Oneroa Road development</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>11,200</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>114.3</td>
<td>Terraced houses</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Te Atatu Peninsula</td>
<td>84 Gunner Drive</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>1,650</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>224.2</td>
<td>Mixed use with Apartments</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vinograd Drive development</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>24,130</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>38.5</td>
<td>Terraced and Semi-attached houses</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2001-2004</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gunner Drive development</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>4,870</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Apartments</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: *The number of mailbox letter-drops differs from the number of units in the development because other developments had been chosen as possible sites but no residents were interested in being interviewed. These development sites were therefore excluded, but the mailbox letter-drops were not.
3.7.1 Case study developments in Takapuna

Twenty residents from the three developments in Takapuna were interviewed. Figure 12 to Figure 14 contain site photographs of these developments. Development A is a five-storey apartment with a net residential density of 167.9 d/ha. Development B is a three-storey apartment of 60.8 d/ha. Development C comprises two rows of terraced housing and has a net residential density of 35.8 d/ha. These typologies are representative of both the range of scales and price-points available in the area. They were chosen with the view that interviewees would likely come from a representative range of the various socio-economic, cultural, and demographic backgrounds living in Takapuna. Takapuna Beach is a sixteen to seventeen-minute walk from case study developments A and B and a five-minute walk from case study development C. Access to Lake Pupuke is a ten-minute walk from A and B, while C has direct access to the lake. Each development is also no more than a fifteen-minute walk from the town centre.

Figure 12. Case Study Development A, 73 Anzac Street, north façade

Figure 13. Case Study Development B, 130 Anzac Street, north façade
3.7.2 Case study developments in Kingsland

Thirteen residents from two developments were interviewed in Kingsland. Photographs of developments D and E are shown in Figure 15 to Figure 17. Case study development D is within a five-minute walk of the town centre and E is within the town centre itself. Case study development D is a four-storey apartment building with a density of 281.3 d/ha. Case study development E was a mixed-use typology with apartments built above the high street shops at a density of 285.7 d/ha. The development is four storeys on the roadside but six storeys on the parallel street where the site contour slopes down.
4.7.3 Case study developments in Botany Downs

Fourteen residents were interviewed from four developments in Botany Downs. These developments ranged from 49.7 to 114.3 d/ha. Figure 18 to Figure 27 contain site photographs of these developments. Case study developments F, H and I are of two-storey terraced houses. Case study development G is the only development selected to feature a combination of three-storey, low-rise apartments alongside terraced house typologies within the single development.
Figure 18. Case Study Development F, the north façade of Armoy Road Development A

Figure 19. Case Study Development F, view of the internal driveway at Armoy Road Development A

Figure 20. Case Study Development G, front access view at Armoy Road Development B
Figure 21. Case Study Development G, rear access view at Armoy Road Development B

Figure 22. Case Study Development F, internal cul-de-sac view at Armoy Road Development B

Figure 23. Case Study Development H, west façades on Puma Drive as part of the Spalding Rise Development
Figure 24. Case Study Development H, typical west façades in the Spalding Rise Development

Figure 25. Case Study Development H, typical north façades in the Spalding Rise Development

Figure 26. Case Study Development I, east façades on Kirikiri Lane as part of the Oneroa Road Development
3.7.4 Case study developments in The Te Atatu Peninsula

Ten residents from three developments were interviewed in the Te Atatu Peninsula. Figure 28 to Figure 35 contain photographs of these developments. Case study development J is a six-storey apartment building, with retail on the ground floor. It is located on the main street leading into the town centre. Its relatively high density of 224.2 d/ha is considerably greater than the surrounding suburban area, which predominantly has a density of between 10 d/ha to 20 d/ha. Case study development K borders the town centre, covers an area of 24,130 m², and has an average density of 38.5 d/ha. There is a broad range of architectural styles throughout the development; the forms are all two-storey typologies, predominantly terraced houses with some semi-attached townhouses at the periphery. Case study development L is a two-storey apartment complex with a density of 37 d/ha. While it is the furthest from the town centre of the three Te Atatu Peninsula case study developments, it is only a five to eight-minute walk for residents wishing to access these amenities.
Figure 28. Case Study Development J, the southeast façade of 84 Gunner Drive

Figure 29. Case Study Development J, the southeast façade of 84 Gunner Drive

Figure 30. Case Study Development K, northeast façade of the Tuscany Way housing as part of the Vinograd Drive development
Figure 31. Case Study Development K, internal view of number 16 at the Vinograd Drive development

Figure 32. Case Study Development K, southwest façade of the Rhone Way housing as part of the Vinograd Drive development

Figure 33. Case Study Development K, northwest façade of the Vinograd Drive development
3.8 Research challenges and limitations

As with any doctoral study (Roderick 2009), there were challenges that needed to be overcome to complete this research. Fernández and Lehmann (2005, 14-15) offer a list of principles – drawn from Glaser’s writings on Grounded Theory – to assist researchers when faced with research challenges. Importantly, they encourage researchers to tolerate both confusion and regression, acknowledging that “the researcher might get briefly ‘lost’ before finding his or her way” (Ibid., 14). The knowledge that both confusion and regression were accepted as integral parts of coding and data analysis helped the researcher persevere and trust in the emergence of the research findings (Glaser and Holton 2004, 17).
A further practical challenge faced was completing enough mailbox letter-drops to ensure there were enough participants. In the end, organising the interviews until data saturation was reached took longer than anticipated. Furthermore, once collected and transcribed, the volume of the interview data became apparent and the time required for coding, analysis and interpretation needed to be reassessed. Over 300 pages of transcription were line-by-line coded. Instead of this being a limitation of the study, the researcher used it as an opportunity to develop an inherent familiarity with the data.

Other limitations included that the study was qualitative rather than quantitative and therefore the data was not generalisable or statistically relevant. However, this was offset by the depth of the analysis that could occur due to the richness offered by interviewees during their hour-long interviews.

Further limitations included the potential for respondent biases to be embedded within the final data set and the possibility that the supermarket voucher gifted to interviewees to thank them for their participation might provide a financial incentive which would affect the interviewees who would respond.

The choice to interview residents who had already chosen to live in an attached dwelling under six storeys, as opposed to those who lived in standalone detached homes or high rise dwellings over six storeys, is also a potential limitation that was considered by the researcher because it meant that it was not possible to compare responses from different densities. Future studies could certainly expand to conduct interviews with residents across these other categories, in addition to the group chosen in this study. However, for the purposes of narrowing the research scope to enable the timely completion of the thesis and to ensure sufficient depth was achieved in the study, the choice to interview residents who had already chosen to live in an attached dwelling under six storeys was considered a necessary one. This grouping was chosen over the other two because it represents the choice that an increasing number of Aucklanders would be required to make if there is to be the uptake of a higher percentage of higher density attached dwellings than has previously occurred in the city.
Chapter 4  Results

In Chapter 4, the main findings gathered from the interviews are presented. First, the interviewee profiles, including demographic data, are outlined to frame the subsequent presentation of results. The findings are then grouped into five sections: Understanding Quality of Urban Life, Housing Choices, Neighbourhood Satisfaction, Urban Amenities, and Perceptions of Higher Density Living. In Section 1, results are presented that describe how the interviewees conceptualise quality of life and quality of urban life. Exploring interviewees’ perceptions of higher density living is the focus of Section 2. The analysis of interviewee housing choices and aspirations is reported in Section 3, together with an outline of the associated trade-offs interviewees made when choosing their current homes. Section 4 delivers a more in-depth look at the data around neighbourhood satisfaction, including neighbourhood likes and dislikes. The links between urban amenities and quality of urban life experiences are presented in Section 5. This includes a sub-section dedicated to the results developed from the data associated with the experiences interviewees report having with individual types of urban amenities.

Anonymised interviewee quotations are interspersed throughout the chapter to illustrate the core themes and categories coded from the data. Whilst this data is presented in four independent sections, the results are interdependent and an understanding of the whole is required to develop a meaningful discussion section. A summary of the key findings is presented at the end of the chapter.

4.1  Interviewee profiles

Through the first four interview questions, information was collected regarding interviewee demographics, including household structure, cultural diversity, previous living experiences, and current dwelling tenures.

Interviewees ranged in age from twenty-three and eighty-seven years, and the distribution of age across the four case study suburbs is shown in Figure 36.
The average age of interviewees was forty-four\textsuperscript{5}. The age of interviewees was asked so the researcher could identify any patterns in the data about how different age groups responded to different lines of questioning. However, comparisons between the coding of the data and the attribute coding assigned to interviewees in NVivo revealed that the life stage of interviewees and their lifestyle preferences affected their responses more so than their actual age group.

The interviewees were grouped into three key life stage categories, shown in Figure 37. By chance, there was a relatively even three-way split between the groupings which provided a useful representative sample of each category. Sixteen interviewees were in the pre-family life stage, twenty-one had family to consider when making housing choices, and twenty were in the post-family or no-family life stage. Of the twenty in the post-family life stage, three were under thirty-five but had decided that they were not going to have a family. Therefore, they had similar lifestyle freedoms, when compared to their older post-family counterparts, in terms of their ability to be transient and have disposable incomes.

\textsuperscript{5} According to the Statistics New Zealand 2013 census data, the mean age of residents across the four neighbourhoods is 38.1 years. This is affected by the mean age of Takapuna residents being 46.6 years of age; the mean age in Kingsland is 31, in Botany Downs is 39.4, and in the Te Atatu Peninsula is 35.5 years (Statistics New Zealand 2015). The age of respondents was higher than the overall average age of Auckland residents also because children are included in the Statistics New Zealand data. In this research, homeowners and renters and not their children made up the sample group of interviewees.
Interviewees were also asked to explain who else lived in their household; this data is presented in Figure 38. The average age of household members was thirty-two. This is comparable to the average age of Aucklanders, which is 35.1 years (Statistics New Zealand 2015). While the life stage groupings of interviewees were straightforward, the household demographic data was seemingly more varied in terms of living situation and relationship type. Of the fifty-seven residents interviewed, seven lived alone, twenty-five were couples, three were same-sex couples, six lived with flatmates, and two lived with extended family members. Seventeen interviewees had at least one child living at home, and of these ten had children under seven. Only three had two or more children living at home. Four of the respondents were able to offer a disabilities perspective. This produced a considerable diversity of household compositions, which was of value in the study.

These household compositions are characteristic of the growing trend in Auckland towards smaller and more diverse households (Beacon Pathway Ltd 2010, Dixon and Dupuis 2003, 355, Knox and Smith 2007, 20, Page 2007, 31-32). Auckland Council identifies that there will notably “be a greater proportion of couples without children and a smaller proportion of two-parent families with children” over the next twenty years (2012b, 138). Single person and couple-only households are set to increase to 60% of total
households by 2040 whereas “households with children (which currently make up almost half of Auckland households) will decline to around one third of all households” (Auckland Council 2011a, 42).

Figure 38. The age ranges of the household members across the case study suburbs

Equally, Auckland Council (2006c, 11) recognises that:

The number of people per dwelling in the Auckland region has been declining since the 1950s. As at 2001, the average number of occupants per household was 2.9 down from 3.6 in 1956. Since 1956, 28 per cent of the growth in dwellings has been required solely to provide for this trend, that is, to cater for smaller households - not for a growing population.
Mitchell (2011, 37) also observes that “household formation has increased faster than population growth.” In addition to diverse households he attributes this trend to New Zealand’s ageing ‘baby boomers,’ some of whom want to ‘age in place’ and stay in their family home, but some of whom want to downsize to low maintenance typologies that support socially active and ‘lock up and leave’ holiday lifestyles. He also attributes this change to the socio-cultural tendency of later family formation where couples are both meeting later and waiting longer to have children. Schmitz (2003, 8) confirms that “because the baby boom (the cohort born between 1945 and 1966) is so large, it will be an important market segment for years to come.” While the relative proportion of Auckland residents aged sixty-five and over is decreasing — largely as “the result of age selective international and internal migration” (Auckland Regional Council 2007d, 8) — significantly, the age dependency ratio in Auckland is increasing (Auckland Regional Council 2006c, 4).

The Centre for Housing Research New Zealand (2008, 20) comments that baby boomers are “expected to live longer, stay in the workforce longer, and face different family pressures with children in their thirties and forties who are not yet home owners.” Adding that “it is also likely that the over-65s will exhibit a much wider range of rich and poor, healthy and unhealthy than at any time in living memory” (ibid.). Auckland Council (2006c, 4) is conscious of the spatial impacts of this ageing population structure on urban form and comments, “as the number of residents 65+ years increases there will be increased pressure on services such as housing, health, transport and recreation.” An ageing population requires greater accessibility (Davies 2007, 34), both internally within dwellings and externally to the urban amenities that constitute the local neighbourhood. These ideas were considered during each stage of coding, and relevant comment has been made in the subsequent sections where life stage was a factor that shaped the opinions of the interviewees. It was fortuitous that those who responded to the mailbox letter-drops were representative of such a broad cross section of current New Zealand society. This ensured that a diversity of life stage factors and lifestyle preferences, in keeping with New Zealand’s changing demographics, could be addressed in the study.

Through asking interviewees about their housing experiences, it was possible to code each participant in NVivo according to where they were born and the different countries or parts of New Zealand where they had lived. Ethnicities were also recorded as part of this process.

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6The ratio of people aged 65+ to people in the working age group from 15-65 years.
The proportions of New Zealand and overseas born interviewees are presented in Figure 39. In the sample, thirty-six (63%) of the interviewees were New Zealand born: thirty-two (57%) of the respondents were Pākehā from various ethnic backgrounds, two (4%) were Māori, and one (2%) was of Pacific Island descent. In total, twenty-one (37%) of the interviewees were born overseas. Of these, eight (14%) were of Asian descent. The other thirteen (23%) were from Europe, Africa, Australia, North America, and the Middle East.

Figure 39. Proportion of New Zealand vs. overseas born interviewees

Of the twenty-one overseas born interviewees, eleven were from countries where English was their first language and ten were from countries where English was not their first language. Countries of origin included The United States of America, Australia, Scotland, England, China, Korea, Malaysia, Vietnam, Singapore, India, Portugal, Bulgaria, Slovakia, Serbia, Jordan, Mozambique, and South Africa.

The ethnic mix of the interviewees was more diverse than the Statistics New Zealand 2013 census data for the case study suburbs. Only the percentage of Pākehā interviewed was similar to the ethnographic percentages identified in the census. However, the diversity of the sample group reflects the cultural diversity that is typical and will continue to be typical of Auckland (Auckland Council 2012a, Mitchell 2011, Statistics New Zealand 2015). Auckland Council (2006c, 4) recognises the ethnic and cultural diversity of Auckland’s population, citing as a trend that is “likely to continue as immigration brings people from

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7 New Zealand European
8 Statistics New Zealand (2015) data for the ethnicity of Auckland residents is as follows: European 59.3%, Māori 10.7%, Pacific peoples 14.6%, Asian 23.1%, Middle Eastern, Latin American, African 1.9%, Total other ethnicity 1.2%.
non-traditional contributing nations.” Immigration has been increasing in Auckland since the Immigration Act came into effect in 1986 (Auckland Regional Council 2007d, 13), most notably in central and downtown Auckland (Statistics New Zealand 2015). In the 2013 census it was confirmed that over one third (39.1%) of Auckland residents were born overseas; the percentage of those identifying as Pacific or Asian ethnicities is increasing at the fastest rate (Statistics New Zealand 2015). Consequently, the percentage of people identifying as European or New Zealand European decreased from 75 per cent in 1991 to 59.3 per cent in 2013 (Statistics New Zealand 2015).

In this research it was of value to be able to identify whether interviewees were born overseas or in New Zealand, since different cultures have very different housing traditions and it was thought that this knowledge might help to explain some of their housing aspirations and perceptions of density. It was found to be useful information for adding context to the data on individual interviewee housing choices and aspirations, as outlined in section 4.3. For example, one interviewee grew up with apartments being the norm and came to New Zealand to be able to have a standalone home. In contrast, another overseas-born interviewee preferred apartments because they were accustomed to them and wanted to continue living in them.

Also useful was information about whether New Zealand born interviewees had lived overseas or not. This information added context to the data about interviewee’s housing aspirations and their perceptions of density. As displayed in Figure 40, of the thirty-six New Zealand born interviewees, fifteen spoke about having spent time living overseas and being exposed to a range of different lifestyles and housing norms that influenced their current perceptions.

![Figure 40](image)

**Figure 40.** Proportion of New Zealand born interviewees who had lived overseas vs. New Zealand born interviewees who had lived only in New Zealand
In line with the thinking of Latham (2000, 290), the interviewees who had lived overseas were more likely to be accepting of higher density typologies. However, they were mostly still opposed to high-rise developments. This is discussed further in section 4.6.2.11.

Also recorded was data about which interviewees had lived outside of Auckland. As displayed in Figure 41, a total of nineteen out of fifty-seven interviewees had lived outside of Auckland. They had lived in other main centres, such as Christchurch and Wellington, and in rural and provincial centres, including Otago, Napier, Gisborne, Palmerston North, Tauranga, Rotorua, and Tairua. There were no patterns identified between how interviewees responded to questions about their housing choices and whether or not they had experienced rural or provincial living in New Zealand.

![Figure 41. Proportion of total interviewees who had lived outside of Auckland vs. the interviewees who had not lived outside of Auckland](image)

In summary, the information gathered on the demographics, housing structures, prior location and housing experiences of the interviewees serves to build a contextual picture. This aids the interpretation of the data gathered. Most notably, it contextualises interviewees’ perceptions of density, housing choices, and the insights into their ideas around the role of urban amenities in influencing their perceptions of neighbourhood satisfaction and quality of urban life.

### 4.2 Results section 1: Understanding quality of urban life

The purpose of asking interviewees to describe their understanding of both the concept of quality of life and quality of urban life was twofold: firstly, to learn how interviewees understood these terms before
proceeding to the remainder of the interview, and secondly to gather data that could be compared with the literature. Eventually, comments about these concepts resulted in an understanding, through data coding, of how interviewees perceived their neighbourhoods contributing towards their quality of urban life experiences.

4.2.1 Describing quality of life

As discussed in the introduction of this thesis, enhancing the quality of life is an explicit urban planning aim of Auckland Council (2012a), together with the aim that the majority of urban growth needs to occur within the defined metropolitan boundary. Better understanding the perceptions of interviewees about their housing choices, in relation to how they use and value local urban amenities, will enable commentary on the extent to which there is an alignment with Auckland Council’s urban planning goals for intensification. Quality of life is a well-used concept in urban and social research, although as noted by van Kamp et al. (2003) there is inconsistency in exactly what it means, and often it is conflated with the idea of ‘liveability’ and ‘well-being’. For this reason, asking the interviewees how they understood and defined their quality of life was important because it influenced how subsequent questions were answered. The interviewees’ understanding of quality of life underpinned their housing choices, their neighbourhood satisfaction, and the role of urban amenities in their acceptance of intensification.

Two types of data were coded together to obtain an understanding of how interviewees perceived quality of life. Interviewees were asked directly what the phrases ‘quality of life’ and ‘quality of urban life’ meant to them. This data was coded alongside indirect data gathered from comments made about quality of life in response to other lines of questioning and as part of the general comments interviewees made. Their responses about what quality of life meant to them were coded into ten sub-categories; these are displayed in Figure 42.
Responses were often multifaceted and as such were coded into more than one section. For example, an interviewee may have linked aspects of both personal health and financial security in their response. In this case, their comment would have been coded into each of the two categories. By using open-ended questions about quality of life, interviewees had to consider their responses and focus on the core of what was most important to them. In some cases, it is likely that responses also reflected what was top-of-mind for interviewees. Coding data from throughout the interviews meant that when interviewees referred back to their original comments, additional commentary could also be woven into the coding process. This built a more complete picture of interviewees’ perceptions.

Most frequently, interviewees conveyed in their responses that the presence of urban amenities in their neighbourhood influenced their perception of quality of life. For example, one interviewee commented, “quality of life to me means that people have healthy housing. They have space, physical space so that it’s not crowded, and they have urban amenities like sports grounds and playgrounds and walking routes and
cycling routes and can cycle to work and to school.” Another commented, “I think quality of life is having urban amenities accessible, easily accessible... Pop across to the shops, have a coffee; we will do that in the weekends because we’ve got a fifteen-year-old.”

Sixteen of the fifty-seven interviewees related their descriptions of quality of life to their life stage or personal circumstances. One commented broadly about this, saying “I would say quality of life would take into account where you’re living, how much discretionary income you have, your employment, the stability of the country you live in, the stability of the community that you live in, your health, your family’s health, your social networks, (and) how financially comfortable you are.” Others made it more personal; one young solo-parent stated that quality of life for them meant the ability to afford and access sufficient food and electricity and seeing that their son got a good education. Another spoke about how their view had ‘changed dramatically’ over the last four years due to being in a serious car accident, noting that they learned not to take for granted their quality of life and what their neighbourhood could offer them, such as easy access to medical care and quality food. Six interviewees spoke about how quality of life was linked to their independence as older residents.

Eight of the interviewees related their responses to freedom of choice; “Freedom to do different things. Freedom to go on holiday... to go out for a night to a nice restaurant.” Similarly, fifteen interviewees related their comments to “being financially secure” and the ability to lead the sort of life they wanted, given their budget. Fourteen interviewees related their descriptions to happiness or to enjoying life. Examples included comments such as, “quality of life means to be able to do the things that you get enjoyment from” and “happiness for me means a place where I can relax and enjoy the sunshine.” A smaller number, five interviewees from Takapuna and Kingsland, included the importance of a work/life balance in their responses. Fourteen interviewees included comments about the importance of health in their descriptions of quality of life. The idea of health covered a sense of personal health or wellbeing as well as healthy environments in terms of both the environmental quality of one’s neighbourhood and the build quality of one’s dwelling.

Thirteen of the fifty-seven interviewees related their quality of life to a sense of neighbourliness. For example, one interviewee remarked that they have more interaction with their neighbours now, living in a higher density typology, than they had living in their previous standalone housing. In addition to neighbourliness, ten out of fifty-seven interviewees related quality of life to their accommodation and lifestyle needs being met by their housing choices.
In summary, it is evident that quality of life is a multifaceted concept for people, and each interviewee had a slightly different emphasis on what was most important to them. Significantly, the neighbourhood and the availability of amenities emerged as an important component. Generally, this idea was also linked to other factors that contributed to each interviewee’s sense of quality of life. For example, personal health is made easier if residents have access to medical facilities. Enjoyment and happiness factors for some interviewees were linked to access to recreation amenities because they valued exercise; for others the accessibility of food-related amenities like cafés and restaurants added to their happiness because they enjoyed the experience of eating out.

The interrelationship of quality of life factors, and the role that urban amenities play within this relationship, is therefore a core aspect of understanding trade-offs. An increasing number of Auckland residents will need to make these trade-offs between housing size and convenience if there is to be a greater uptake of attached housing typologies within existing neighbourhoods, as the city continues to grow, whilst avoiding sprawl.

### 4.2.2 Describing quality of urban life

During the interview process the literature review continued, as is the case with Constructivist Grounded Theory studies. Interspersed with asking interviewees about how they perceived quality of life, the researcher read and reviewed quality of life literature. Marans and Stimson’s (2011) book *Investigating Quality of Urban Life* proved to be an important text. For Marans and Stimson investigating quality of urban life is a precursor to addressing urban growth issues in cities, which is at the core of this research. After reviewing this text, the researcher realised that asking about the generic term quality of life was insufficient on its own and therefore, from the twelfth interview onwards, interviewees were also asked whether quality of urban life meant the same to them as quality of life or whether it meant something different.

Of the remaining forty-five interviewees, nineteen had the same understanding of both terms. Generally, these were the interviewees who had already related their quality of life to urban issues. Twenty-three thought that quality of urban life differed from quality of life. Of the twenty-three with differing views, eleven related quality of urban life to built environment factors; four of these focussed on the role of infrastructure and six focused more on the role of built form and urban amenities in contributing to the quality of urban life they derived from their neighbourhoods. For example, for one interviewee, “quality of life is quite a broad term but quality of urban life is just looking at life in the city compared to rural life,
so it’s a bit place-specific.” Another noted that quality of urban life was “more related to what buildings are around me.”

It was found that asking about quality of urban life led interviewees to talk about the role they perceived urban amenities to have in their daily lives. In particular, it enabled the researcher to articulate the ways in which interviewees commented about how the built environment affected their housing choices and neighbourhood satisfaction. The comments made by interviewees about their quality of urban life were therefore useful in framing the conversations about housing choices and neighbourhood satisfaction; they were used as points of reference during data coding to contextualise responses.

In summation, asking interviewees about both their perceptions of quality of life and quality of urban life proved to be useful in identifying how interviewees differentiated between their general sense of well-being and their more specific sense of quality of urban life. Quality of life is affected by a broad range of socio-cultural and socio-economic factors whereas quality of urban life is predominantly affected by the physical environment.

4.3 Results section 2: Perceptions of higher density living

Interviewees were asked about their perceptions of higher density living. This included questioning them about how they felt about urban intensification in their neighbourhoods, how they thought it might change their neighbourhoods, and what housing typologies might be acceptable to them if their neighbourhoods were to intensify. The purpose of asking interviewees about their perceptions of higher density living was to determine if these opinions were in line with or at odds with the idea that a greater uptake of higher density typologies was needed in Auckland if the levels of intensification desired by Auckland Council (2012a) were to be achieved. Because the interviewees were already living at higher densities than is the norm in the case study suburbs, it is also important to view their responses within this context.

4.3.1 Perceptions of the terms ‘density’ and ‘urban intensification’

Interviewees were questioned about what the terms ‘urban intensification’ and ‘density’ meant to them and what these terms made them think about. Interviewee descriptions of density and urban intensification from throughout the interviews were grouped during the data coding stages into four key
categories, as presented in Figure 43. Interviewees predominantly related their responses to increased population density, increased dwelling density, the height of the built form, and a concern for potential crowding.

Figure 43. Interviewee responses when asked to define and discuss the terms ‘Density’ and ‘Urban Intensification’

Many of the interviewees had multiple ideas embedded within their answers. Thirty-one interviewees related urban intensification and density to the number of people in an area (population density). For example, one interviewee defined urban intensification as “getting as many people into a square footage as you possibly can without it being horrible.” Another commented that intensification “could be rural” as well as urban because intensification was “just an increased number of people living in an area;” for example, if a farm was divided into lifestyle blocks, that too is intensification. Twenty-nine thought that increased density meant the appearance of additional dwellings in their neighbourhoods; in particular, they linked this dwelling density to building height by commenting about the likelihood of “more apartments.” Twenty-six specifically related increased density to ‘building up.’ Twenty-four raised
concerns about crowding and the associated issues of traffic congestion, difficulties in finding a car park, and noise. One interviewee summed up this sentiment in their description of urban intensification as, “Chaos. More traffic, more people, more cars, congested roads.”

From the responses, it is evident that the interviewees saw both terms in a very similar way; density was understood to mean both the human population of an area and the number of built forms within a specific environment. Urban intensification was seen to be an increase in both these aspects. Similarly, perceptions about the impact of building heights in blocking sunlight and the potential for noise-related issues were also frequently raised in the process of interviewees identifying their definitions of ‘density’ and ‘urban intensification.’

The initial impression given by the majority of interviewees was that these terms had negative connotations. However, as the interview questioning continued it became evident this was not always the case. While the majority of interviewees initially reacted negatively when asked to define the terms urban intensification and density, further questioning revealed that they were in fact not anti-intensification but, rather, were anti-highrise. This is an important distinction that emerged from asking interviewees to define terms, one that would not have been evident had a survey with predefined multi-choice questions been used.

4.3.2 Perceptions of higher density living environments

Interviewees were asked to relate their perceptions of urban intensification to their own housing experiences and what they thought of higher density living both in their neighbourhood and in the wider Auckland area. The data about interviewees’ perceptions of urban intensification and higher density living was coded into four categories: positive, negative, mixed, and neutral perceptions. The number of comments made by interviewees in each of these four categories is presented in Figure 44.
In the literature, it is often claimed that there is considerable resistance in Auckland to higher density typologies, particularly multi-storey apartments (Auckland Council 2011b, 2, Gray and Hill 2010, Harrison Grierson 2008, Syme, McGregor, and Mead 2005, Vallance, Perkins, and Moore 2005). In this research, interviewees made thirty-two positive and thirty-one negative comments when asked about their perceptions of higher density living environments. Twenty-five mixed and eighteen neutral responses were also recorded. The larger number of comments than the number of interviewees indicates contradictory statements made: in one section of the interview an interviewee said that they felt negatively towards intensification but in another section they said they felt positively about it occurring.

Twenty-five interviewees expressed the idea that they had a mixed viewpoint about higher density living, one interviewee stating, “I’m a bit of a contradiction in terms aren’t I?; I like peace and quiet and yet I love being able to walk to work” and another avowing, “I have a mixed view... yes I know it must happen, I’m prepared to accept it happening, but I’m worried that this other half of the balance... things like open...
space, good transport, good facilities, recreational facilities... might not be right.” Other reasoning by interviewees included a belief that intensification could be done successfully. However, their comments were tempered with a concern about the urban planning process in Auckland and the potential repetition of previous mistakes, such as apartments that are too small to maintain quality of urban life. Another concern raised was that if more urban amenities were required there could be adverse environmental effects, including an increase in noise-related issues.

Eighteen comments were made about intensification being a natural or inevitable process, resulting in neutral rather than contrasting views. One interviewee emphasised that to them, intensification is “not a negative or a positive, it’s just something that is inevitable and you have to turn it into a positive.” Another explained, “If you want an increased quality of life you probably have to accept some degree of change and that probably means intensification. You are living in the biggest city in the country that is expanding rapidly. It’s a fact of life.”

These conflicting responses reflect the confusion interviewees expressed about their perceptions of higher density living. A study conducted by the Ministry for the Environment (2002a, 17) in New Zealand also found that Auckland is in a transition phase which “is causing debate within communities about what people value about their living and working environments, and how an area should develop.” These conflicting opinions need to be further understood if the transformation of existing perceptions is to be addressed. Similar findings were recounted in the Auckland Regional Council’s Stocktake of Existing Consultation on Urban Intensification report (2006). The report found that their “review of the consultation undertaken has highlighted that there is a range of opinion from the community on urban intensification, as would be expected given the diversity of the Auckland population” (Wilkinson 2006, 21). It goes on to state, “from the consultation the councils have undertaken with their communities, since 1999, there appears to be a general understanding and acceptance that growth in the form of intensification is happening” (22). The findings of this research show that residents can feel both positively and negatively about urban intensification and density, to a greater or lesser degree.

In general, interviewees were comfortable with certain aspects of urban intensification but not with others. For example, one interviewee looked forward to intensification because they thought it would mean an improvement in the provision of public transport in their neighbourhood and yet at the same time they were concerned by it because they thought that it might mean it would become difficult to find tables at all their favourite local cafés.
In addition to conflicting comments made by individual interviewees, different interviewees expressed the same reasoning as each other; some described their view as positive, while others described the same view as negative. This indicates that it was how the interviewees perceived their responses, and whether they thought they were positive or negative, that was important, rather than the wording of the responses themselves. For example, when one interviewee thought intensification would mean the town centre would become a lot busier and there would be more retail amenities, they perceived this to be a negative view because they were concerned this would lead to noise and parking issues. However, another interviewee who commented in the exact same way perceived their comment to be positive because they enjoyed the atmosphere created by increasing numbers of pedestrians and the added convenience of having more retail amenities to choose from. Therefore, it was not enough to ask interviewees to describe how they thought intensification might change their neighbourhoods but it was also important to ask whether or not interviewees felt positively or negatively about these changes.

The reasoning for negative views predominantly centred on concerns about the potential congestion and associated noise created by the additional vehicle traffic, with sixteen interviewees commenting about these concerns. For example, one interviewee asked, “Where is everyone going to park? ...We already have big problems with parking in Auckland, full stop.” This can be linked to the data on neighbourhood dislikes (see section 4.5.3), where noise featured as a key environmental factor that contributed to the neighbourhood dissatisfaction experienced by interviewees. Five interviewees expressed their concerns relating to the potential for height increases in the built form and ten interviewees expressed negative views, despite being unable to identify why they felt negatively.

The thirty-two positive comments made by interviewees about higher density living covered a broad spectrum of opinions. Some interviewees noted that they thought higher density living could be positive only in certain neighbourhoods and were cautious about it being encouraged everywhere. Others mentioned the potential for it to positively affect the affordability of homes and to help address some of the housing issues with previously poorly built and ageing housing stock. As well as upgrading housing stock, other interviewees saw the potential for higher density living to renew town centres and improve urban amenities that they thought were run down, including high street shops and local dairies.

The role and importance of design was also raised as an issue embedded within the positive responses. This is summarized by one interviewee who remarked, “I didn’t object to that apartment building (pointing across the road) and I wouldn’t object to another one by it, on one condition: the apartments have to be designed so that they are suitable for different age groups. You can’t build two hundred little boxes.”
You’ve got to have different sizes for different requirements.” This idea can be connected to another that came through in the positive responses, that higher density typologies were considered to fit better with a range of modern lifestyles because they were low-maintenance and secure and thus met housing needs at different life stages better.

At a neighbourhood scale, twenty-four of the thirty-two positive comments were focussed on the need for additional urban amenities and the value of proximity and accessibility to these amenities. One interviewee thought, “in general, urban intensification would improve quality of life... at least in Auckland, because of the proximity, because... there would be more shops, shops would be closer to wherever they lived, and the same applies to schools, GP (General Practitioner) practices and other things.” Other interviewees indicated that their view had recently changed from negative to positive. One interviewee, for example, commented:

Urban intensification is probably considered to be a negative term in general. If I had heard that before moving to Auckland, I would have thought about it as a negative term. However, having lived in Auckland for almost a year, I think that urban intensification in certain areas can improve the quality of life of people living there.

Green spaces in particular were mentioned, one interviewee commenting, “If we’re going to have intensification I think we’re going to have to have more parks and places for people to go (to) and have some space and enjoyment.” Another interviewee described their vision as follows:

I look across all of the old 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s houses that are dotted between my apartment and the one at the end of the street and I think how cool it would be if we had maybe, one or two more apartment blocks so that we’re stacking people up and fitting more people in. Maybe between those apartment blocks there were more green areas. In this same street you could probably put in three times the amount of people, in stacked villas—three-bedroom homes, not shoeboxes—but have a more pleasant living experience.

Green spaces were similarly found to be important to residents in previous studies by Dunbar and McDermott (2011) and Saville-Smith (2010).
In addition, seven interviewees thought there was a financial incentive for urban intensification because infrastructure could be better funded as more people would be contributing to rates and taxes in the area. One interviewee, for example, proposed that, “If people were actually closer to amenities... it will mean far less people having to actually drive, which in turn, I guess, will improve the traffic in Auckland, which is a huge problem for everyone.”

The comments made by interviewees point to an important finding, that the idea of intensification was not rejected outright by interviewees; instead their opinions are far more complex than have been reported in previous studies. The opinions interviewees expressed about density, intensification, and higher density living environments were conditioned in many ways: notably, by their previous housing experiences, by how they derived satisfaction from their neighbourhoods, and their expectations of quality of urban life. This included their perceptions about how additional people and dwellings may affect their day-to-day routines. For many interviewees, these opinions were also in a state of flux because the type of intensification they thought might be successful was not dependent on constant factors; instead it was dependent on subjective variables, such as their discernment of design aesthetics or their evolving lifestyle preferences and how these were connected to their life-stage. In summation, this research finds it pertinent to question the empirical conclusiveness of any reporting of outright opinions about higher density living and to view such commentary with scepticism.

### 4.3.3 Perceptions of density changes in interviewee’s neighbourhoods

In many instances when interviewees spoke about their perceptions of higher density living they also expressed their perceptions of density changes in their local neighbourhoods. They compared their suburbs with others in Auckland, as well as comparing their perceptions of Auckland to their experiences of international cities. This enabled the researcher to identify any NIMBY (‘Not In My Back Yard’) views and determine whether interviewees felt the same about intensification elsewhere in the city as they did within their own neighbourhoods.

Seven interviewees used overseas cities as examples to explain their views on density when directly asked about their neighbourhoods, and a further twenty-one compared Auckland with Australian, Asian, and European cities when commenting on density in other interview questions, particularly relating to their own experiences of these cities. Comments included the concern that Auckland might become cramped like Singapore, high-rise like the Gold Coast, have the traffic congestion issues of Portugal, be busy like London, or have the European model of not owning their own home. Conversely, other interviewees
wanted the entertainment amenities of Sydney, the public transport amenities of Hong Kong, and to have more varied housing typologies integrated into existing neighbourhoods like in the United Kingdom and some European cities. Seven interviewees spoke about the way they hoped urban intensification would mean that Aucklanders would better embrace the concept of streets as ‘places,’ in the way that European communities in Italy, France and England have a strong sense of the ‘high street’ as a ‘place’ for socialising.

In terms of intensification potential, thirty-two of the fifty-seven interviewees thought that their suburbs were different from other suburbs in Auckland for three key reasons. Firstly, due to the availability of different urban amenities; to interviewees in Takapuna, this meant natural amenities and the variety of retail amenities; in Botany Downs, it meant the proximity of the mall; in Kingsland, this meant the café culture; and in the Te Atatu Peninsula, it meant the dominance of community facilities. Secondly, the differences between the existing housing typologies in each area were raised by interviewees as an aspect of differences between their neighbourhoods and others in Auckland. Lastly, the existing demographics and ethnographics were also raised as factors that made each neighbourhood unique. A number of interviewees in the Te Atatu Peninsula thought that their neighbourhood was quite different from others in Auckland because its geography affected the feel of the place and the sense of community. For example, one interviewee commented, “I think our neighbourhood is very special. It’s on a peninsula. It’s contained. It has a sort of a perimeter within which the neighbourhood sits.” In contrast, ten interviewees thought that their suburb was similar to other suburbs in Auckland. However, one interviewee tempered this with the comment, “I think our neighbourhood could be quite similar to other neighbourhoods, but as a whole Auckland is just so massive that every neighbourhood has its own quirks and personality.” Three were unsure about their thoughts regarding whether or not their neighbourhood was similar or different from others in respect to their intensification potential.

Four interviewees did not think urban intensification would change their neighbourhoods significantly because it was already happening. Six thought that higher density living was less likely to succeed in their suburb; five of these comments were made by interviewees from the Te Atatu Peninsula, one commenting that “the Peninsula is quite a different suburb of Auckland in the way that you’ve got one way out and one way in. That can cause problems if your population grows without the proper amenities.” Five interviewees, three of whom were in Kingsland, thought that higher density living was more likely to succeed in their neighbourhood. One interviewee explained why, by reasoning that “Kingsland has such awesome amenities and it’s so central and the public transport works and there’s lots of cool stuff happening there. I think if you were to put up a number of low-rise apartments they would get snapped
up and I think lots of people would want to come and live in the area.” Another Kingsland interviewee commented:

I think the fact that Kingsland does have those restaurants and cafés might make it more appealing to put more apartment blocks up there because it’s already got some things and it probably appeals more to people than going further out west or whatever. I think the fact that we’ve got amenities and that we are that close to the city means Kingsland would sooner intensify than other areas, and be successful at it. Whereas, if you go further out west they wouldn’t have as many shops or restaurants or whatever. So they might need to build those before or as intensification occurs.

Forty-three of fifty-seven interviewees commented on the relationship between the presence of urban amenities and the success of intensification in existing neighbourhoods. The most frequent link made was between the quality of urban life and the accessibility and proximity of urban amenities. A number of interviewees spoke about sequencing the arrival of urban amenities in an area as being critical to successful urban intensification. For example, one interviewee commented:

I think as we add more people into the neighbourhood it’s going to change your access to those amenities which we said before; parking. Even small things like going into a café and not being able to find a table. Potentially going into my gym at night and looking in and all the treadmills are taken and everybody’s on every machine, it’s like this is a waste of time, go home again. So I think amenities will need to keep track as intensification increases, so the existing ones don’t get too crowded. Otherwise your quality of life is going to diminish because while you’ve got all these amenities around you, you can’t actually get to use them at the right time or with space around you.

Accessibility and proximity were similarly related to walkability and it was indicated that for intensification to be successful, a trade-off needed to occur in people’s minds between the reduced private open spaces they have, such as lawns and gardens, and the subsequent convenience of the accessibility and proximity of urban amenities. One interviewee remarked, “I would want good access to parks and things like that, because living in a shoebox would drive me nuts.” Seven interviewees also commented that certain urban amenities, such as food-related amenities and basic services, ranging from supermarkets to petrol stations, may be needed everywhere. What was most important to interviewees was to get “the mix (of urban amenities) right, proportionate to the size of the population.”
In summary, because interviewees were asked open-ended questions about their perceptions of the density changes that had occurred, and the future changes that may occur, in their neighbourhoods, their responses covered a broad range of issues. It was significant that few – six interviewees – thought that increased density would not be successful in their neighbourhoods. Most interviewees, whether or not they had positive or negative views of urban intensification, expected it to occur in their neighbourhoods in the near future. NIMBY views were minimal among interviewees. However, this may have been because the case study suburbs had already experienced sustained growth and urban intensification over the previous decade and accordingly, residents were accustomed to density changes occurring.

### 4.3.4 Perceptions of the acceptability of higher density typologies

Perceptions of density were aligned with perceptions of higher density typologies. Interviewees incorporated comments about their views of different typologies throughout the interviews and they were also asked directly to identify what housing types would be acceptable to them if their neighbourhood were to intensify.

The reasoning for asking about acceptable typologies as a follow-on question when asking about perceptions of density was to determine whether all forms of intensification were perceived negatively, as is often reported in the mainstream New Zealand media (Auckland Council 2011b, 12, Syme, McGregor, and Mead 2005, 2), or if any forms of intensification were viewed as acceptable by interviewees. Bearing in mind that this study is about residents already living in higher density housing scenarios, this line of questioning – which asked interviewees to identify if any typologies would be acceptable to them – as well as providing their general opinions about increased density, is a critical point of difference between this study and most others in the field of urban intensification and housing research. Responses are shown in Figure 45.

Responding to this question, seventeen interviewees stated that three- to five-storey apartments would be acceptable if their neighbourhood were to intensify, seventeen would be happy to see terraced houses, and twenty-three thought that getting the mix of typologies right was key to acceptable intensification. Of the seventeen interviewees who stated that three- to five-storey apartments would be acceptable, six indicated a strong preference for a three-storey maximum height. Reasoning for this included not overshadowing neighbours, maintaining a connection with the ground for visual surveillance, and maintaining a connection to nature. Four interviewees thought a four-storey maximum was most acceptable to them. One interviewee commented, “I quite like the idea of walk-up buildings where you
are not necessarily reliant on lifts. So probably four storey, that’s three storeys of walk-up.” The remaining seven interviewees accepted apartment typologies that were up to five storeys high.

![Bar chart showing accepted typologies](image)

**Figure 45.** The various types of higher density development that would be acceptable to interviewees if their neighbourhoods were to intensify further

Interviewees often spoke about there being more than one ideal typology and building height. The most common concern was that “too many low-rise or high-rise would change the area and what it looks like.” The majority of interviewees thought that a mix of some low-rise apartments, terraced houses, units, and traditional suburban detached typologies were the best mix. However, ten of the fifty-seven interviewees considered apartments of six-plus storeys to be acceptable to them as part of a broad mix of typologies in a neighbourhood. Provisos such as not overshadowing urban spaces, considering sight lines, quality design, avoiding ‘shoebox’ apartments, and locations near to town centres were provided as part of interviewees’ reasoning. A mix of typologies was also seen as more conducive to diverse neighbourhoods, as highlighted by one interviewee who recognised that “a community is made up of everybody, from birth to death if you like, and that’s how we should be living.” This is in line with the finding, presented in Auckland Regional Council’s *Stocktake of Existing Consultation on Urban Intensification* report, that residents “expressed a need for a mix of housing types for different cultures, ages, and incomes” (Wilkinson 2006, 22).
Generally, interviewee responses indicate that where they had mixed or negative feelings about intensification they were only opposed to high-rise apartments rather than all forms of intensification. The majority of interviewees considered some form of higher density row houses or three- to five-storey apartments to be acceptable typologies within their existing neighbourhoods and in Auckland as a whole. This finding aligns with previous studies undertaken by Auckland Council (2011b, 6) where it was found that “three- to five-storeys, mid-rise development was generally preferred over development much higher than this.” This illustrates the considerable difference between being anti-highrise and compared with being anti-density. It also suggests that the intensification of existing neighbourhoods, identified as necessary by Auckland Council (2012a), is more favoured than was previously realised in earlier urban intensification studies in Auckland. For example, this finding contrasts with the findings of a 2011 Centre for Housing Research study which found that attached typologies were “consistently seen in negative terms” (Dunbar and McDermott 2011, 27) by focus group participants. However, it is in line with the more recent research carried out by Auckland Council (2015) where it was found that “Aucklanders desire a greater volume of choice of accommodation options” (Yeoman and Akehurst 2015, 49).

4.4 Results section 3: Housing choices

Related to the questions about quality of urban life and perceptions of intensification are those about housing choices, aspirations, and the associated trade-offs that residents make when deciding where to live. If higher density typologies are to be chosen by a greater number of Auckland residents then current choices and aspirations, across a range of demographics, need to be understood.

4.4.1 Housing experiences

The housing typologies previously experienced by interviewees were recorded to determine whether housing experiences affected housing choices and aspirations. The five typology groupings that interviewees had experienced before their current townhouses and apartments are shown in Figure 46.
Despite currently living in attached typologies, the majority of interviewees had mostly experienced traditional standalone housing. Therefore, their perceptions of now living in attached housing is significant in understanding why they chose to move a higher density neighbourhood. Twenty of the fifty-seven interviewees had experienced standalone housing only, before moving into their current attached typology. Twenty-eight had experienced mostly standalone housing, with some attached typologies. Six had experienced mostly attached typologies, with some standalone housing. Three had experienced only apartment living before their current housing, these residents had all ‘densityed-down’ from high-rise apartments to their current medium-rise apartments. However, the majority of interviewees were currently living in a higher density than their previous dwelling. In contrast, six had experienced rural living. While the housing choices of some interviewees may have been affected by their prior housing experiences, their current typologies were generally of a higher density than they had predominantly experienced before making their current choice. It could be concluded that the choices and trade-offs that interviewees made when transitioning to higher density typologies were generally not based on their habitual dwelling patterns.
To further contextualise responses, the current residential typologies of interviewees were also coded so that it could be determined whether interviewees thought differently about their housing aspirations, depending on the typology of home they lived in. Figure 47 shows the current typologies of the interviewees across the four case study suburbs. Most of the interviewees lived in apartments. Thirteen lived in low-rise apartments of three- to five-storeys. Twenty interviewees lived in apartments of six storeys or more; although the complex in Kingsland, where seven interviewees lived, was four storeys on the high street side and six storeys on the side that sloped towards low-density villa typologies. It was coded by its highest side because interviewees were not asked to confirm which apartment was theirs in line with the ethics approval granted to this project. Nineteen interviewees lived in terraced housing, and five were currently living in semi-detached housing.

![Figure 47. Current residential typologies of interviewees across the four case study suburbs](image)

Current dwelling tenure was another question asked of interviewees. This data is presented in Figure 48. Of the fifty-seven interviewees, twenty-six were owner-occupiers and thirty-one were renters. The highest proportion of renters were from Kingsland and Botany Downs, whereas the highest proportion of interviewees who owned their property were from the Te Atatu Peninsula and Takapuna. It was observed that the higher ownership rate seen in the Te Atatu Peninsula interviewees was similar to Statistics New Zealand data.
Zealand (2015) data. However, unlike in the sample group, Statistics New Zealand data (2015) for Takapuna shows that the ownership rates are lower than the rental rates and in Botany Downs the ownership rates are higher than the rental rates. In general, the dwelling tenure data is in line with the falling rates of home ownership that characterise the current Auckland housing market (Statistics New Zealand 2015). It is envisioned that, by 2050, “at least 40% of all Auckland households may be living in rental accommodation – either by choice, or because they cannot afford to get on the property ladder” (Auckland Council 2011a) (See also Auckland Regional Council 1999b, 26-28, Darroch Ltd 2010, 18, Dixon and Dupuis 2003, 355).

The durations of time for which interviewees had been living at their current residences are presented in Figure 49. The average length of dwelling tenure was three years, the shortest time was one month and

Figure 48. Dwelling tenure across the four case study suburbs

9 Statistics New Zealand (2015) data for the ownership and rental rates in Auckland is as follows: Takapuna ownership 32%, rental 39.5%. Kingsland ownership 34.9%, rental 50.9%. Botany Downs ownership 59.6%, rental 24.1%. Te Atatu Peninsula ownership 53.7%, rental 33.6%. The missing percentage are held in family trusts. However, none of the interviewees in this study mentioned this option when asked about their dwelling tenure.
the longest thirteen years. All the developments chosen in the study, as attached typologies, were relatively recent builds. The oldest was built in 2000; the most recent was completed in 2011. Thus, fourteen years was the longest amount of time any of the interviewees could have been living in their current dwelling. Yet, because Aucklanders are becoming more transient (Statistics New Zealand 2015), data from recent movers is beneficial in terms of the applicability of the study to the changing Auckland housing market.

Figure 49. Durations of time that interviewees had been living at their current address across the four case study suburbs

This data also gives an indication of how familiar residents are with their neighbourhoods. However, length of tenure is not the only relevant factor when considering neighbourhood familiarity, as some interviewees mentioned living in the same neighbourhood before moving to their current dwelling. In future studies, it would be useful to also ask how long, collectively, interviewees have lived in their current neighbourhood or neighbouring areas.
4.4.2 Factors influencing current housing choices

Beamish, Carucci Goss, and Emmel (2001, 1) identify that “the complexity of people’s lives makes housing choice a decision that is influenced by a variety of factors.” Six key interrelated factors were identified during the data coding as influencing the attached typology housing choices of those interviewed. These factors are shown in Figure 50 and include both typological choices and locational choices.

![Coded categories of interviewee responses](image)

**Figure 50.** Instances when interviewees spoke about various factors that affect their housing choices
Coding the data identified that both an interviewee’s life stage and their lifestyle preferences were the two most critical factors that affected housing choices; each of these factors affected, to some extent, all fifty-seven interviewees. Location convenience and typology features were also significant factors influencing two-thirds of the interviewees. Embedded within the ‘typology features’ category it was evident that some interviewees indicated a lack of typological choice within housing options; they did not feel that there was a broad enough range of housing options to suit their needs at different stages of their lives. Affordability, in particular, the desire for home ownership, and place attachment featured similarly as factors influencing a third of the interviewees.

4.4.2.1 Life stage

The life stage of an interviewee was a significant overarching factor that affected their housing choice. Life stage is influenced by age, marital status, and the presence and age of children (Beamish, Carucci Goss, and Emmel 2001). While family and household living arrangements are becoming increasingly diverse, there are general groupings that could be identified from the data. Responses from interviewees were coded into three life stage categories: pre-family, family, and post-family or no-family. The sixteen interviewees in the pre-family category commented about the way attached typologies suited their way of life. One interviewee categorised themselves as a member of “the typical apartment generation” because of their active lifestyle, preference for urban living, and propensity for travel. Another commented: “due to our age; we just thought it would be nice to live in an upmarket ‘Sex and the City’ type apartment.” Other reasoning included the affordability of higher density typologies when singles or couples wanted to live alone rather than requiring flatmates to bill-share with them. The lifestyle benefits that higher density living offered those in the pre-family category was also a factor. For example, the low maintenance nature of apartments and row-houses freed up time for social activities. In keeping with previous studies (Beamish, Carucci Goss, and Emmel 2001, 21), this group usually indicated that while they thought higher density living suited them now, they thought about looking for standalone accommodation if they wanted a pet or aspired to standalone housing later when they started a family.

Twenty-one of the fifty-seven interviewees had family to consider when they made their current housing choices. Finding a dwelling of a suitable size was part of this equation, highlighted well by one interviewee who commented:

When we discovered that our son was on the way we knew that our previous house wasn’t going to work for two reasons. One was that the laundry was in the garage and
it didn’t have internal access, so that would have just been a nightmare, and the second thing was, it was a two-bedroom house and it just wasn’t going to be big enough if we had someone come to stay and a baby and us. So we were forced to find another house.

Proximity to urban amenities was highly valued by families when making housing choices. Parks and supermarkets were especially valued in housing choices for this life stage grouping. One interviewee observed that, “proximity to the supermarket, and especially with a young family, is so handy.” Another said a big part of their decision-making was “the closeness of schools, supermarkets, petrol stations, beaches, playgrounds, and parks, everything that you need to function with children.” Proximity to education amenities was also an important factor in housing choices for those in the family life stage. For example, one interviewee discussed how they moved in to a school catchment zone they viewed as being favourable to their daughter’s educational outcomes, even though “it meant a hike in the mortgage,” because they prioritised both the standard of education and the convenience for their daughter of being able to walk to school. Others had also moved for similar educational reasons and also so that their children could walk to school.

As well as looking for typologies that suited the spatial needs of families, the low-maintenance nature of higher density typologies also had value for some families. One interviewee commented, “I think for us being a two-person family, an apartment is excellent because of its ease. There are no lawns to mow. It’s easy to clean; it’s modern. So for me at my life stage at the moment it’s very good.” Security was another aspect that had influenced the housing choices of interviewees in the family life stage and caused them to choose an attached typology. One parent noted, “If I was away for an evening and my daughter had to spend the evening at home alone I’m very comfortable that she’s secure there. She’s safe.” Another added that they appreciated that their apartment had a security alarm because, as a single parent, it put their mind at ease.

The twenty interviewees in the post-family or retirement life stage predominantly came from situations where they were downsizing from their family home. Their reasoning for doing so was multifaceted and ranged from valuing the lock-up-and-leave nature of apartments, to freeing up capital, which enabled them to focus on their lifestyle preferences. These generally included mention of food, entertainment, and recreation amenities. For example, a number mentioned enjoying lunches out with friends and the convenience of having local parks nearby for when grandchildren come over. It was generally perceived that the advantage of making the choice to live in an attached typology was because they were in walkable accessibility of neighbourhood amenities. For example, one interviewee commented that they could live
in their neighbourhood even if they could not drive because everything they needed was within a walkable distance.

The vibe or atmosphere of a place was similarly valued by those in the post-family or retirement life stage. For example, one interviewee did not enjoy traditional suburban living because they felt it was more for families and, as an empty nester, they wanted to live in an area that was busier, with options of different activities for them to engage with so they did not get lonely or feel isolated. Furthermore, a concern raised by retirees was that they were anxious about ‘ageing in place’ because, even though they wanted to, there were not enough attached housing options available for them if they wanted to downsize. One interviewee, who currently lived in a terraced house in the Te Atatu Peninsula, remarked, “I would actually like to move into an apartment... but unfortunately for me at the moment there’s nothing here for sale... I could be quite happy in a two-bedroomed apartment.” Another added, “from my point of view there are very few homes for older people; most of the homes around here are huge family houses... I don’t want to be in an area exclusive to older people. I want to be in an area for all of society... And I really don’t want to move out of the area. It’s very convenient for me.” This highlights a mismatch between the demand side and the supply side of housing in Auckland.

Auckland Council (2011b) has also identified a mismatch between market demand, available supply, and planning policy in Auckland. Residents who wish to live near a range of desirable urban amenities, and who are “therefore willing to make a trade off in terms of a flat or apartment rather than a standalone house” (10), are limited in their attached typology options. This also reinforces the results presented in the most recent housing study by Auckland Council, The Housing We’d Choose. It found that, “there is a mismatch between the current supply of dwelling typologies and the housing Aucklanders would choose, if they were available” (Yeoman and Akehurst 2015).

Also in line with this study, Preval, Chapman, and Howden-Chapman’s (2010, 46) research “provides qualified support for the hypothesis that there may be an emerging need for ‘small lot’ or attached houses closer to urban centres.” Equally, their research also found that life stage was a core factor affecting housing choices. They identified that higher density typologies were most popular with ‘young and old’ residents and smaller households, commenting that given New Zealand’s ageing population and the prediction that household size is likely to shrink over the next twenty years, their results provided “support for policies that encourage infill and mixed-use development and discourage greenfield development” (ibid.). The findings presented in this thesis support the findings made by Auckland Council
(2011b) and Preval, Chapman, and Howden-Chapman (2010); particularly among pre-family and post-family residents, there appears to be an identified demand for attached housing typologies.

4.4.2.2 Lifestyle preferences

As well as life stage, lifestyle preferences strongly affect the housing choices of all those interviewed. One interviewee observed, “I think that people would look for (housing) based on their age and profile. They’d look for places to live that suit their kind of lifestyle.” Speaking personally, another interviewee confirmed that they had chosen to live in their current home due to lifestyle preferences, adding, “It’s close to everything... places we like to go out to, where all our friends live.”

Seven interviewees raised the point that they thought lifestyle preferences could be generational. For example, one interviewee commented, “looking at the generation coming through... they’re not going to want what I grew up on, the quarter acre section with the house, that’s of no interest to them at all.” Similarly, another interviewee commented:

    What I notice, especially in medium or bigger towns, (is that) younger people are more and more happy... ready to move to or start living in apartment blocks than their parents, who probably couldn’t imagine themselves living in an apartment. It depends on what you do with your free time, and young people probably want to be more independent, more flexible, and want to spend so much time travelling (overseas).

Randall (2008, 31) identifies a similar finding in his research, commenting that preferences expressed by interviewees tend to reflect their current housing situation. Such that, “respondents in higher-density dwellings view compact development more favourably than respondents in low density single family housing.” This implies that the acceptance of attached typologies in the form of semi-detached townhouses, terraced housing, and small scale apartment complexes will follow generational shifts towards urbanism due to the increasing number of younger people likely to have experienced these typologies, either when they were students, as young professionals sharing rental accommodation, or while living abroad. This group are already more accustomed to urban lifestyles and the availability of a range of urban amenities than previous generations (Schmitz 2003, 9). For example, one interviewee said, “people in NZ have to get past this; that all houses should be built on a quarter-acre section. That is long gone and I don’t think people today want it. All right, you’ve still got the old people who want a massive garden, that’s fine. But (for) the majority of people, their lives are not designed to go with a quarter-acre...
section.” While it appears in much existing research that ‘the quarter acre dream’ is still prevalent (as discussed in the Literature Review), this was not the case among those interviewed in this research. Dixon and Dupuis (2003, 355) also deduced, in their study of housing choices in Auckland, that traditional housing preferences are slowly changing and “the detached owner occupied home may no longer be the widely accepted dream it once was.” This finding is important because the ratio split between detached and attached typologies in Auckland remains 70:30 percent (Statistics New Zealand 2015). If preferences are indeed changing then this existing ratio, where 70 percent of homes are standalone will not align with an increasing demand for attached typologies. Responding to this demand, Auckland Council (2012b, 138) has identified that a mix of housing typologies to suit both changing life stages and changing lifestyle preferences is important so that residents can “choose to move to a suitable dwelling within the same community.” As well as the idea that there needs to be a mix of dwelling sizes and typologies in a neighbourhood to support changing lifestyles. Beacon Pathway Ltd (2010, 1) found that housing choices “have a profound effect on, and will be affected by, Auckland’s urban form, the distribution of services and amenities in Auckland and the effectiveness of its infrastructure.” Urban amenities are therefore also a key aspect of housing choices research because the quality and convenience of urban amenities can change perceived notions about the quality of urban life experienced by residents and their associated locational and dwelling choices. Providing a range of urban amenities that align with evolving housing needs and preferences is critical to the long term viability of Auckland’s neighbourhoods. This point is addressed in detail in section 4.6.2.11.

4.4.2.3 Location convenience

The idea that urban amenities have a role to play in housing choices leads into a discussion of location convenience. Location convenience affected the housing choices of forty-one of the fifty-seven interviewees. Convenience was a term specifically used by twenty-seven interviewees. The majority of the time this was in the context of accessibility and proximity to urban amenities; with interviewees identifying that "having amenities close by is quite good because it makes life easier.” Commercial amenities were mentioned specifically by twenty-nine of the fifty-seven interviewees. Twenty-five commented on the role of natural amenities in contributing to their housing choice, and subsequently their neighbourhood satisfaction; twenty were in Takapuna and five were from the Te Atatu Peninsula. This may reflect the fact that these two neighbourhoods are near to natural amenities, unlike Kingsland and Botany Downs.
Walkability to urban amenities influenced housing choices for seventeen of the fifty-seven interviewees, twelve of whom were from Takapuna. One Takapuna interviewee remarked that walkability had played a big part in their decision to live in an attached typology in the neighbourhood, rather than purchasing an equivalently priced detached typology elsewhere. The benefit of being able to walk to such a range of urban amenities meant that their daily life needs were more conveniently met. Accessibility and public transport connectivity was also a factor raised by sixteen interviewees as part of the location convenience that had influenced their housing choice.

Sixteen interviewees in Takapuna and Kingsland indicated that proximity to central Auckland was important when it came to their housing choices. For example, one interviewee chose their apartment because, “it was close enough to town but it was surrounded by houses and greenery so it didn’t feel too ‘city’ and it was in walking distance to shops.” Similarly, proximity or ease of access to work or school was raised as a factor that affected the housing choices of twenty-six interviewees across all the case study suburbs.

The findings of this research support previous Auckland studies and offer greater detail about the role of location convenience in housing choices. For example, in a study undertaken by Mead and McGregor (2007) it was determined that neighbourhood location was one of the main considerations made by residents when deciding where to live. This study adds that convenience, proximity, and walkability are the key motivators that interviewees cited as part of location convenience. Mead and McGregor (2007, 16) also found that the residents they interviewed “wanted to live in an area that they ‘like’.” It was through comparing Mead and McGregor’s findings to those of this study that it was realised that the neighbourhood likes, discussed subsequently in section 4.5.2, largely constitute the reasons that underlie why location convenience was important to many of the interviewees in this study.

4.4.2.4 **Typology features**

Thirty-eight interviewees said that the typological features of their attached dwellings had influenced their housing choice. Aspects such as security, ease of maintenance, build quality and affordability were factored into their housing choices. Of these thirty-eight interviewees, eighteen specifically mentioned the safety and security of the built form in their decisions. Similarly, in a stocktake of existing consultation on urban intensification in Auckland, Wilkinson (2006) found that a key similarity between previous studies was the finding that the low maintenance, secure, nature of many higher density developments featured alongside the convenience of living near to urban amenities as the two most common reasons
provided by participants as to why they had made higher density housing choices and moved from detached into attached housing typologies.

Ease of maintenance was raised as important in the housing choices of twenty-nine interviewees; half of these comments were made by interviewees from Takapuna. For example, one interviewee thought that choosing an apartment was the right decision for them because they could “just leave it and come home to the smell of freshly cut grass without doing anything.” Four interviewees spoke about how the low-maintenance aspect could also be advantageous in the future housing choices of other residents, one interviewee proposing that if you “walk down any suburban street... you can see the houses where people shouldn’t be... living in this sort of environment because they just take no care whatsoever of the house or the land. So, it seems obvious to me that those people would be far better off in an apartment somewhere.”

Eight interviewees specifically mentioned the ability to lock-up-and-leave their apartments as a factor that has affected their housing choice. This factor, alongside low-maintenance, meant that interviewees felt they could be more flexible, more transient, and have more leisure time because their houses were taken care of.

Build quality influenced the housing choices of twelve interviewees and there was concern expressed over the ageing housing stock in Auckland. One interviewee commented that while they were looking at a range of typologies, what affected their decision most was the build quality of the dwelling and how well it had been maintained. Factors such as whether it was well-insulated and mould-free were particularly important. Another stated:

It was the type of the house inside. I’m finding lots of New Zealand houses are really old and not very well looked after. Some of them are really damp with no insulation and cold. I’ve lived in houses like this previously and this time I was looking for something that’s more new so the standards are a bit higher than twenty to thirty years ago. I mean it’s healthy if it’s not damp and if it’s nice and clean and dry.

There is an established view in the literature that the build quality of attached typologies in Auckland is perceived to be substandard (Syme, McGregor, and Mead 2005, 2). This research indicates that if this view did exist, it is now shifting. In this study, more concern was directed at the ageing standalone housing stock in the city, and the lack of insulation in many dwellings, rather than at the build quality of attached
Chapter 4 Results

typologies. This is not to claim that the leaky building crisis in Auckland is not an issue. However, in terms of the acceptance of intensification, it appears that the quality of new higher density projects was a strong contributing factor to a growing acceptance of higher density living amongst the interviewees in this study.

4.4.2.5 Affordability

Along with build quality, affordability of housing was a clear consideration for twenty-two interviewees. These considerations are summarised by one interviewee who observed:

We originally wanted a standalone, but the standards of housing in NZ for the prices we wanted weren’t matching, so we moved into an apartment. We had a certain amount of money for a deposit. The options were, basically, move quite far out to the suburbs to somewhere where we could afford or buy an apartment where we’ve always lived and (is) close to our work. And it just ended up being a better lifestyle choice to buy something in the city that we could afford, this close to our work.

Tied to affordability was the desire to own property; nineteen of the interviewees spoke about this influencing their current housing choice in some way, whether it meant purchasing a smaller home to “get on the property ladder” or renting a smaller home to be able to save for a house deposit. Nineteen interviewees added that they were not specifically looking for attached typologies when they chose their current home. In these cases, lifestyle and location factors took precedence over housing type and were balanced with affordability constraints to result in the choice of an attached typology.

4.4.2.6 Place attachment

Finally, place attachment, the idea of feeling established in one’s neighbourhood, was a factor that came into play for seventeen interviewees. Generally, this related to an interviewee choosing to move within an existing neighbourhood. These interviewees felt that by living in and contributing to an area they could “build a community commitment.” Eleven interviewees mentioned proximity to friends and family as a motivating factor for their location choice that in turn affected their housing choice. Interviewees also spoke about developing place attachment when they could visualise their future quality of urban life in an area, whether that be through the convenience of being close to preferred urban amenities or because they had “nice neighbours and a safe neighbourhood.” A sense of community and security was specifically
mentioned by twelve of the interviewees as a factor that had shaped their housing choice. This occurred at both the neighbourhood scale and amongst immediate neighbours. If interviewees liked their neighbours, even if they did not know them, they were more likely to talk about wanting to stay in the area. Familiarity was important to interviewees and statements such as, "I know a whole lot of people around here," are characteristic of comments made by interviewees whose housing choices were affected by place attachment. This finding is in line with the ‘Recent Mover Survey’ data, outlined in a Centre for Housing Research report, where focus group participants identified that their “previous or current connection to an area is an important driver in dwelling and location selection” (Beacon Pathway Ltd 2010, 107).

4.4.2.7 Summary about the factors influencing housing choices

In summary, housing choices involve both locational and typological choices. The reasons behind housing choices expressed in this study differ from traditional, predominantly standalone, housing preferences. Lifestyle preferences were as important as life stage factors for the interviewees and convenience was a key part of the decision-making processes for many. Urban amenities are factored into residents’ thinking around the convenience of an area and how it meets their quality of urban life needs. The benefits of higher density typologies were acknowledged by many interviewees, particularly pre- and post-family residents who valued the low maintenance and security features that these typologies offered them. Questioning interviewees about the factors that influenced their housing choices led to also being able to identify the trade-offs that they were making throughout this process in order to arrive at their current housing choice. These trade-offs and how they were prioritised by interviewees is discussed in the subsequent section.

4.4.3 Trade-off hierarchies in the housing choices process

Circumstantial constraints, such as affordability, and personal preferences, such as proximity to employment, caused interviewees to make trade-offs among the six factors they described as most affecting their housing choices. Each interviewee valued the six key housing choice factors in different ways and thus they had differing trade-off hierarchies. A ‘trade-off hierarchy’ is a term developed in this research to describe the nuanced way individuals choose to prioritise various personal preferences, or are required to prioritise various personal constraints, when making housing choices. Interviewees usually cited one predominant or primary trade-off factor that they prioritised more than other factors. This became the deciding factor that shaped their housing choice.
The trade-off process followed by interviewees was tracked during the data coding of three interview questions. Firstly, interviewees were asked why they had chosen their current home. Secondly, they were asked how they had decided on their housing aspirations. Thirdly, they were asked to talk about their ‘plan B’ if, for whatever reason, their first choice aspiration did not come to fruition. The key factors that were traded-off by interviewees in these processes are presented in Figure 51.

**Figure 51.** Factors influencing the trade-off process that occurs when making housing choices

### 4.4.3.1 Primary trade-off factors

Lifestyle preferences, location convenience, and affordability were most frequently cited as factors that affected the trade-offs described by interviewees. Twenty-one interviewees spoke about lifestyle preferences being their primary trade-off factor. These were often similar to the location convenience factors prioritised by seventeen interviewees. One interviewee summed up the relationship between lifestyle preferences, location convenience, affordability, and typology features in the following statement:

> Living in close proximity to other people and so forth really only works if there’s a trade-off and that’s where you have extra facilities or it’s maintained to a high standard or
you have this kind of vibrancy that comes with having a lot of people. So I think the role of amenities is to aid that. But that said, a person's financial position being the same, I think if you have the right mix of amenities then intensification can be superior to the quarter-acre dream.

Urban amenities were frequently associated with both lifestyle and location convenience trade-offs. For example, one interviewee “decided to live in a decent area, near shops, near everything,” despite affordability concerns, and traded-off a lower density detached typology for a higher density attached typology near to the town centre. Another interviewee added, “I’ll compromise on smallness... I don’t actually mind the smallness, but I like to be close to the city.” Proximity and accessibility are intricately linked to priority for location convenience factors, one interviewee describing them as their ‘number one’ deciding factor when it came to their current housing choice. Six Takapuna interviewees had traded-off place attachment to a previous neighbourhood where they had family homes, for the accessibility of an increased number of urban amenities in Takapuna. Often in this process they also downsized to free capital for living or travelling. One commented, “we felt that Takapuna offered all the facilities on a flat piece of land that would allow us to walk to places and have all the amenities close by as we got older.”

These results build on the findings of the *Future Intensive: Insights for Auckland’s Housing* report, commissioned by Auckland Council, which found that “residents appear willing to consider some kind of trade-off between the low density suburbs, and the amenity that more compact development can offer” (Haarhoff et al. 2012, 22). In particular, residents in this research prioritised their lifestyles and location convenience as the primary trade-offs that shaped their housing choices.

Affordability was also ranked as a primary trade-off factor, out of necessity. Unlike the other trade-off factors, if a housing choice was beyond the financial means of a resident then affordability was automatically their bottom-line. Affordability was identified as a primary trade-off factor by thirteen of the fifty-seven interviewees. Three interviewees had prioritised trading-off their previous neighbourhoods, despite enjoying living there, for the ability to own a house, albeit one further out of the city. One interviewee mentioned that “there’s always a trade-off” when choosing typologies because affordability is always a factor and buying an apartment can make the property ladder more accessible. An important point to note is that primary trade-off factors are not static and those recorded here are a snapshot of the interviewees priorities at the time of being interviewed. It was found that they often were linked to life-stage. For example, an interviewee discussed how they had currently prioritised renting over ownership because they favoured living in a specific area, which they could not otherwise afford, due to the amenities it offered. However, they foresaw that their trade-off hierarchy would change and they
would favour ownership at a later life-stage when they had a family and the desire for ownership became stronger.

### 4.4.3.2 Secondary trade-off factors

Typology features, the influence of life stage, and place attachment were cited as the factors more likely to be traded-off and not prioritised by interviewees when they were making their housing choices. They have therefore been coded in this research as secondary trade-off factors. Not all interviewees noted that these factors were secondary to them when discussing their housing choices so the totalled number of responses listed are representative of the individual views spontaneously expressed by interviewees during the course of their interviews, rather than representing responses to direct lines of questioning.

Regarding typology features, ten interviewees commented about their trading-off a standalone for an attached typology because they were likely to require less maintenance, or for security reasons. Examples include one interviewee who traded-off a standalone house for an apartment because their partner travelled a lot for work and they felt safer with their small children in an apartment. Other interviewees traded-off a standalone house for an apartment so that they could travel more easily because they could lock-up-and-leave without any concern for security. Four interviewees also mentioned trading-off standalone typologies for higher density typologies due to the poor build quality of detached homes in Auckland; one interviewee confirming that for them “the first thing is to have a healthy place to live.“

The influence of life stage on housing choices was not acknowledged as a primary trade-off. However, that life stage was a low ranking factor could be more representative of how interviewees perceived the trade-offs they prioritised rather than a true representation of its influence. For example, an interviewee who currently prioritised their proximity to restaurants and bars above other factors perceived that lifestyle was the most important factor to them. However, if they were to transition from the pre-family to family life stage, life stage factors such as proximity to education amenities may take precedence, as was noted by other interviewees for whom this had occurred. Interviewees with children were more acutely aware of their life stage shaping their decision-making process and interviewees who were parents generally traded-off their own location convenience and lifestyle needs for proximity to urban amenities such as schools, day-care centres, parks and playgrounds and the affordability of higher density typologies in these areas.
Place attachment was raised by only four interviewees as a factor that they traded-off. This may be more indicative of the fact that the interviewees in the study generally experienced a high level of neighbourhood satisfaction where they currently lived and therefore it was not a factor they felt they had to trade-off as opposed to one they did not prioritise or it may not have been top-of-mind for the interviewees in the study when they thought about their process of making housing choices.

**4.4.3.3 Balancing trade-offs**

It also became apparent when coding the data that, as well as trading-off factors in a hierarchical way, for some interviewees the balancing of equally important trade-off factors was important. This interviewee’s response is characteristic of many of the multifaceted examples provided by interviewees:

> Well, we are planning to have a baby, so we thought we needed more space, that was one, and then we sort of knew the policy on the deposit of a house was going to increase so we sort of said well we (had) better do it before the deposit went up and that’s why we bought this place really.

Two key trade-off factors were listed as equally important to this resident. Their housing choice was shaped by a balancing of their desire for home ownership and the influence of their life stage, because they were starting a family and as a result the number of bedrooms and the amount of space in the dwelling was a significant consideration. Other factors, such as proximity to their places of work and place-attachment to previous suburbs they had lived in were much lower on their trade-off hierarchy and did not affect this particular housing choice the couple made.

In a recent study conducted for Auckland Council by Yeoman and Akehurst (2015), a series of trade-offs were identified that align to the way interviewees balanced different housing choices in this study. For example, Yeoman and Akehurst (2015, 38) found that respondents to their survey balanced dwelling size and dwelling type, commenting that “people were more likely to choose attached dwellings and apartments over stand-alone dwellings when dwelling sizes were larger (as determined by the number of bedrooms).” The issue of dwelling size as part of a trade-off based on prioritising typology features also arose as a factor that affected both families looking to upsize to a dwelling with an extra bedroom, and individuals or couples in the post-family life stage who were looking to downsize. For families, having an extra bedroom was often critical and became a primary trade-off in their hierarchy. In contrast, for those
in the post-family life stage it was generally a low-ranking preference. This was unless affordability, and the freeing up of capital, were paramount.

Yeoman and Akehurst (ibid.) also found that respondents to their survey balanced dwelling size with preferred location and also size with affordability, or dwelling price. Generally, Yeoman and Akehurst found that “people were willing to trade-off their preferred location to live in a larger dwelling.” They also found that “as price increases, people became relatively less likely to select a larger dwelling, indicating that there is willingness to trade-off dwelling size for lower price” (ibid.). However, as the price increased people were less likely to select attached typologies. Yeoman and Akehurst concluded that “a significant proportion of respondents... were prepared to trade-off location and dwelling type ahead of dwelling size, as the price increased” (49). This indicates the way affordability is a constraint that can override all other housing preferences. Even though it is not always acknowledged verbally by many interviewees, the same was found in this study. The balancing of trade-offs can therefore only occur when residents have the ability to construct their own trade-off hierarchies based on their personal preferences, without constraints imposed on them. This connects to the idea that affordability is a critical factor in the housing choices process.

4.4.4 Housing aspirations

Just as locational choices are part of housing choices, so too location aspirations are part of housing aspirations. As well as considering why residents had chosen their current home, it was also important to ask about their housing aspirations to build a picture of the potential future demand for different housing types. When asked where they saw themselves living in five years’ time, the majority of interviewees wanted to remain in their existing neighbourhoods or in a neighbouring suburb. The location aspirations for where interviewees want to be living in five years’ time are shown in Figure 52.

Twenty interviewees aspired to stay in their current suburb and nine aspired to live in a neighbouring area. These interviewees confirmed that they would trade-off dwelling typology to do this, if it meant they could achieve their locational aspiration. In contrast, for seven interviewees their location aspirations were instead dependent on their employment location because they chose to prioritise this proximity in their trade-off hierarchy. Three interviewees wanted to be living out of Auckland or overseas in the next five years and five were unsure of their housing aspirations, having not previously thought about them. Six interviewees wanted to trade-off their current location for one further away from central Auckland so that they could own their own home rather than renting. Likewise, six wanted to trade-off their current
location for a rural or semi-rural property because this was seen as an option that would meet their lifestyle desire for peace and quiet. This shows two very different forms of reasoning for wanting to live at the city fringe. In the one instance, affordability constraints and the desire for ownership are the primary trade-offs causing residents to cite location aspirations different from their current suburb. In the other instance, lifestyle factors are prioritised by interviewees.

Figure 52. Location aspirations for where interviewees want to be living in five years’ time

Furthermore, when identifying their housing aspirations beyond location, interviewees often spoke about having more than one preferred typology. In some cases, this meant stating that they would like to live in a standalone house but not having a preference for a small or large site, either option being a low-density housing preference. In other instances, this meant being happy to live in either terraced housing or higher density low-rise apartments. Instead, they focussed on factors such as whether or not they had a family, whether their relationship status changed, or their employment location. These mixed preferences meant that, during data coding, two scenarios were identified with regards to housing typology aspirations: a lower density scenario and a higher density scenario. The lower density scenario is a compilation of all the lower density responses and the higher density scenario is a compilation of the higher density responses.
In the lower density scenario, the ratio of detached to attached housing typologies was twenty-eight to twenty-nine, as shown in Figure 53. In the higher density scenario, the ratio was twenty-one to thirty-six, as shown in Figure 54.

Figure 53. Lower density scenario of housing typology aspirations

Figure 54. Higher density scenario of housing typology aspirations
In the lower density scenario, no interviewees aspired to cluster or unit typologies and there was an even divide between detached and attached typologies. In the higher density scenario, the greatest shifts were an increase of six residents who aspired to low-rise apartments and a decrease of nine interviewees who aspired to some form of standalone housing. In both graphs the number of interviewees aspiring to lifestyle blocks and to terraced housing remains unchanged. While standalone typologies were a strong aspirational typology for many of the interviewees, terraced housing and low-rise apartment living were aspirations for a significant number of interviewees in each scenario.

In summary, there was a notable preparedness to move into attached typologies at different life stages. There was still a desire for standalone housing when interviewees were in the family life stage. However, for many interviewees their housing aspirations were no longer the standalone homes synonymous with the ‘quarter acre dream.’ Instead a key finding from this research is that interviewees desired a greater variety of housing typologies from which to choose than they felt were available to them. Notably, this desire was geographically constrained to established neighbourhoods with which interviewees were familiar. Predominantly, interviewees preferred typologies of the same or a similar density to their current home. For example, an interviewee living in terraced housing was most likely to consider this typology or low-rise apartments to be acceptable if intensification were to occur in their neighbourhood. An interviewee currently living in a three-storey apartment was likely to find low-rise apartments of up to five storeys to be an acceptable typology.

4.4.5 Reasons for housing aspirations

The reasons given by interviewees for their first choice housing aspirations were generally the same as they had been for their current housing choice. They were also dependent on whether or not interviewees saw themselves in detached or attached housing typologies. This data adds to the literature on the demand side of housing research and from it further insights can be gleaned as to how housing perceptions will need to change if higher density living is to be embraced as a preference by more residents. However, the supply of attached housing options is potentially a more pressing issue than the acceptance of them, because there already appears to be an undersupply of attached dwellings in established suburbs (Yeoman and Akehurst 2015, 5). The research of Yeoman and Akehurst (2015, 5) for Auckland Council “suggests that, outside of the Auckland central area, there is a significant under-supply of units and apartments, while the supply of apartments in the Auckland central area exceeds demand.”
Beginning with detached typologies, as presented in Figure 55, three predominant and three lesser reasons were identified as motives for interviewees’ first choice aspirations.

![Figure 55. Factors influencing housing aspirations when a detached typology was aspired to](chart)

Fifteen of the twenty-nine interviewees aspiring to detached typologies spoke about wanting single-story detached houses for the ability to make and store life’s acquisitions – such as sports equipment, outdoor equipment, and family heirlooms – or needing space for larger families and pets. One interviewee described their aspiration as follows:

> I think what I like about having a house on a section is you can easily have pets; you can have a vegetable garden if you want; just having a little bit of land allows you room to park a boat or a motorbike or something. There’s just the ability to cater for acquisitions which you can’t do in a smaller apartment.

This was similar to the reasons for prioritising lifestyle preferences of fourteen interviewees. For example, one Takapuna interviewee thought they might move to Riverhead or Coatesville so that their son had
space to roam, another to the same area because they wanted to retreat somewhere that was "quieter with less traffic," where they could also raise livestock.

There were also interviewees who were unsure about which future housing scenario they would choose. This is exemplified well by one interviewee who said:

I really like living in the apartment due to lots of reasons: Location, upmarket style living, the gated entrance and security, and there’s a whole community in the building kind of thing... but then again I like the house option because there’s more open space and you have your own home, and you can make it your home. Yeah, it’s totally different to an apartment.

When asked if they would choose the house or apartment option if there was a way to have their dog at the apartment they replied, “Yes, I’d totally stay.” This indicates that there are other micro social issues, such as the ability to keep pets, that significantly affect housing choices.

The desire for standalone home ownership was a strong pull factor for twelve interviewees, seven of whom lived in Kingsland. Views either focused on the idea of the ‘kiwi dream’ or the ability to renovate and claim the space as one’s own. For example, one interviewee spoke about how they grew up in Brisbane where “everyone buys a house,” identifying a similar ownership culture in Auckland. Another interviewee commented, “It’s that whole idea of the kiwi dream, for me anyway, just having your own place, a section.” Yet another added, “It’s that kiwi dream I think. I grew up in a huge house in Pt. Chevalier with a huge back yard and a creek down the bottom and kayaks and stuff; it was just the best place to grow up. I wouldn’t want to bring a kid up in an apartment to be honest.” Lastly, one interviewee commented, “in terms of ownership (I am) really looking forward to making something my own that renting isn’t giving me,” a sentiment directly echoed by five other interviewees. This finding is in line with research undertaken for The Centre for Housing Research (2010). Focus groups, with a total of eighty-seven participants, revealed that, “the desire for home ownership reflects not simply an abstract desire for home ownership but a real concern among younger households that the rental market fails to meet their needs” (Beacon Pathway Ltd 2010, 111). Randolph (2006, 477, 482) and Rowland (2010, 33) also comment on changing ownership patterns in their research in Australia and The United States of America by questioning the sustainability of the current trend away from owner-occupied dwellings. They ask what the implications will be if the rental market continues to grow as prospective buyers are priced out of the ownership market. A solution for these issues has not been found for Auckland; and is part of the
reasoning put forward by Auckland Council (2012a) as to why it is pursuing a ‘quality compact city’ development model.

Continuing with attached typologies, as presented in Figure 56, two predominant and four lesser reasons were cited as motives for interviewees’ first choice aspirations.

![Figure 56. Factors influencing housing aspirations when an attached typology was aspired to](image)

Convenience, as a result of the location, was generally seen as the most critical factor that affects the trade-offs interviewees made when choosing to move from a detached to an attached typology. The benefits of higher density typologies, because they are low-maintenance and secure, was also commented on by interviewees. One summed up their housing aspiration thinking and the trade-offs involved as follows:

"For the money we could stay here and we would be living in this kind of a house (terraced house) which would be a newer house on a small site or it would be an older house on a half site, so I would rather have the newer house on the small site because I don’t really need the land. Or we could go further out but then the commute would be that much longer. So the matrix of the things you kind of consider (include), how..."
long it takes to get to and from work and the house size and the age of the house and the amount of space that you have.

Location convenience was favoured by sixteen of the thirty-six interviewees who expressed their aspiration for an attached typology. Within this category, the word convenience was mentioned specifically by three interviewees, commercial amenities by eight, and natural amenities by six. Accessibility and public transport connectivity were specifically mentioned by seven interviewees and proximity and ease of access to work or school was highlighted by a further twelve. Typological features were favoured by sixteen of the thirty-six interviewees who expressed attached typology aspirations; interviewees spoke about wanting an apartment because it was low maintenance and secure. The ease of maintenance, security, and safety offered by apartment complexes were specifically cited by nine interviewees. Build quality was mentioned by two and the affordability of attached typologies was specifically addressed by three interviewees.

In summary, the predominant reasoning of interviewees aspiring to detached typologies was considerably different to the reasoning of interviewees aspiring to attached typologies. For those wanting to move to detached typologies, lifestyle preferences, the perceived typological advantages of standalone homes, affordability and the desire for ownership were the predominant reasons why they favoured these typologies. For those wanting to remain in an attached typology of some form, location convenience and the perceived typological advantages of terraced housing and apartments were the predominant reasons why they favoured these typologies. Place attachment factored less for the interviewees envisaging living in a detached dwelling than those envisaging attached, higher density dwellings.

### 4.4.6 Everyone needs a backup plan

Following on from questioning interviewees about their five-year housing aspirations, they were asked where else they might be happy to live if, for whatever reason, their first choice was not a feasible option. This was not applicable to interviewees who wanted to remain in their existing typologies but, for those planning to move, it meant introspection on the viability of their aspirations. Questioning interviewees about their ‘plan B’ was designed to encourage them to think as realistically as they could about the constraints that they might face when choosing their next home. Figure 57 shows the ‘backup plan’ typology aspirations expressed by interviewees.
Affordability parameters became more significant for interviewees when they were asked to think as realistically as they could about their future housing. For example, one interviewee stated, “I’d really consider looking at buying a terraced house or a cluster house as my next home because it’s probably more affordable as the next step up, rather than going to a standalone house.”

When interviewees were asked what they might still be happy with if their first choice aspiration was not viable, terraced housing rose from a preferred option for twelve interviewees to a viable option for seventeen. Standalone typologies dropped from a preferred option for twenty interviewees to the plan B for ten interviewees. This aligned to the findings of a 2015 Auckland Council research report ‘The Housing We’d Choose’ (Yeoman and Akehurst 2015). When faced with financial constraints, a significant proportion of participants in the study chose attached typologies including “walk-up apartments… especially in non-traditional apartment locations” (Yeoman and Akehurst 2015, 49), such as existing Auckland neighbourhoods.

Figure 57. Secondary housing typology aspirations if the first choice aspiration was not a viable option for an interviewee
Interviewees who had originally chosen low-rise apartments as their primary preference noted other forms of higher density dwellings, such as terraced housing or modern units, that would also be acceptable. This saw a substantial rise from only one interviewee to a total of eighteen interviewees identifying units as a typology they would consider. However, there was concern among interviewees that they did not want to live in existing unit typologies in Auckland, predominantly built between the 1950s and 1970s, as these were considered by interviewees to have a poor build quality and were often seen to have negative social stigma attached to them. The thought that higher density typologies were likely to be new builds appealed to interviewees. The comprehensive study of any stigma attached to dwellings of different time-periods in Auckland’s history has not occurred; this is raised as an area for future research in section 6.2 which identifies future research possibilities. In instances where interviewees said a higher density typology would be acceptable to them, there were some conditions that these typologies needed to offer. For example, one interviewee tempered their response with the statement:

*If I lived in an apartment it would at least have to have a reasonable sized balcony. I’ve still got to have somewhere where I can sit outside, even if it’s just to read a book. Even if you can just open the doors wide and you don’t even step out there, just to feel like you’ve got everything coming in, air and sun.*

Another interviewee added that they knew they could live in an apartment so long as they could “see green out the window.” Therefore, while the data collected in this research is telling of the potential for a changing market demand for housing in Auckland, the core socio-cultural requirements of residents remain strongly aligned to traditional living patterns – which favour features such as indoor-outdoor flow, a connection with nature, and storage to accommodate busy lifestyles and varied interests.

### 4.5 Results section 4: Neighbourhood satisfaction

Overall, interviewees in this study were satisfied with the quality of urban life they derived from their neighbourhoods. However, it was found that neighbourhood satisfaction was more multifaceted than a yes/no answer from interviewees about their perceived satisfaction. Understanding neighbourhood likes and dislikes added to the complexity of understanding both neighbourhood satisfaction and quality of urban life (Marans and Stimson 2011, 7, 91). It also helped in understanding the perceptions of residents towards higher density living, discussed in section 4.6.2.11. In this section the multifaceted nature of neighbourhood satisfaction is addressed by considering how interviewees viewed their neighbourhoods in terms of their likes and dislikes, and how they thought their neighbourhoods could be improved. The
section begins by first identifying how interviewees conceptualised their neighbourhoods within this process.

### 4.5.1 Concepts of neighbourhood

Embedded within the analysis of the relationship between quality of urban life factors and neighbourhood satisfaction is the need to understand what interviewees mean when they talk about their neighbourhoods. Interviewees were therefore asked to define and describe their neighbourhood to contextualise their responses about the relationships between their neighbourhoods and their perceptions of quality of urban life. When interviewees from the same case study development were asked to define their neighbourhood it was often a different geographical area to the next interviewee. The majority of interviewees across all four case study areas described their neighbourhoods as both their immediate suburb as well as including two to four adjoining suburbs. For example, in Takapuna this included the adjoining suburb of Milford and often other suburbs in the same regional area of the North Shore, with which interviewees were familiar. In Kingsland, this included the neighbouring suburbs of Eden Terrace, St Lukes, and Sandringham. Other descriptions included distance related descriptions such as “two kilometres from the apartment” and “within a thirty-minute walk from my apartment.”

Place attachment is a key factor that affected how interviewees conceptualised their sense of neighbourhood. For example, one interviewee described their neighbourhood as mostly their immediate suburb. However, they also felt a connection to another Auckland suburb that was a twenty-minute drive away, due to the amount of time they spent there with family members. In this instance, they considered that both areas made up their conceptualisation of neighbourhood. Others spoke about identifying their neighbourhood as both the area in which they currently lived, as well as the suburb that they had grown up in, because of the familiarity they still had with that area. Other interviewees described their neighbourhood to be made up of both the suburb where their home was and the suburb in which they worked, since they used both areas to access key daily life amenities such as supermarkets, cafés, green spaces and medical facilities. The Te Atatu Peninsula was a little different, due to its geographical isolation where six of the ten interviewees thought about ‘the peninsula’ as their neighbourhood.

### 4.5.2 Neighbourhood likes

Asked about neighbourhood likes, interviewees were able to respond in greater detail to the ways in which their neighbourhood contributed to a complete sense of their neighbourhood satisfaction and
quality of urban life. This enabled the interviewer to explore the embedded assumptions and beliefs of the interviewees. In particular, identifying their likes and dislikes helped interviewees to think deeply about how their neighbourhood affected their quality of urban life and how their acceptance of higher density living might also be affected by their current environments. This questioning confirmed whether the responses made by interviewees about their neighbourhood satisfaction were consistent throughout the interviews or if they changed with different lines of questioning. In most cases, interviewees’ answers were consistent across different interview questions. This indicates that they were considered in their responses. Responses about what interviewees liked about their neighbourhoods were coded into four categories; these are displayed in Figure 58.

Figure 58. Interviewee comments about what they liked about their neighbourhoods
Most frequently, the presence of urban amenities and the resultant convenience and choice associated with having a range of options in close proximity was raised by forty-four interviewees. Responses usually linked a broad range of urban amenities together and made statements such as, “It’s conveniently close to shops, coffee shops, the supermarket, (and the) motorway.” Connected to this were the ideas of accessibility, proximity, and physical connectivity, mentioned by thirty-seven interviewees. For example, one Botany Downs interviewee liked their neighbourhood because “it’s close to friends, it’s close to family, (and) it’s close to everything we need. It’s close to work; it’s just handy for all those sort of reasons.”

Walkability was a core component of accessibility, proximity, and physical connectivity and was specifically mentioned by seventeen interviewees across all four neighbourhoods as a reason why they liked, and enjoyed living in, their current neighbourhoods. One Takapuna interviewee, for example, commented, “you go across the road to do your shopping, you just walk, you’re going to the movies or you’re going to Takapuna to have a coffee, you just walk; you go to the beach, you walk.” Interviewees in Kingsland particularly related walkability to their ability to walk to local restaurants or cafés, particularly on the weekend. In Botany Downs, walkability related to walking to the mall.

Public transport was also mentioned specifically by sixteen of the fifty-seven interviewees and coded under accessibility. However, only interviewees from Kingsland spoke about regularly using public transport. Their comments generally centred on the fact that they used it because they had multiple options, the bus and the train, which meant that if one was not reliable they could catch an alternative without it affecting their timing plans. One commented, “I really like that there’s lots of buses that come past, it’s handy to get to work. There’s always the train as a backup option as well if I want to get into town. We don’t use it often but it’s there.”

Twenty-one interviewees included factors about the neighbourhood ‘vibe’ in their reasoning for liking their neighbourhood. Similarly, eighteen spoke about appreciating the emotional connectivity they felt to their neighbourhood, one Takapuna interviewee stating “people get to know you locally, like I know all the people in the shops, all the shopkeepers and all the bank tellers.” Likewise, a Botany Downs interviewee liked their neighbourhood because it was a “close knit community” and an interviewee from the Te Atatu Peninsula liked their neighbourhood because it felt “like a small town.”
In conclusion, neighbourhood likes can be quite varied, based on individual preferences. However, reasoning is predominantly centred around the value interviewees place on convenience and accessibility. There was also a strong element of the intangible favoured by interviewees. Ideas such as the “vibe” of the neighbourhoods and the human connectivity interviewees felt towards their neighbours also influenced their neighbourhood likes and ultimately their sense of neighbourhood satisfaction.

**4.5.3 Neighbourhood dislikes**

Factors that interviewees disliked about their current neighbourhoods were questioned for the same reasons as were neighbourhood likes in the previous section. Understanding neighbourhood dislikes added to the complexity of understanding quality of urban life and the role urban amenities can play in influencing the transition of Aucklanders to living at a higher density than they have been accustomed to. Interviewees were asked directly what their dislikes were; many referred back to this question at later stages of the interview as new ideas came to them. At whatever stage of the interview dislikes were mentioned by interviewees, they were coded and included in the findings presented in Figure 59.

![Figure 59. Interviewee comments about what they disliked about their neighbourhoods](image-url)
Out of fifty-seven interviewees, seventeen were not able to identify any dislikes about their neighbourhood when asked. Of the remaining forty interviewees who could identify neighbourhood dislikes, nineteen cited environmental factors, particularly noise. This was most noticeable in Kingsland, where one of the case study developments was next to train tracks and the other was near a motorway. Noise was correspondingly noted by nine of the thirteen interviewees from Kingsland as influencing how they perceived their neighbourhood.

Seven of the interviewees cited a lack of specific urban amenities. Comments generally related to lifestyle preferences, such as wanting more health food-related amenities or a regular cyclist wanting a cycle path. It is interesting that urban amenities featured strongly in neighbourhood likes but the lack of amenities featured minimally as neighbourhood dislikes. It is unclear whether this indicates that interviewees were generally satisfied with the urban amenities that were available to them or if interviewees noticed those they had and did not think about those they did not have.

Twelve interviewees related neighbourhood dislikes to their inability to get to work quickly during rush-hour traffic. A further twelve interviewees spoke about housing dislikes rather than neighbourhood dislikes, which ranged from affordability concerns, to privacy issues, to a dislike of house sizes.

In summation, neighbourhood dislikes were expressed despite the fact that residents felt an overall satisfaction with their neighbourhoods. When coded, neighbourhood dislikes were less important to interviewees than their neighbourhood likes. The interviewees indicated during their interviews that there were no dislikes that would cause any of them to move, making comments such as “It would be more convenient if we had a chemist closer to us, but it’s not something that would make me wanna move.”

### 4.5.4 Neighbourhood improvements

The process of identifying neighbourhood likes and dislikes engaged interviewees in thinking about and commenting on ways in which they would want to subsequently see their neighbourhood improved. Interviewees were questioned about the neighbourhood improvements they would like to see to determine whether there was a link between the acceptance of higher density developments and the provision of additional urban amenities in a neighbourhood. Interviewee responses were coded in four categories, as presented in Figure 60.
Figure 60. Interviewee comments about how they thought their neighbourhoods could be improved

Twenty-one of the fifty-seven interviewees were unsure as to what improvements could be made to their neighbourhoods. Twenty-four interviewees described additional urban amenities that they would like to see as a way to improve their neighbourhoods. This was most noticeable in Kingsland, where ten interviewees commented about the need for additional urban amenities such as a chemist, a medical centre, a local grocery shop, a bank, and a post office. In the Te Atatu Peninsula, seven of the ten interviewees mentioned improvements related to updating their run down town centre with urban amenities such as a local butcher or deli, boutique gift and clothing stores rather than “two dollar shops.”

Similarly, seventeen interviewees expressed the opinion that their neighbourhoods could be improved through additional or improved infrastructure, such as a train from Botany Downs to the CBD. Two interviewees in Takapuna spoke about wanting to see an improvement made to pedestrian infrastructure, including improving footpaths and “pedestrianising the main street.”

Eight of the interviewees raised the idea that improving environmental factors, such as noise, would improve their neighbourhood. Nineteen had previously described noise as a neighbourhood dislike, indicating that eleven of these residents did not link their dislike with a potential neighbourhood improvement.
Together, the neighbourhood likes, dislikes, and improvements data illustrate a correlation between interviewee responses and the theory tested by this research: that the strategic provision of additional urban amenities in a neighbourhood corresponds to the increased acceptance of higher density living. This is, in large part, due to the relationship between the availability of daily life urban amenities in a neighbourhood and neighbourhood satisfaction.

### 4.5.5 The relationship between quality of urban life and neighbourhood satisfaction

There was further correlation between interviewee responses in this study and the work of Marans and Stimson (2011), since both identified a strong relationship between neighbourhood satisfaction and quality of urban life. This relationship is shown in Figure 61. Neighbourhood satisfaction was seen to be directly affected by “the provision of services and facilities such as education services, emergency services, public transport, parks, shopping, and leisure opportunities” (Marans and Stimson 2011, 81). Similarly, access to urban amenities was recognised as an important component to achieve quality of urban life. Urban amenities had a key role to play in the neighbourhood satisfaction of interviewees, which in turn is a key contributing factor to the quality of urban life experienced by neighbourhood residents.

![Figure 61. The relationship between quality of urban life, neighbourhood satisfaction and urban amenities in a neighbourhood](image-url)
Interviewees were asked how they thought their neighbourhood affected their quality of urban life and often continued to articulate different aspects of their views throughout the remainder of the interview. Figure 62 shows their responses coded into five categories. To ensure that the complexity of responses was preserved through the coding stages, interviewees’ responses were, in many instances, coded into more than one category as they saw the relationship between their quality of urban life and their neighbourhood as multifarious.

Figure 62. Interviewee comments about the relationship between their neighbourhood satisfaction and their quality of urban life
Walkability was the concept most frequently linked by interviewees to their neighbourhood satisfaction. Forty-six of the fifty-seven interviewees mentioned the importance of walkability in some way during their interviews. The thoughts expressed by interviewees about walkability covered notions of accessibility to urban amenities and employment, health and wellbeing, and pleasure. In Takapuna, eighteen of the twenty interviewees referred to walkability, mainly about the walkable accessibility of local urban amenities such as cafés, workplaces and schools, and natural amenities. This was well concluded by one interviewee who stated: “the ability to just go somewhere, like to walk somewhere or just the freedom to do things I think’s pretty important.” Six interviewees from Takapuna linked walkability to health and wellbeing by speaking about walking to the neighbouring suburb of Milford, although the rest seemed to walk more locally around Takapuna. Four interviewees from Kingsland commented on walking around their neighbouring suburbs. In Botany Downs, three interviewees spoke about valuing their walkable accessibility to a local park and a further three spoke about walking to the local mall as an aspect of their quality of urban life. Valuing the walkable accessibility to local urban amenities was raised by six interviewees from the Te Atatu Peninsula and five also spoke about using local walkways for exercise.

The role of the urban amenities in their neighbourhood was related by interviewees to quality of urban life through the notions of ease of accessibility. This was articulated by thirty-five interviewees, and convenience and choice were articulated by twenty-seven interviewees at various times throughout the interview process. One interviewee commented that urban amenities “can make things more difficult, or easier, depending on where you live” and another noticed that “good amenities, good quality amenities, would affect how and where you go, when.” Twelve interviewees recognised a specific link between the proximity of urban amenities and their improved quality of urban life. Ten spoke about the convenience of living near to commercial amenities, such as their local shopping mall, hardware stores, and other local retailers. Six spoke about natural amenities, such as beaches and parks.

However, perceptions of proximity and accessibility differed amongst interviewees. For example, one interviewee said that their quality of urban life was improved by the easy accessibility and close proximity of a local swimming pool. Another interviewee commented about not using the same pool because they perceived it to be too far to walk and inconvenient to access. The difference was that one interviewee was accustomed to travelling for twenty minutes from their previous dwelling to use the swimming pool, while the other previously had a pool within their apartment complex. Proximity was also related to familiarity. For example, the concept of walkability varied; if people knew the route very well, and considered it to be within their neighbourhood, then they were likely to think that an amenity was more
easily accessible. Proximity and accessibility are relative terms and this must be considered in any dialogue in which they are important factors affecting the views of interviewees.

Twenty-six interviewees linked their sense of connectedness to people in their neighbourhood to their neighbourhood satisfaction and quality of urban life. Twelve mentioned neighbours, and whether they were friendly or noisy. This can be linked to the twenty-five instances where neighbourhood vibe and environmental factors were cited by interviewees as aspects of quality of urban life.

Four interviewees spoke, in various ways, about the issue of place attachment, due to having family living in the same area, as affecting their neighbourhood satisfaction. Six interviewees commented on the importance of socialisation for human health; for example, one interviewee said that they need “people contact, that interaction with social demographics.” The most frequently raised environmental factor was noise, which seventeen interviewees cited as a factor that could change how they perceived their quality of urban life and adversely affect their neighbourhood satisfaction.

In summary, the importance of walkability to interviewees is in line with the findings of other studies (Mehta 2008, Sandalack et al. 2013). It was also possible to determine that the desire for convenience, that has become part of modern lifestyles, is a significant factor that affects quality of urban life. Aligned to convenience, the proximity and accessibility of urban amenities is very important. There is a cyclical relationship between accepting urban lifestyles, valuing convenience, and convenience provided by urban amenities. Therefore, the strategic integration and placement of urban amenities in a neighbourhood is integral to quality of urban life; it is not just the fact that urban amenities exist in a neighbourhood; location and ease of access also are important.

4.6 Results section 5: Urban amenities

It was established in the literature review that research into the role of urban amenities, particularly when considered broadly across a neighbourhood, is an under-researched urban issue. However, the extent of
the role that urban amenities play in delivering quality of urban life outcomes did not become apparent until the research for this thesis was carried out\(^\text{10}\).

Interviewees were asked various questions that focussed on urban amenities; initially they were asked how they defined them, to establish a basis for understanding their subsequent responses. They were then asked about the perceived role and value to them of the urban amenities they used. This flowed into their being asked to talk about their favourite urban amenities and their awareness of them in their neighbourhoods, even though they may not use them, but nevertheless thought they would be valued by other residents. Critically, the importance of urban amenities in the process of intensification was also raised as an issue by interviewees. From their comments, links emerged in the data between different types of urban amenities, such as those used in daily life activities versus those used intermittently. The accessibility of urban amenities and how interviewees chose to access them were also identified.

### 4.6.1 Defining urban amenities

When asked to define urban amenities, six interviewees were unsure of what the term meant and eight interviewees thought of urban amenities as council-provided facilities. However, the majority, forty-three of the interviewees, considered urban amenities to be all the services and infrastructure in a neighbourhood that contribute to their urban living experience. One interviewee described urban amenities as “all of the things that you value in a community... the open space, the walkways, the park space, the variety of shops or facilities and our proximity to them.” Another echoed this statement by identifying urban amenities as: “what’s available in my neighbourhood that fulfils my lifestyle and my

\(^{10}\) Originally, the researcher had intended to map out the urban amenities in each of the case study suburbs because they were originally thought of as being equivalent to an interviewee’s concept of neighbourhoods. It would then have been possible to track which amenities the interviewees discussed within this area. However, interviewees did not define their neighbourhoods in this way (as discussed in section 4.5.1). Each interviewee would have required a different map to represent the different areas they defined as their neighbourhoods. Even when a standardised map, based on 800-metre walking circles around the case study developments, was created, it was realised that while most interviewees did use a variety of amenities in their immediate area, they also used neighbouring and other suburbs in different ways to meet their urban amenity needs. It became apparent during the initial five interviews that how and where residents use urban amenities is far more complex than previously realised. Usage patterns depended on how familiar interviewees were with different areas; place attachment caused them to favour using some neighbourhoods over others. How the neighbourhoods where they worked were serviced by different urban amenities was also a factor that affected their daily life patterns of movement. The usage of urban amenities also depended on the personal connections that the interviewees had with the proprietors of various amenities, as well as their own perception of proximity and accessibility. Therefore, questioning interviewees about how they conceptualised their neighbourhoods made possible the realisation that it was more significant to identify usage patterns for different categories of urban amenities, such as retail amenities versus recreation amenities, than it was to only consider urban amenities in the immediate suburb. This also made it possible to broaden the questioning and focus on the full potential of the role of urban amenities in the transition to higher density living. A broader definition of neighbourhoods, being understood as both individual and collective spaces, is in line with the work of Minnery et al. (2009) which identifies the difficulties faced in defining neighbourhood boundaries. They argue that residents have “a far more nuanced view of neighbourhood boundaries than do planners and other policymakers” (Minnery et al. 2009, 491).
needs.” Most of the interviewees found it easier to list examples of urban amenities in their responses rather than define the concept theoretically. For example, one interviewee listed “public transportation, cultural locations like theatres, cinemas, concert halls... educational establishments, libraries, universities, schools, hospitals, entertainment, pubs, bars” when asked to define the term urban amenities. In summation, the majority of interviewees considered urban amenities cohesively to include natural, public and commercial amenities that contribute in varying degrees to their daily life needs, their neighbourhood satisfaction, and the quality of urban life they derived from their neighbourhoods. This holistic definition is in line with the definition identified in Chapter 2.

4.6.2 The experiences of interviewees with different categories of urban amenities

Interviewees were questioned about how, where, and when they used urban amenities, to build a more detailed picture of how different types of urban amenities contributed to their neighbourhood satisfaction and quality of urban life. To make it easier for interviewees to comprehensively comment about their use of urban amenities, these were divided into nine categories, shown below in Figure 63.

This list was not revealed to interviewees before they were asked to define the term urban amenities, to ensure that they were not influenced by the interview question structure. Interviewees were then questioned about how they used these groupings of urban amenities within their neighbourhoods, as subsequently discussed.

A. **FOOD-RELATED AMENITIES** e.g. for your daily and/or weekly food shopping, restaurants, takeaways, cafés, and bars
B. **PUBLIC SPACES** e.g. parks, reserves, courtyards, and plazas
C. **RECREATION AMENITIES** e.g. sports clubs and grounds, natural amenities, walking/running/cycling tracks
D. **COMMUNITY FACILITIES** e.g. libraries and faith centres
E. **EDUCATION AMENITIES** e.g. schools, childcare, age care, training facilities
F. **SERVICES** e.g. medical services, financial services, maintenance/vehicle services, petrol stations, beauty services
G. **RETAIL AMENITIES** e.g. clothing and gift shops, homewares, electronics and home appliances
H. **CULTURAL AMENITIES** e.g. theatres, art galleries, performance spaces
I. **PUBLIC TRANSPORT FACILITIES** e.g. bus stops and train stations

**Figure 63.** Categories of urban amenities provided to interviewees
4.6.2.1 Food related amenities

Food-related amenities were cited thirty-one times as the most important type of urban amenities to them. For example, one interviewee favoured food-related amenities because it was this category they used the most, a sentiment also echoed in the responses of other interviewees. Along with parks, food-related amenities was the category most frequently cited as affecting the quality of urban life interviewees derived from their neighbourhoods. Thirteen interviewees raised food-related amenities as being necessary for maintaining quality of urban life if further intensification were to occur in their neighbourhoods. Three of the thirteen interviewees from Kingsland spoke about requiring more supermarkets specifically, and four interviewees in other neighbourhoods spoke about needing to increase the size of existing supermarkets to prevent excessive congestion during peak times.

When it came to commenting on their usage of urban amenities, supermarkets in particular were frequently used and recognised as very important to interviewees; forty-eight of fifty-seven interviewees shopped at least once a week. Of these, seven used a local supermarket daily, six shopped between three or four times a week, thirteen shopped at least twice a week, nine shopped once a week and an additional eleven did a big shop once a week and smaller shops as they needed throughout the week. Of the remaining eleven interviewees, five did a big shop every two to three weeks and six did a big shop every three to four weeks as well as doing more regular, smaller shops when they found they needed items for certain meals. These usage patterns make supermarkets the most frequented of all the urban amenities spoken about by the interviewees.

It was most common for interviewees to use several supermarkets rather than using the same one each time. Fifteen interviewees would do a large shop at one supermarket (usually this choice was affected by cost), but then “top up at other places,” a choice usually affected by convenience. The preference for using several supermarkets is exemplified by one interviewee who explained their process of using food-related amenities as follows:

The main shop is at PAK’nSAVE which I’ll do a big shop once a month for the big things, cleaners, bulk things like rice and that kind of thing. Then I will do a smaller shop from then on basically once a week but then I’ll top up as needed but I also shop at Fruitworld twice a week and get a big load of veggies and fruit from there and Cavendish Meats, my meat is from Cavendish Meats. I will shop at Countdown for certain things and I’ll shop at New World occasionally.
In total, thirty-one interviewees spoke about shopping at multiple supermarkets and forty-seven mentioned specific brands in their responses. The importance of living close to a supermarket was specifically mentioned by twenty-five interviewees and the resultant convenience was highlighted by eleven interviewees when speaking about their housing choices and neighbourhood satisfaction. Walkability was part of the proximity favoured by interviewees. For example, one interviewee noted that while the supermarket “doesn’t have to be next to the place that I live... I’d prefer if it was within walking distance.” The majority of interviewees shopped locally and all lived within one kilometre of at least one supermarket. However, the interviewees in Takapuna, Kingsland, and from the Te Atatu Peninsula also spoke about travelling, usually by car, to use supermarkets in adjacent suburbs. This was in addition to using their closest supermarket and was usually a decision they perceived to be driven by cost or because they thought a different provider offered more variety or specialty goods. Some interviewees would also stop at supermarkets on their way home from work. An example that typified the way in which most interviewees used supermarket amenities is as follows:

We go to the supermarket probably every second day because it’s a three-minute walk from our front door. We occasionally do a larger shop at the Lincoln Road Pak’nSave because it is a cheaper supermarket and it’s relatively easy to get to and from. It’s not far from the motorway exit. But for day-to-day stuff we probably end up spending two thirds of our money locally and one third at a bigger shop where it’s cheaper.

Interviewees from Botany Downs likely would have answered similarly, but they have all three supermarkets in their area and as well there are specialty food shops in their town centre. Therefore, their usage patterns were even more localized than in the other neighbourhoods.

Specialty food shops were included in the responses about food-related amenities by half of those interviewed. These amenities were not asked about directly but were commented on by twenty-eight interviewees. Of those who spoke about them, fruit and vegetable stores were mentioned the most often and were commented on by twenty-three interviewees, butchers by ten, specialty supermarkets by nine, bottle stores by four, and a bakery by one interviewee. Specific brands were mentioned by twelve interviewees. Eighteen interviewees said that they used these urban amenities as and when they needed specific supplies. Seven used them weekly, and three used them more than twice a week. Reasoning for using specialty food shops included the quality of the produce offered by smaller retailers – mentioned by eight interviewees, the view that smaller retailers were cheaper – mentioned by six interviewees, and the desire to support local businesses –mentioned by seven interviewees. Five interviewees also saw the
addition of specialty food shops such as fruit and vegetable stores or butchers as a good way to improve the quality of urban life for residents in a neighbourhood.

Farmers markets were mentioned by ten interviewees as a way they liked to shop for fruit and vegetables. Six spoke about using farmers markets as a form of entertainment, five travelled to several across Auckland as well as using their local one regularly.

Dairies, or ‘the corner store,’ were mentioned by five interviewees. Three commented that their neighbourhood would be improved if they had a dairy close by to “just duck in and pick up extra supplies” if they had forgotten something for dinner or run out of time to supermarket shop. However, the majority of interviewees used their local supermarket as one would a dairy and would do a large number of small shops or go to the supermarket more than once a day if something had been forgotten. One interviewee mentioned using the local service station as one would a dairy as well.

Next to supermarkets, cafés were spoken about by the interviewees as the food-related amenities that they used most frequently and valued most in terms of their relationship to delivering quality of urban life. Living in close proximity, particularly in walking distance to cafés, was cited by seventeen interviewees as a factor that affected their quality of urban life. One interviewee summed up this feeling by commenting that having all the cafés and bars right over the road made it very easy for them to “have a very pleasurable life.” Cafés were also seen by fifteen interviewees as a form of entertainment related to lifestyle preferences. Nine interviewees spoke about valuing the variety of café options available to them; considering that having choice added to the quality of urban life they experienced in their neighbourhoods. Interviewees used a mix of cafés in their neighbourhoods and cafés in the wider city.

The locations of the cafés that interviewees used were usually associated with social connectivity, with fifteen speaking about how important it was to them to meet up with friends and family at cafés. For example, one interviewee commented, “we used to go to Ponsonby and Herne Bay quite a bit only because we used to catch up with family over that side.” As a result, the frequency with which interviewees used cafés could fluctuate widely; nineteen interviewees reported variable use of cafés. Six interviewees frequented cafés more than four times a week, thirteen interviewees used cafés at least once a week, and eleven reported using cafés two or three times a week. A common response was “once during the week and once at a weekend.” Eight interviewees considered their café use to be occasional. Specific brands were not mentioned by interviewees. While one interviewee would go to cafés more frequently if they had a greater disposable income, cost was cited as a prohibitive factor for café use by
only three interviewees. Cafés were seen as a form of entertainment and it was this that led interviewees to associate the availability of cafés to their neighbourhood satisfaction and ultimately to the overall quality of urban life they derived from their neighbourhoods.

The use of restaurants was slightly less frequent than that of cafés. Sixteen interviewees reported using a restaurant at least once a week, nine once every two weeks, and eleven once a month. Ten interviewees used restaurants occasionally. For eleven interviewees their use of restaurants was variable; four of these eleven considered that their use of restaurants was seasonal and that they would use more restaurants during summer as opposed to winter. Restaurants were also used as a form of entertainment and for social connectivity; eighteen interviewees would use restaurants in a range of locations depending on where family and friends lived. Typical of many interviewees, another said that half of the time they spent at restaurants was at local ones, usually within walking distance of their home; for the other half of their restaurant time, they travelled, usually by car, to ones outside the neighbourhood. The usual purpose of this was visiting friends and family or to explore a new area as a form of entertainment.

Fifteen of the fifty-seven interviewees highlighted that proximity was important to them when choosing a restaurant and nine specifically spoke about convenience. These interviewees also indicated that their frequency of use was tied to these factors and did report using them more often than did other interviewees. While the most frequent use of restaurants was local and tied to convenience, restaurant use was related to lifestyle experiences and quality of urban life by fourteen interviewees. It was also related to exploring and getting to know the city and other suburbs, one interviewee commenting: “if we are visiting an area we stop there and have something.” Eighteen interviewees spoke directly about the link between having variety and choice in the restaurants they could go to and their sense of neighbourhood satisfaction.

The convenience of takeaway restaurants was raised by ten interviewees and was tied to their valuing their proximity to them and enjoying having multiple options readily available for them. Proximity usually meant in the local neighbourhood, but for some interviewees it also meant adjacent suburbs or being on their route home from work. Proximity related a lot to available time. Specific brands were mentioned by ten interviewees. As well as brands, interviewees cited specific favourite takeaway restaurants as part of a comfort routine that added to their quality of urban life. Fifteen interviewees reported that their use of takeaway restaurants was variable; one stating "I never plan on takeaways, it’s always just a last minute thing. But we have no more than two a month." Thirteen interviewees tried to use takeaway restaurants only occasionally, six used them monthly, three used them once every two to three weeks. Twelve used
them once a week and five used them more than twice a week. Only three interviewees reported never using takeaway restaurants.

Unlike cafés and restaurants, bars and pubs were not as important to the neighbourhood satisfaction of interviewees in this study. Eighteen reported never using bars and pubs, and a further eleven used them only occasionally. Variable use was also reported by eighteen interviewees. Reasoning given for not using bars and pubs was mostly due to age or life stage with a number of retirees commenting that they were “too old for bars.” Ten interviewees did report using bars regularly and their reasoning focused on the entertainment factor; the benefit they saw to their quality of life by being able to meet up with friends to relax or to meet colleagues as an after-work bonding activity.

In summary, food-related amenities were the most frequently used urban amenities out of all the categories considered in this study. Having a variety of these amenities locally was most important, a finding that was similarly noted in Randall’s research (2008, 47). Where food-related amenities were in walkable distances, interviewees considered that they added most to their neighbourhood satisfaction. Importantly, food-related amenities were often seen as a form of entertainment and it was because of this factor that they contributed strongly to the satisfaction that interviewees perceived they derived from their neighbourhoods. Furthermore, the accessibility of food-related amenities was also tied to the enjoyment of other amenities such as natural amenities; ideas such as the opportunity to walk along the beach with a coffee or ice cream, and the convenience of being able to pick up lunch quickly and also run errands, such as going to the bank. In this way, the spatial location of food-related amenities alongside other types of amenities was seen as a positive by the interviewees in this study.

4.6.2.2 Public spaces and natural amenities

Public spaces, such as parks, and natural amenities, such as beaches, were established by interviewees as strongly related to their quality of urban life experiences. These were the second most popular category of urban amenities, after food-related ones. Parks and reserves were highlighted by forty-nine of the fifty-seven interviewees as urban amenities they used and enjoyed. For example, one interviewee commented, “I’m well aware of the fact that we’ve got a park and a playground, all those pieces improve the quality of our life living in the city.” Twenty-one interviewees spoke about using parks locally and seventeen interviewees spoke about their use of regional-scale parks. Walking was the most frequently mentioned reason to use this type of amenity, with thirteen interviewees identifying that they used parks for this purpose. Interviewees from Kingsland did not always speak highly of their local park, and as a result
generally used regional scale parks instead; Cornwall Park and Western Springs were cited in particular. Playgrounds, usually at parks, were cited by eleven interviewees as urban amenities that they used regularly. For parents, in particular, they were places for social encounters to meet up with other parents and their children.

Interviewees generally drove to natural amenities and these were seen as regional-scale amenities, except in Takapuna, where the beach and a lake were within a fifteen- to twenty-minute walking distance from interviewees’ homes. Thirty-one interviewees, seventeen of whom were in Takapuna, spoke about using natural amenities. Interviewees from Takapuna usually only spoke about local natural amenities; however, they did also mention the Auckland Domain, Mission Bay and Devonport. Interviewees from Kingsland thought further afield and spoke about using the Waitakere Ranges, Piha beach, and various volcanic cones all over Auckland. Interviewees from Botany Downs spoke about using Eastern Beach, Bucklands Beach, Mission Bay, Cockle Bay, and Shakespeare Point, all natural amenities in the south and southeast of the city. Interviewees from Botany Downs generally visited natural amenities for a specific trip, as opposed to interviewees from Takapuna who integrated trips to the local beach or lake into their daily life experiences. The proximity of natural amenities to residents’ homes was appreciated specifically by nine interviewees from Takapuna. Interviewees from the Te Atatu Peninsula spoke about travelling further west to Muriwai beach. Like parks, natural amenities were associated with recreation, an observation highlighted by eighteen interviewees.

In general, a point of difference between the usage patterns of parks and beaches with those of other urban amenities was the fact that these amenities did not need to be used by interviewees to be valued by them. The value of natural amenities to the quality of urban life experienced by some interviewees for example was visual amenity; their ability to see the beach but not necessarily to walk along it was commented on by four interviewees. Similarly, interviewees spoke about valuing the presence of a local park even if they used it only infrequently.

Public spaces and natural amenities were mentioned most frequently by interviewees as the additional amenities an area would need if further intensification were to occur without compromising the quality of urban life for existing or new residents. For example, four interviewees specifically mentioned that the prospect of increasing density made natural amenities all the more important to look after, because it was very difficult to add parks and impossible to add lakes and beaches. One interviewee commented, "If you have more people, it’s even more important to take care of green spaces." Another observed, “if you’re going to get lots of young families in particular I think you do have to think about adding parks and
playgrounds and swimming pools; places that these people can go if they do not have some land around where they’re actually living.” In addition, a recurring theme identified through data coding was the link interviewees made between smaller unit sizes and the need for additional and enhanced public spaces and natural and recreational amenities to maintain quality of urban life.

The comments made in this study were in line with the work of Schmitz (2003, 52), who asserts that quality of urban life is strongly linked to “the quality of the open spaces and amenities, and on their ability to provide for the personal fulfilment of community residents.” In addition, Auckland Council contends that “redevelopment around amenities like blue and green networks and open spaces is needed to help support compact living” (2011g, 64). The availability of parks, gardens, and other green spaces was the leading reason why participants in the 2014 Auckland Council Quality of Life Survey felt pride in the look and feel of their local area (Auckland Council 2014).

4.6.2.3 Recreation amenities

As was the case for parks and reserves, general recreation amenities were also highlighted by forty-nine interviewees as urban amenities they used and enjoyed. Walking, running, and cycling tracks in particular were commented on by thirty-two interviewees; the majority used them regularly, with two to three times a week the most common response. The use of gyms was reported by twenty-one interviewees; seven spoke about using gyms in their local neighbourhood and nine reported using gyms outside their neighbourhood. This was generally related to the proximity of a gym facility to their place of employment. Eleven interviewees reported using a gym once or twice a week.

Swimming pools and sports clubs or grounds were each discussed by twenty-two of the fifty-seven interviewees. Ten interviewees spoke favourably about the presence of swimming pools in their neighbourhoods, but did not indicate whether they used them, and four spoke in the same way about sports clubs. Three interviewees used their local swimming pools and five used swimming pools outside their local neighbourhoods regularly. However, a further seven interviewees instead used the pools that were part of their residential complexes. Local sports clubs were regularly used by six interviewees as compared with those outside the neighbourhood used by twelve interviewees; these were usually in adjacent suburbs or near to interviewees’ places of employment.

Recreation amenities were cited by thirteen and community facilities by nine interviewees as important to them. The highest number of responses in these categories were by interviewees from Botany Downs
and the Te Atatu Peninsula. One interviewee commented that “the recreation, community facilities and public spaces as a package are really important.” Natural amenities and recreation amenities were linked as being complementary by nine interviewees. Similarly, education amenities, such as schools, were used as recreation facilities by eight interviewees. One interviewee summarised this in their example, stating, “The only community recreational facilities we use are the schools. When our grandkids come we take them down to the primary school down the street and they ride their bikes around or play on the playground.” Recreation amenities were also specifically emphasised as necessary in intensification scenarios by eleven interviewees.

In summary, recreation amenities were the category that interviewees were most likely to use close to their place of employment rather than close to their homes. This was because it was more convenient for them to use outside working hours and would help them to avoid travelling during peak-hour traffic. Recreation amenities were also frequently used in conjunction with other types of amenities. For example, two interviewees spoke about appreciating their ability to stop at a supermarket near their gyms to conveniently “pick up dinner” on their way home. Another appreciated that their gym was in close proximity to a “great local café” that they could meet friends at for coffee before or after working out. Yet another spoke about going to the local pub with their sports team following a practice or game. A number of parents spoke about getting “a treat” for themselves, such as a coffee, while taking their children to the park or to a swimming lesson. This meant that they only had to make one vehicle trip for two purposes and they reasoned that this convenience added to the quality of urban life that they were able to derive from their neighbourhoods – a result of the spatial connectedness of these complementary urban amenities.

### 4.6.2.4 Community facilities

All of the interviewees expressed that they valued the community facilities in their neighbourhood although they did not always use them. Other than community centres and halls mentioned by five interviewees, urban amenities such as schools, sport and recreation facilities, and parks were also described as community facilities by interviewees. Faith centres were not generally mentioned by interviewees; of those that did, six used them locally and five travelled to a neighbouring suburb to use faith centres.

Libraries were the community facility most frequently spoken about by interviewees when asked about which they used most often. While the case study suburbs were not chosen for this reason, each did have
a library within ten to fifteen minutes walking distance from each of the case study developments where interviewees lived. Interviewees in each suburb used their local library the majority of the time, rather than using libraries in other parts of Auckland. Regular use, between weekly and monthly visits, was reported by twenty-two interviewees. Families in particular were the most frequent users. In contrast, seventeen interviewees spoke about using their local library infrequently and eleven interviewees spoke about having Kindle or access to books online rather than going into the library. This indicates how technology is affecting the usage of urban amenities and is similar to comments made by interviewees about online banking. To investigate this further is beyond the scope of this research although it is an area that could be looked into further in future studies.

### 4.6.2.5 Education amenities

The use of education amenities was not relevant for twenty-four interviewees, although nine of them spoke about valuing them in spite of not needing to use them. Education amenities were cited by nine interviewees as critical in the process of intensification, one commenting, "If you’re going to get a lot of intensification you’re going to get a wide range of age groups living within those areas, and so I think schools play a vital part.”

When commenting on their usage of education amenities it was coded that childcare was used by four interviewees. Primary and secondary schools were amenities used or valued by twenty-three of the interviewees. Six had children at a local school and four intended to send their children to a local school. One interviewee spoke about recently moving but needing to keep their child at the school in their previous suburb because they had a well-established social group. Two interviewees used their local school for night classes, eight for recreation purposes, and two appreciated the visual amenity of their green fields. Tertiary education amenities were relevant to eight interviewees. Three interviewees were employed at tertiary institutes, one was a current student, and three had children currently studying at a university. Training facilities and age care facilities were each used by one interviewee.

Overall, only three interviewees highlighted education amenities as the most important category to them when asked which categories they favoured. However, this could be due to the proportionately small number of interviewees who had dependents attending primary school or secondary school and the proportionately small number of interviewees currently enrolled in tertiary education. For example, one interviewee stated that they value food-related amenities the most but added that if they had a family they would “probably value education amenities the most.”
4.6.2.6 Services

Services was a broad category of both commercial and civic amenities that relate to the daily life needs of residents. Services that were specifically asked about in the interview process included: medical, financial, vehicle, and beauty. The majority of interviewees followed the structure provided. Either a broader or looser interview structure might have elicited a wider range of responses in this category. However, some additional services were mentioned, including: fire stations, post offices, florists, shoe repair workshops, the AA centre, rehabilitation facilities, physiotherapists, and veterinarians.

Services, ranging from medical to financial to primary services such as police stations, were cited by twelve interviewees as important for maintaining quality of urban life if further intensification were to occur in their neighbourhoods. For example, one interviewee noted that medical services in a neighbourhood were vitally important, and suggested that the quality of urban amenities, “would have to increase if there was going to be an increase in population in any given area.”

In terms of their usage of different services, medical services were used as and when needed by interviewees. They were cited by nine interviewees as the category of urban amenities most important to them; these interviewees all required the use of medical services on a regular basis. Nineteen interviewees went to a local medical practice, while thirty-eight remained with a practice in the suburb they had previously lived in, due to the personal relationships they had formed with individual practitioners. One interviewee summed up this reasoning in their statement as follows:

There’s a relationship with a health professional and there’s no point in breaking that just to have something down the road because it’s such an occasional service for me. Having said that, if my daughter was feeling particularly ill I would take her to the local White Cross.

The same scenario occurred for dentists, with four interviewees commenting about their use of a dentistry practice locally and nineteen using dentists in their previous residential neighbourhoods. Other interviewees did not have a dentist or went so infrequently that they could not identify a specific location where they would go to for these services.

Chemists, optometrists, hospitals and other medical facilities were not listed as examples when asking interviewees about the services they used; the importance and use of chemists was raised independently by six interviewees, optometrists by four, and hospitals were mentioned on four occasions by
interviewees who were over sixty-five. Hospitals, in particular, were not a top-of-mind service for most. However, it is likely that this would have been different had the interviewees needed to visit them regularly.

Responding about financial services generally required interviewees to be prompted. The use of physical banks was a reality for thirty-three interviewees whereas twenty-five interviewees used only online services. Typical of many interviewees who used online services, one interviewee commented, “Basically, nowadays, you can do most of your financial and other services online, like broadband and electricity and so on and so on. That’s what I prefer, I prefer to organise everything online.” Of the interviewees who used physical banks, twenty used local services within their neighbourhoods, and the remaining thirteen used non-local services, although these were often located near to an interviewee’s place of employment for convenience reasons and the ability of interviewees to use these services during their lunch breaks from work. Twenty interviewees used physical banks occasionally and the remaining thirteen used them regularly, once every two weeks or more.

Lawyers and accountants were mentioned by only five interviewees and the locations of where they used these services, like medical services, was affected by human relationships – if they had built a rapport over time, or by recommendations from family and friends – rather than by a desire to use their local services.

Vehicle services, particularly maintenance or vehicle repairs and warrants of fitness were spoken about by fifty-two interviewees; five interviewees did not own a motor vehicle. Frequency of use was related to vehicle registration and warrant of fitness requirements. Twenty interviewees spoke about using local vehicle maintenance services within their neighbourhoods, whereas thirty-two used services outside their neighbourhoods. These were either in adjacent suburbs or in suburbs where they had previously lived. Again, the reasoning for this was because they had built up a relationship with the mechanic or because it was near to their place of work for convenience reasons – being able to fit their vehicle servicing into their workday.

Petrol stations were not asked about directly in the interviews but their importance was noted by thirty-nine interviewees; thirty-one of whom spoke about using specific stations, usually locally within their neighbourhoods. The remaining eight interviewees used petrol stations wherever they happened to be when they needed to fill their cars with petrol. Nineteen interviewees used petrol stations weekly and four used them fortnightly.
In contrast to petrol stations, for interviewees to openly talk about beauty services usually required prompting as they were not top-of-mind urban amenities for them. Of the thirty-five interviewees who spoke about going to a hairdresser, thirteen went in their local area, three nearest to their place of employment, and twenty-one went to a hairdresser outside of their local area. Other beauty services such as massages or skin treatments were commented on by fourteen interviewees; eight used their local services and six went elsewhere for beauty treatments. Reasoning for not using their local provider was predominantly that interviewees built long term trusting relationships with one supplier and stayed with them even if either of them moved to a new suburb. This factor was the defining characteristic of the services category of urban amenities.

### 4.6.2.7 Retail amenities

Retail amenities were considered to be less important than other categories of urban amenities by the majority of those interviewed. However, seventeen interviewees raised the proximity of retail amenities as an important factor in delivering quality of urban life in their neighbourhoods. Seven interviewees highlighted that they thought retail amenities would be important in the process of intensification, one interviewee noting that, "there could be more shops and more different amenities and facilities around them" to maintain or improve quality of urban life in intensified neighbourhoods. These findings appear to contrast with the work of Yeoman and Akehurst (2015, 25) which found that easy access to shops was the feature rated the highest by their survey participants as making their Auckland neighbourhood convenient to live in. This could be because their survey had checkbox options rather than open-ended questions; it is unclear if their participants took shops to mean all local services and amenities, including retail shops, or as a singular category of retail amenities alone.

Frequency of use was not as clear for retail amenities as it was for other categories because interviewees tended to use them as and when they needed to buy clothes, gifts, and appliances among other items. Common responses included "a couple of times a month" or "whenever I need to." Seventeen interviewees used their local retail amenities more frequently than retail amenities elsewhere. Nineteen interviewees predominantly used a mix of retail amenities locally and in other neighbourhoods and thirteen usually shopped outside their local area.

Interviewees from the Te Atatu Peninsula for example usually went to the adjacent suburbs of Lynnmall or Henderson because there were limited retail amenities in their local neighbourhood; interviewees in Kingsland spoke about using a variety of central Auckland suburbs for similar reasons. Interviewees in
Takapuna and Botany Downs, however, had many more local retail amenities available to them and tended to shop locally more frequently. Many interviewees had complex reasoning for using retail amenities in different areas across the whole city. An example, given by one interviewee that was typical of the explanations given by many, is as follows:

Definitely Queen Street is handy. I think we mix it up a little. We do use Sylvia Park at times and also Albany. My brother lives in Mairangi Bay, so Albany is quite handy if we go and visit him, and really St Lukes is so close to us that we did our last grocery shop there actually and might even start doing that more often and then you know you’ve got a few other shops there as well you can use at the same time.

Retail shopping in town centres was commented on by twenty-six interviewees. Interviewees from Takapuna frequently used their town centre and the town centres of Milford, Devonport, and Ponsonby. Interviewees from Kingsland spoke about using Auckland central, Mt Eden, and Ponsonby. In Botany Downs, interviewees most frequently used their own town centre as well as the centres of Howick, Pakuranga, and Mt Wellington. In the Te Atatu Peninsula, interviewees most frequently spoke about using the town centres of Ponsonby, Newmarket, and Henderson. The use of town centres also related to employment locations; the CBD was mentioned by interviewees who worked there but not by those who did not.

Malls were popular locations for interviewees; their use was discussed by fifty-two of the fifty-seven when asked about their use of retail amenities. Usually interviewees spoke about using these amenities in a broad range of locations across Auckland. Large regional malls such as Sylvia Park, Albany, and St Lukes pulled interviewees from all four suburbs. Locally in Takapuna, interviewees usually mentioned Shore City, Milford and Glenfield malls as the ones they were most likely to frequent. St Lukes was local to Kingsland interviewees but Newmarket 277 was also mentioned. Botany Downs has the Botany Town Centre, which functions as both a mall and a town centre. Interviewees here also mentioned Manukau Mall. Interviewees from the Te Atatu Peninsula generally spoke about using Westfield’s WestCity in Henderson. Specialist malls such as Onehunga Dress-Smart were also mentioned by three interviewees. Twelve interviewees spoke about often shopping online rather than using physical retail amenities. Three interviewees shopped mostly when they travelled overseas.

In summary, retail amenities were the category of amenities that drew the most diverse attitudes from interviewees. When interviewees considered the retail amenities within their local neighbourhoods, they
either tended to use them frequently and consider them to be essential for their neighbourhood satisfaction or they were not interested in commenting about them. Some residents saw retail amenities as an essential component of their local neighbourhoods, but preferred to use them only when they had to. These differing attitudes meant that no clear patterns could be identified in the data about local retail amenities. The situation was different when it came to regional retail amenities, notably shopping malls. These urban amenities were frequently used by the majority of interviewees and were seen to add to the quality of urban life they derived from the city as a whole. Interviewees did not always speak favourably about them, but admitted that they used them, generally frequently, because of the convenience factor of having such a range of options within such close proximity to each other.

4.6.2.8 Cultural amenities

When asked about cultural amenities, cinemas, theatres, concert facilities, art galleries, and museums were the amenities in this category that interviewees used most frequently. In the case of cinemas, most interviewees went to a mix of local and regional cinemas, although Takapuna and Botany Downs were the only areas with cinemas in their neighbourhoods. There were sixteen mentions of local cinemas and thirty-one mentions of regional cinemas by interviewees. In Takapuna, local cinemas were visited occasionally by interviewees but they were more likely to frequent the neighbouring areas of Wairau Park and Northcote Point. In Kingsland, the cinema at St Lukes mall, and cinemas in Newmarket and Queen Street were popular choices. Interviewees in Botany Downs varied between their local cinema at the Botany Town Centre mall, and cinemas in the neighbouring suburbs of Howick and Manukau. Interviewees from the Te Atatu Peninsula spoke mainly about using cinemas in the central city or at the WestCity Henderson mall. Eight interviewees went to the cinema once a month, seven twice a month, twenty-two were more occasional users and ten considered their use to be variable. Ten of the interviewees stated that they did not frequent cinemas. Eleven interviewees indicated a preference for watching film at home because it was a more affordable option.

Concert facilities were cited by eleven interviewees when asked about the cultural amenities they used. No obvious patterns were established when it came to usage preferences; responses ranged from local to regional scale urban amenities, and from monthly to annually, in frequency. Similarly, theatres were commented about by seventeen interviewees and location and frequency of use varied widely among those who commented. Interviewees from Takapuna spoke about the local Bruce Mason Centre and the PumpHouse theatre, both within fifteen-minute walks from the case study developments chosen in this study. All other interviewees had to travel for these urban amenities and only drove to them. Interviewees
from Kingsland commented about the Aotea Centre and the Town Hall in Auckland’s CBD. Interviewees from Botany Downs spoke about Howick Little Theatre and Harlequin Musical Theatre, both a ten- to twelve-minute drive for interviewees in this area. Interviewees from the Te Atatu Peninsula spoke about Corban Estate Art Centre in Henderson, a fifteen-minute drive, rather than mentioning the cultural amenities that were available to them in wider Auckland. In this way, theatres were often seen as regional rather than neighbourhood urban amenities.

Fifteen interviewees spoke about where and how they used art galleries. The Lake House Arts Centre, a local cultural amenity in Takapuna, was mentioned by three interviewees. The Auckland Art Gallery, a regional amenity, was mentioned by six interviewees and there was an even split of responses between attending regularly and occasionally. Museums were considered to be regional-scale amenities by those interviewed, with only eight interviewees visiting them regularly. However, many of the interviewees still considered them to have considerable value to the wider community.

### 4.6.2.9 Public transport and parking-related amenities

Public transport was linked to the use of all categories of urban amenities because it provides access to them; this idea was specifically raised by three interviewees. Public transport and parking-related amenities were cited as being of considerable concern in the event of increased intensification in the selected case study suburbs. However, twenty-four interviewees reported not using public transport currently. Reasoning for not using public transport included that the services were “too unreliable” or “too difficult to use.” One interviewee commented that it was “just the convenience of using a car” that meant that they did not use public transport. Of the thirty-three interviewees who did use public transport, thirty used buses; the majority of these thirty were from Takapuna or Kingsland, and travel was most often to the central city. Kingsland was the only one of the neighbourhoods with access to a train station and thirteen interviewees spoke about using these services, although most used them infrequently for commuting. Four interviewees mentioned cycling; two commuted and two indicated their support for a proposed cycle-way from Takapuna to the CBD.

Twenty-nine interviewees spoke about their use of parking-related amenities, despite there being no direct questions about parking as part of the interview structure. Eight interviewees would choose to use certain urban amenities over others based on where it was easier to park, nine thought parking was a big issue as part of intensification debates and nine also thought that more parking would be necessary if
intensification were to occur, without adversely influencing the quality of urban life experienced by residents.

4.6.2.10 Regional-scale amenities

Responses about regional-scale amenities were woven through interviewees’ responses to specific amenity questioning, particularly when asked about entertainment and cultural amenities, public spaces and natural amenities, and some retail amenities such as shopping malls. However, in addition to this, interviewees were asked directly if there were other urban amenities that were outside their neighbourhoods that they considered to be important with respect to enhancing their quality of urban life; forty-three interviewees noted additional regional-scale amenities to those that they had already covered in other sections of the interview. Their use was often event- and season-dependent. Eighteen considered stadiums and regional sporting facilities to be important. Eden Park, Mt Smart, and North Harbour Stadiums were all specifically mentioned. One interviewee mentioned ice-skating and ice hockey, another golf, and another two mentioned badminton. This indicates the variety of urban amenities which function at a regional, instead of local, scale.

Eight spoke about the value of the Auckland Art Gallery as a regional amenity and regional museums, notably the Auckland War Memorial Museum, were cited as important to the city as a whole by twenty-three interviewees. Other regional urban amenities described as important by interviewees were the Auckland Town Hall, Civic Theatre and Aotea Centre concert venues, Auckland Zoo, Rainbow’s End theme park, Butterfly Creek butterfly house, Kelly Tarlton’s aquatic world, Waiwera hot pools, and MOTAT transport museum. Auckland Airport, aero clubs, shopping malls, and night markets were also described as having an important place in the city’s fabric.

4.6.2.11 Summary of interviewees’ specific experiences of urban amenities

From the data on the experiences of interviewees with various categories of urban amenities it was concluded that they can be divided into two groups based on frequency of use – daily life amenities and intermittently used amenities. These categories are shown in Figure 64.
Daily life amenities include those described by interviewees as the most important to them in terms of delivering neighbourhood satisfaction and meeting their quality of urban life needs, e.g., food-related amenities, recreation amenities, and public spaces. They are also used the most frequently and are the urban amenities that interviewees were most likely to walk to. Having key ‘daily life amenities’ nearby was raised by nine interviewees as a critical part of their ability to determine whether their quality of urban life expectations were met by their neighbourhoods. The proximity of daily life amenities to interviewees’ dwellings was more important to them than the proximity of intermittently used amenities.

Intermittently used amenities vary in terms of how frequently they are accessed. Interviewees frequently choose these amenities based on familiarity, due to personal relationships they have with the proprietors or recommendations made by friends and family members. It was not important to interviewees that they lived within walking distance of these amenities. Retail and education amenities fit into both categories as their frequency of use is determined by lifestyle preferences and life stages, and vary depending on the circumstances of interviewees.

It was found in this study that ultimately, daily life amenities are likely to be the most critical amenities in terms of delivering successful urban intensification based on the perceptions conveyed by interviewees. The ways that they are integrated into the existing urban fabric as growth occurs are crucial to ensure that quality of urban life is maintained in the transition to higher density living in Auckland.

In addition, there was not always a correlation between the use of urban amenities and the way that interviewees valued them. For example, for twenty-eight of the interviewees, education amenities fell into this category. One interviewee commented, “There are so many good schools around our way. I don’t use them anymore because my boy’s grown up, but I can see where I’m living it’s important (for other residents in this development).” Thirteen interviewees commented about how they saw or knew other residents who valued recreation facilities and, while they did not use them themselves, they appreciated that they were available, should they ever wish to use them. For example, one interviewee commented “fitness facilities, I don’t use those but I think they’re great to have.” When speaking about the urban

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<th>Daily life amenities</th>
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<tr>
<td>Food-related amenities</td>
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Figure 64. Divisions of urban amenities in two categories
amenities that they valued but did not use, seven interviewees specifically mentioned parks and another seven mentioned swimming pools. While valuing urban amenities did not always relate to usage, an appreciation for their presence in their neighbourhood was reflected in their neighbourhood satisfaction.

From considering the specific experiences of interviewees with the different categories of urban amenities it was realised that in many instances interviewees valued the convenience of being able to use urban amenities in sequence. They viewed these amenities as being complementary to one another. Usually, complementary urban amenities required one vehicle or walking trip for two or more purposes and interviewees reasoned that this convenience improved their sense of neighbourhood satisfaction. Examples of complementary daily life amenities cited by the interviewees include: fruit and vegetable shops, butchers, cafés or restaurants, supermarkets, hairdressers, the doctor, the chemist, libraries, cinemas, gyms, parks, and playgrounds. For example, one interviewee observed that “what will keep residents happy is if they can find, when they’re rushed and stressed, they can find some food, fill up the car, park the car... (and) find a quiet space to sit down.”

### 4.6.3 The accessibility of urban amenities

When it came to accessing urban amenities, the majority of interviewees both walked and drove to their local urban amenities. Interviewees from Takapuna would usually walk to local amenities across the whole of Takapuna, around twenty minutes in any one direction. This included access to natural, retail, and food-related amenities such as restaurants and cafés; and also to pick up small items from the supermarket as long as it was not raining and they did not need to buy many items. Many would also occasionally walk to Milford, a thirty- to forty-minute walk each way. Interviewees would usually drive to neighbouring suburbs such as Albany and Devonport because it was considered ‘faster’ and ‘more convenient’ than any other forms of transport. If they were travelling to the CBD in rush hour or did not own a vehicle, they would catch public transport.

Interviewees in Kingsland would usually walk to local food-related amenities and the local park, but most would drive or catch public transport if going beyond the immediate town centre. Five interviewees mentioned walking further to go to the supermarket on Dominion Road if the weather was good and they did not need to do a full shop, or to the city to use a variety of retail, cultural, and entertainment amenities. However, this was usually only at weekends when time was not an issue. If they needed to access urban amenities, Kingsland interviewees would usually drive along Dominion Road and to the neighbouring suburbs such as Mt Eden, Pt. Chevalier, Grey Lynn, St Lukes, and Sandringham.
Similarly, interviewees from Botany Downs would often walk to the Botany Town Centre, a five- to ten-minute walk. Again, this was as long as it was not raining and they did not need to purchase a large number of items. To get to anywhere beyond the town centre, they would drive. One interviewee commented, “I always walk to the Botany shops because we live virtually across the road. Anywhere else... I’ll always drive my car. Too far to walk,” and another said, “If I’m feeling lazy you know or maybe if you have to carry a few heavy things, like your grocery shopping, I would rather take the car.” The interviewees in Botany Downs spoke of driving more frequently on average than interviewees from Takapuna and Kingsland; they also mentioned driving children to school whereas all the interviewees in the family life stage in Takapuna said they walked their children to local schools.

Interviewees from the Te Atatu Peninsula would usually walk to access local amenities on the Peninsula, including natural, retail, and food-related amenities, but anywhere off the Peninsula they would drive. One interviewee commented, “I would walk everywhere, anything that I can get within our local community we walk to with the exception of the medical centre because it’s about a kilometre and a half down the road.” Another commented, “I would walk to anything that’s on the peninsula, unless it’s raining, obviously, then it’s the car.” Some interviewees also mentioned they would walk to urban amenities, near to their place of employment, usually during their lunch hour.

However, very few interviewees commuted on foot to their places of employment. Only four interviewees said walking was a viable transport method for them. This can be related to the fact that five interviewees worked in the same suburb in which they lived; nine lived within a five- to ten-minute commute, three within a ten- to twenty-minute commute, fourteen within a twenty- to thirty-minute commute, and seven travelled for more than thirty minutes each way. Thirty-four interviewees always drove to work, an additional three had an even split between driving and busing, an additional two an even split between walking and busing, and another two an even split between driving, busing, and walking. Five primarily took buses to their places of employment, one caught a train, and one cycled. Eight of the interviewees were retired or unemployed.

From the data gathered on accessibility and the reasons given by interviewees for their travel patterns, it can be concluded that the majority of interviewees prefer to access urban amenities in their immediate neighbourhoods, weather permitting, by foot. When interviewees wanted to access an urban amenity outside their immediate neighbourhood their preference was to drive; confirming that Aucklanders remain “dependent on the use of their car as their main mode of transport” (Wilkinson 2006, 22).
4.6.4 The role of urban amenities in achieving quality of urban life at higher densities

Most interviewees saw the role of urban amenities as multifaceted and posited a variety of overlapping responses when interviewed. Four key interrelated categories of the role of urban amenities were identified through the coding process; these are shown in Figure 65.

Figure 65. The perceived role urban amenities play in delivering quality of urban life for the interviewees

With regard to perceptions of quality of urban life, forty out of fifty-seven interviewees saw the role of urban amenities as linked to the convenience and accessibility of the goods and services they used and valued in their daily lives. For example, one interviewee posited that the closer urban amenities were, the
more accessible they were, and “the easier life is for everybody around” as a result. Another commented, “I think that my quality of life would not be as good if I didn’t have all the things I love doing in such easy access to where I live.” Nearly all, fifty-one out of fifty-seven interviewees, considered that how they valued the urban amenities in their neighbourhood was affected by their ability to access a range of them easily. Most interviewees considered that they had good access to a range of desired urban amenities in, or near to, their neighbourhoods. They also perceived their quality of urban life to be affected positively by them. In addition to this, they also thought this meant that they valued the urban amenities that were easiest to access more than those that were not in such close proximity.

The role of urban amenities was also linked by thirty-four interviewees to the quality of urban life they desired at different life stages. For example, six interviewees mentioned parks being especially useful for families living in higher density typologies with small back gardens or balconies. Others spoke about libraries being used most frequently by parents with young children and the elderly. Other interviewees spoke about the availability and accessibility of public transport as an important part of ensuring the elderly could maintain their independence. The observation that different life stages use the same urban amenities but in different ways, and at different times of the day, was also mentioned by interviewees. For example, one interviewee posited that elderly people might want a quiet café during the day time or for afternoon tea, whereas young people might want to get a coffee early in the morning on their way to work and they might also want somewhere where they could stop in for a drink after work. Another spoke more personally, commenting, “we don’t really go to community centres that much. But I imagine when I have my baby we’ll probably start going to some.”

It followed that meeting lifestyle preferences was another role that the interviewees saw urban amenities as enabling. Twenty interviewees incorporated aspects of meeting lifestyle preferences into their responses about the role of urban amenities and centred their comments on the idea of providing choice and convenience for residents. As part of lifestyle preferences, the role of urban amenities was linked to the entertainment options of interviewees. Most frequently, food-related amenities were cited by interviewees as a form of entertainment that added to their neighbourhood satisfaction. Similarly, nineteen interviewees linked sports and recreation amenities to entertainment. This ranged from using local parks, beaches, and reserves for leisure activities through to gym classes or watching sports at recreation amenities as forms of entertainment. One interviewee commented, “sports and things like that would probably be my main source of entertainment.” Parks in particular were linked to entertainment by fourteen of the interviewees. Five interviewees spoke about events-based entertainment. For example, one interviewee commented that for entertainment they went to events, such as the lantern
festival, adding “when the tall ships came in we got the day off work and went over to Devonport and had a picnic on North Head and watched the ships come in.” Lastly, eight interviewees linked the role of urban amenities to creating a sense of community and giving residents options that can help them to engage with and feel connected to the built environments in which they live.

4.7 Results chapter summary

Despite interviewees coming from a range of demographic, ethnographic, and socio-economic backgrounds, clear patterns emerged among the findings. Significant differences were not evident amongst the responses of interviewees from the four different case study suburbs, despite living in attached housing of different densities and heights. However, where interviewees from one case study suburb did respond in a contrasting or specific way to an interview question, as compared to interviewees from another case study suburb, it has been documented in the relevant results sections. One example of this included interviewees from Kingsland speaking about their use of trains, while other interviewees did not because Kingsland was the sole case study suburb with an accessible train station. A second example was interviewees from Takapuna mentioning their proximity to the local beach and lake as being important to them. This was not an option for the interviewees from the other three neighbourhoods who did not live in close proximity to either type of urban amenity.

It was found that responses were more likely to be affected by an interviewee’s life stage than by any other factors. For example, interviewees who spoke about the proximity to education amenities influencing their housing choices currently had school age children and those who spoke about the option of downsizing their current housing were mostly in the post-marriage or partnership breakup, post-family or retiree life stage.

Key factors influencing the housing choices of interviewees included their life stage, their lifestyle preferences, affordability constraints, location convenience factors, typology features, and place attachment considerations. The interrelationship between the factors that affected housing choices were the basis for the trade-offs that interviewees made when deciding where to live. Divisions could be made between the way interviewees made both primary and secondary trade-offs, indicating that the trade-off process was both multifaceted and hierarchical. Trade-off hierarchies were individualised according to an interviewee’s circumstantial constraints and personal preferences. Some interviewees also tried to balance one or more of their priorities to avoid making trade-offs between all the factors that influenced their housing choices.
While the majority of the interviewees wanted to remain in their current neighbourhoods or in a neighbouring suburb over the next five years, interviewees’ reasoning for their housing aspirations were dependent on whether or not they saw themselves living in detached or attached typologies. Typology features, lifestyle preferences, and location convenience were the factors that impacted most on interviewee housing aspirations.

From interviewee responses on housing choices and aspirations, it could be determined that the majority of those interviewed would trade-off detached for attached typologies in their current neighbourhoods. This was, however, prefaced by two factors. Firstly, that the higher density options available to them were of a size and spatial layout that was similar to the traditional New Zealand home. Secondly, that the integration of additional urban amenities in line with the increasing numbers of residents was factored into any intensification scenario.

It was found in this research that across all four case study areas, interviewees defined their neighbourhoods as both their immediate suburb and two to four adjoining suburbs. They viewed their built environment surroundings as cohesive spaces where they carried out all their daily life activities. The majority of interviewees considered quality of urban life to be more focussed on the relationship between their environment and their neighbourhood satisfaction. Walkability and the accessibility of urban amenities were the concepts most frequently linked to quality of urban life comments. Interviewees did not mind travelling to and from their place of work by car or public transport but wanted to be able to walk around their neighbourhoods. Food related amenities, in particular, were highly valued by interviewees. Their use, along with that of parks, was most frequently mentioned as an example when talking about the urban amenities that affected their neighbourhood satisfaction and quality of urban life. Interviewees valued most the ability to walk to the local amenities that they used most frequently, such as supermarkets and cafés.

The term urban amenities was described comprehensively by interviewees; the majority considered them to be all the services and infrastructure in their neighbourhoods that contributed to their urban living experiences.

Interviewees spoke about using urban amenities in two key ways. Those amenities linked to daily life activities were used the most frequently. Congruently, these were amenities that they preferred to live near and use locally. Examples included food-related amenities such as supermarkets, restaurants, and cafés. For interviewees in the family life stage, education amenities were daily life amenities they wanted
to live near. Intermittently used urban amenities were predominantly chosen by interviewees based on human relationships with their doctors, mechanics, and lawyers, among others, rather than being based on convenience and proximity factors. Interviewees would happily travel to these amenities, usually by car. Examples included most services such as medical services, vehicle services, financial services, and beauty services. Interviewees also spoke about complementary urban amenities; these were amenities that they were likely to use in succession. Examples included using recreation amenities or natural amenities subsequently or simultaneously to food-related amenities. By spatially pairing urban amenities with complementary functions, it was more convenient for interviewees to use them, a factor that they valued highly.

In the research, a considerable difference was noted between the ideas of being anti-highrise versus that of being anti-density. It is suggested that the intensification of existing neighbourhoods, identified as necessary by Auckland Council (2012a), is favoured more than realised in previous research in Auckland. In part, this may be due to the nuanced understanding developed in this research, through asking open-ended questions about the reasoning behind the perceptions held by interviewees. For example, an interviewee was able to comment that they felt negatively about the idea of density and added that instead they favoured seeing a mix of terraced houses or three- to five-storey apartments. This is in fact a contradiction, because these typologies would constitute considerable intensification in their suburb. Had the interviewee not been able to explain their response it would have been coded that the interviewee was anti-intensification. It may also be due to the fact that the interviewees were already living in higher-density dwellings.

Another key finding identified through data coding was that the nexus between quality of urban life expectations, housing choices, and neighbourhood satisfaction, was closely allied to the presence and perceived role of urban amenities in a neighbourhood. Interviewees related the role of the urban amenities in a neighbourhood to their quality of urban life through the importance they placed on their ease of accessibility and the associated convenience of having choices when it came to which urban amenities they favoured. This was an aspect they factored into their housing choices. The majority of interviewees also considered that the best way to improve a neighbourhood in preparation for intensification was to add additional amenities to ensure that the quality of urban life for existing and new residents was maintained. Natural amenities, such as parks, featured most strongly when interviewees were considering which amenities were the most important to enhance or develop should intensification occur.
In conclusion, the relationships identified in this research between quality of urban life factors, perceptions of intensification, and the role of urban amenities in housing choices are complex and interwoven. However, interrogating and understanding this complexity is a critical aspect in understanding housing choices to plan for future intensification and ensure the quality of urban life expectations of residents are met as the city of Auckland continues to experience growth.
Chapter 5  Discussion

In this chapter, the findings from this research are critically evaluated by revisiting the key questions identified in Chapter 3. The research contribution and implications are discussed. The chapter also includes a critical reflection on the use of Constructivist Grounded Theory.

5.1  Returning to consider the research questions

In order to synthesise the research findings, it is essential to address the research questions directly. This synthesis enables an exploration of the way that housing choices and trade-offs are interconnected and demonstrates the complex way in which urban amenities are used in neighbourhoods. The key questions are reflected upon sequentially, within the context of responding to the research aims.

The first question asks how the perceptions expressed by interviewees about density, intensification, and higher density housing typologies inform their perceptions of higher density living. The analysis of interviewee responses has revealed that if a greater quantity and range of attached housing typologies were available in Auckland, many of those interviewed would likely choose to live in them without their sense of neighbourhood satisfaction or quality of urban life being adversely affected. In this study, those wishing to start families or those who already had families were the most likely to want a detached housing typology at some stage while their children lived at home. However, interviewees at other life stages and of varied ages often had no desire for a standalone home specifically. Instead, they spoke about wanting quality built forms located in close proximity to the urban amenities they used and valued. They reasoned that this made their daily lives more convenient and affected them more than the typology of their home. In light of this finding, it appears that the supply of attached typologies is a greater issue than the demand for them. This aligns with the findings from the most recent housing study by Auckland Council, The Housing We’d Choose which found disparity between the current supply of dwelling typologies and the housing Auckland residents would choose, if a greater range of typologies, at varied densities, were available to them (Yeoman and Akehurst 2015).
Furthermore, the findings of this research indicate that residents are becoming accustomed to the idea of intensification as an inevitable outcome of urban growth. Most interviewees expected urban intensification to occur in their neighbourhoods in the near future, whether they had positive views of it or not. Most interviewees reacted negatively when first asked what they thought about density and intensification, citing a concern that it meant a spreading of the ‘shoebox apartments’ located in Auckland’s downtown across the rest of the city. However, when they were asked to describe what form of intensification would be acceptable to them, many favoured an incremental increase in density in the form of attached housing typologies ranging from two- to three-storey terraced houses to three- to five-storey apartments. Questioning interviewees revealed that they were not anti-density or anti-intensification but, rather, were anti-high rise. This finding indicates that it is essential to contextualise interviewee responses around density, if a complete picture of their perceptions is to be developed.

Discovered through the interview data analysis was that aspiring to and choosing attached typologies as a first choice solution to people’s housing needs was contingent on a range of design parameters. These included the view that attached typologies needed better storage options to compensate for the fact that residents may not have a garage or as many hallway cupboards as a traditional standalone option might have. Interviewees also conveyed that their satisfaction with an attached typology also related to the availability of some outdoor private green, patio and/or deck space. In essence, some interviewees favoured standalone typologies because they did not think the attached options currently available to them in their neighbourhoods could cater to all their needs.

Another key finding is that the desire for ownership was stronger among interviewees than the desire for traditional standalone typologies. This meant that, while some interviewees would trade-off proximity to urban amenities in order to own their own home, the majority would have accepted an attached typology instead of a standalone one if it meant they could own a home within close proximity to a neighbourhood and town centre that they favoured. This aspiration for ownership, when considered alongside the rapid increases in property prices in Auckland, is an additional factor that points to the uptake of attached typologies across all demographic sectors. The results are therefore supportive of the findings of studies completed by Auckland Council (Yeoman and Akehurst 2015) where the acceptance of an increasing percentage of higher density living seems likely if the market is able to provide a range of attached typologies that are designed to suit different family sizes and lifestyle preferences.
The second question considered how factors affecting housing choices relate to the trade-offs residents make when they are deciding where to live. Essentially, there were six key factors identified in this research that affect people’s housing choices:

- Their life stage
- Their lifestyle preferences
- Location convenience
- Typological features
- Affordability constraints
- A sense of place attachment

The interrelationship amongst these factors, and how residents prioritise them, forms the basis of each resident’s trade-off hierarchy. Interviewees usually cited one predominant or primary trade-off factor that affected their final housing choice more so than other secondary factors. As well as trading-off factors in a hierarchical way, in instances where two primary trade-offs were valued equally by interviewees, it was noted that the balancing of these equally important trade-off factors played a key role in shaping their housing choices.

While each individual’s trade-off hierarchy is different, some core factors exist. Lifestyle preferences and location convenience were the two most frequently cited factors that interviewees in this study either prioritised or tried to balance in their trade-off hierarchies. At the centre of both these factors is the role of urban amenities in neighbourhood satisfaction. For example, interviewees in this study commented that having easy access to a range of urban amenities from cafés to local parks, made their lives more convenient and they considered their quality of urban life to be good as a result. These are factors that interviewees prioritised when making their housing choices as long as they could afford to.

The connection between housing choice and quality of urban life through the role of urban amenities led to the introduction of the third question asked in this research. This sought to understand in greater detail what role urban amenities play in informing and shaping the quality of urban life that residents derive from their neighbourhoods. In essence, the development of this question was a way to focus the research scope on to a critical issue within urban intensification. In order to address this question, it was necessary to consider the relationships amongst the ways urban amenities are used by interviewees, and how they understand and define them, together with their perceptions of intensification and density.
Through the presentation of the results in the previous chapter, two core roles that urban amenities play in neighbourhood satisfaction were found. Firstly, their proximity and accessibility within a neighbourhood creates and delivers a convenience that contributes to the quality of urban life experienced by interviewees. Choice and convenience were highly valued aspects of lifestyle preferences and correspondingly the role of urban amenities in delivering them was strongly expressed by interviewees. The proximity and accessibility of urban amenities was a factor that interviewees prioritised when they were deciding where to live. In particular, this research has revealed that the proximity and integration of food-related amenities, especially supermarkets and cafés, into suburban existing neighbourhoods provides a level of convenience that interviewees translated into neighbourhood satisfaction. Another key way that urban amenities provide convenience is when there are a variety of different amenities close to each other and to housing developments. This research also found that the quality of urban life experienced by residents is likely to be enhanced when certain complementary urban amenities are spatially grouped close to one another. This is because residents value highly the ability to use a wide range of them sequentially or concurrently, without needing to travel very far.

The research showed that lifestyle preferences and neighbourhood satisfaction are valued very highly in the trade-off hierarchies of interviewees. As a consequence, the role of urban amenities in a neighbourhood can also be linked to the willingness of residents to trade-off the option of renting larger or standalone dwellings for the ownership of attached typologies. As revealed from the interview results, a cyclical relationship was described between accepting increasingly urban lifestyles, valuing convenience, and convenience provided by urban amenities. This is aligned to findings made in Fincher and Gooder’s (2007, 181) research in their Melbourne housing study where ‘home’ is understood to mean not only “the domestic space of family privacy” but also the “lived experience of belonging to an immediate community.” The idea raised by this research is therefore that the strategic provision of additional urban amenities in a neighbourhood corresponds to the increased acceptance of higher density living without adversely affecting the quality of urban life that residents experience.

Another role of urban amenities is to facilitate social enjoyment for residents. For example, recreation amenities aided the social interaction of interviewees who shared similar interests. Interviewees spoke about gaining a sense of community by participating in sporting activities, meeting up with friends, or meeting new friends at these amenities. A further example is food-related amenities, such as cafés and restaurants. Interviewees spoke about their quality of urban life being tied to their ability to have brunch at their favourite local cafés on the weekend or tied to their ability to meet up with family members and friends at restaurants, whether locally or in other neighbourhoods. Despite many interviewees referring
to their use of online shopping and services, it is interesting that the human interactions made possible in the physical spaces created by urban amenities remained a critical factor for many interviewees. This positively affected their neighbourhood satisfaction and, therefore, urban amenities have a role to play in adding to the social complexity of neighbourhoods.

Finally, it is important to revisit the overarching idea that shaped the research from the beginning; that a consideration of subjective quality of urban life necessitates research into both higher density housing choices, including the trade-offs residents make when deciding where to live, and into neighbourhood satisfaction, including the value ascribed to and usage patterns of neighbourhood amenities. The findings support the contention that the provision of housing alone will not likely enhance the quality of urban life experienced by residents to create the necessary acceptance of, and demand for, higher density living in existing neighbourhoods. Higher density, attached typologies need to be provided in conjunction with a range of urban amenities. These urban amenities must be strategically integrated alongside housing, as intensification occurs, if neighbourhood satisfaction and quality of urban life is to be maintained for existing and new residents. Moreover, another key finding is that although the local neighbourhood is a primary location for urban amenities, interviewees use a range of amenities beyond their neighbourhoods that reflect their personal preferences. The idea that all the needs of residents are fully met within a neighbourhood, an underlying assumption in transit-oriented development, denies this more complex reality.

5.2 Implications of this research

The implications of the research findings are threefold. Firstly, housing aspirations are changing to include a growing acceptance of, and preference for, attached typologies. This will require new ways of designing and delivering future neighbourhoods and new ways of enhancing existing ones. The idea that traditional suburbs need to be rethought is not a new finding in Auckland. Beattie and Haarhoff (2011, 10), for example, comment on the increasing interest in urban-style living by observing that reforming existing neighbourhoods “is a serious area of research and practice yet to be more fully explored.” Rowland (2010, 32) asks, “what should our design philosophy for the new suburb be?” and hypothesises that the suburbs of the future will be lively centres “with a range of commercial, retail and cultural activities with small squares and convivial meeting places in which these activities can take place” (32). This is not to compare them to historic models of European development, which do feature these urban elements; instead it is in line with the thinking of Neuman (2005) that future suburbs should be a processual outcome of modern
life. Rowland (2010, 32) continues, “New forms of housing will be designed to cater for the hybrid nature of life in the 21st century where work, living and play become more interrelated.” Similarly, Schmitz (2003, 13) considers that the best new suburbs will be “places where people can build their lives, where they can make social connections, educate their children, obtain the goods and services that meet their daily needs, and even earn their livelihoods.” In this research it is argued that the first step in the process of rethinking existing neighbourhoods is a prioritisation of the strategic integration of urban amenities in line with a greater variety of higher density typologies.

Secondly, the findings of this research suggest that the debate about housing in Auckland must move beyond considering housing provision in isolation. Providing housing alone will not result in quality of urban life for residents. For example, the findings from this research are contrary to the mission of the ‘special housing areas’ identified by the Auckland Council to facilitate housing intensification projects. ‘Special neighbourhood development areas’ would better balance housing needs and quality of urban life outcomes. Housing must accompany the provision of urban amenities to accommodate growth in a way that maintains quality of urban life in Auckland’s existing neighbourhoods.

Thirdly, it is important that the spatial development of cities is aligned to people’s preferences. Auckland Council (2011a, 134) has commented that there is “an inherent problem with the existing regulatory and consenting process in producing quality developments” (see also Motu Economic Public Policy Research 2007). They also identify that “there needs to be a shift in the way we approach the development assessment process where there is an expectation and legitimacy for public agencies to negotiate with the private sector to achieve quality outcomes” (134). In the Auckland Council (2011g, 5) report, Towards a Preferred Urban Form, it was concluded that “one of the key challenges the region faces is to set in place a framework for urban redevelopment that can work in practice.” They argue that “the ability for any city to redevelop and intensify parts of its urban fabric represents one of the most important means by which a city can improve its economic and environmental performance” (5). The alignment of historical residential zoning models, which have shaped the city in the past, to contemporary urban living are brought into question when considering the implications of the findings in this research about the importance of the integration of urban amenities as neighbourhoods intensify. It can be difficult for small-time developers to gain consent to build a café or a day-care centre next to a micro park if the existing park is in a residential zone (The Department of Internal Affairs 2008, 9). This research indicates that the pairing, and the consequential ease of accessibility, of these types of complementary urban amenities help to deliver quality of urban life for residents. Research that has led to questioning residential zoning is not specific to Auckland. In a United States case study, Neuman (2005, 16) argues that “single use zoning
is antithetical to the original idea and crowning achievement of cities, that of bringing persons and activities into proximity”. The effect of zoning on the integration of urban amenities into existing neighbourhoods is a classic example of Neuman’s argument. Similarly, Wheeler (2004) is another urban researcher who argues that their research implicates a need to rethink current zoning mechanisms. He comments:

Before the advent of single-use zoning for broad areas of cities, neighborhoods typically contained offices, small shops, grocery stores, and restaurants in addition to housing. Zoning for most post-Second World War subdivisions prohibits these non-residential land uses... If jobs, housing, shops, and recreational facilities are closer together, the theory goes, then people will need to drive less and neighborhoods will be more vibrant and livable (199).

Searle and Bunker (2010, 176) comment on the compact city future envisaged for Sydney and Melbourne, two Australian cities with which Auckland competes, noting that there are obvious changes needed if existing areas are to be intensified. They argue that “more sophisticated ways of bringing about change (rather) than relying on zoning” (ibid.) is a critical change required if intensification is to be successful. Like Auckland, the necessity for growth to be accommodated in existing areas “has already been recognized by the formation of special development corporations to expedite brownfields development in Sydney, Melbourne and Perth, using a public- private partnership approach but drawing on state legal authority to do so” (ibid.). Nevertheless, Searle and Bunker argue that “many problems in bringing about urban intensification remain” (ibid.). This research questions whether the lack of prioritisation given to the strategic integration of a range of urban amenities into existing neighbourhoods during the intensification process is part of the problem. There are a range of issues tied into questioning this notion, which future research would need to consider, including the relationship between the public and private sectors when it comes to the provision of such amenities and who is responsible for delivering them alongside, or as part of, higher density development.

Despite the prioritisation of intensification in Auckland the proportion of consent applications for attached dwellings in the city has not increased as compared to the consent applications for attached
11. Giving an international example Roland argues that “many of the (new) suburbs being promoted are just denser versions of what has been built over the years, with a convenience store and primary school if lucky” (2010, 31). Wheeler (2004, 183) is critical of the current development model, denoting that “developers also have little incentive to examine how their own designs relate to other neighborhoods or the city as a whole.” He goes on to lament that “the result is a fragmented, chaotic urban landscape in which different neighborhood-scale developments – including residential subdivisions, office parks, and shopping malls – do not connect well to one another or meet broader urban or regional objectives” (ibid.). It is important to consider whether the spatial connectivity espoused by Wheeler could be achieved through a more considered integration of urban amenities into existing neighbourhoods as they intensify. The idea that a network of urban amenities in a neighbourhood plays a role in providing quality of urban life is often inferred, but not explored, in both policy and strategy documents and intensification literature. Hansen and Winther (2010, 1) identify that while “urban amenities as growth drivers have been given much attention in urban and regional studies,” internationally, an exploration of the meaning and perceived value of urban amenities for and by residents has seldom followed. This is in part due to a disconnect between research that considers emergent forms of urbanism and the practical ‘real world’ delivery of complex fine-grain neighbourhoods offering a variety of urban amenities and housing typologies.

In summary, this research raises questions about whether existing neighbourhoods need to be rethought in order to deliver an increasing number of attached typologies, in line with changing demographics and preferences, while ensuring that they are well-serviced by urban amenities. In turn it raises questions about whether historical zoning and neighbourhood design models need to be realigned to better suit 21st century lifestyles, where accessibility and convenience are essential facets of urban living. The implications of this research lead to the conclusion that urban amenities must be strategically integrated into neighbourhoods alongside new housing typologies, to accommodate growth in a way that maintains and enhances the quality of urban life that residents derive from their neighbourhoods.

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11 While the number of consented attached dwellings has increased in Auckland over the last five years (Statistics New Zealand 2015), so too has the number of detached dwellings. The average percentages of each across the city have remained at 30 percent attached and 70 percent detached residential dwellings consented per annum, in line with the current ratio of housing stock. This proves that while the overall number of houses built per year has increased since reaching a fifteen year low in 2009 (Statistics New Zealand 2015), in fact there has not been a percentage increase in the number of attached dwellings being consented as compared to the number of detached dwellings being consented per annum.
5.3 Contribution to knowledge

This study makes a contribution to housing choices, neighbourhood satisfaction, and urban intensification research. The findings provide new insights into the significance of urban amenities in relation to urban intensification strategies promoted in New World cities. This is essential if cities like Auckland are to advance their urban growth management strategies for the delivery of a quality compact city (Auckland Council 2012a).

While some previous research has addressed housing choices, preferences and location trade-offs in Auckland (Beacon Pathway Ltd 2010, Buckenberger 2009, Dixon, Dupuis, and Lysnar 2001b, Haarhoff et al. 2012, Yeoman and Akehurst 2015, Higgins 2010), the in-depth qualitative analysis of resident interview data remains limited. Mead and McGregor (2007, 15) identify that, despite the importance of housing preferences research “remarkably little is known about people’s housing choices, and even less about intensive housing choices.” In a research report for the Auckland Council, Haarhoff et al. (2012, 202) identified that “we need to better understand what the necessary ‘trade-offs’ are between the suburban lifestyle (whether affordable or not) and the urban lifestyle envisaged for a majority of future Aucklanders.” This finding is also echoed in the Auckland Plan, where it is acknowledged that “more research is needed on trends in housing preferences and trade-offs” (Auckland Council 2012a, 273). By questioning residents about their housing experiences, choices, aspirations and the trade-offs they make, this research investigates the knowledge gap not only about what choices interviewees are making, but also around the underlying reasoning that they identify behind their thoughts and actions.

Secondly, this research responds to a knowledge gap identified by McRea and Walters (2012, 191) in their Brisbane housing and urban consolidation study, when they comment that “the various ways that urban consolidation can impact on urban liveability, both opportunities and threats, is currently poorly understood.” Likewise, in a Melbourne study, Alves argues, “little attention has been given to the process of achieving compact urban form where it doesn’t presently exist” (2004, 6). Auckland Council (2012b, 125) also argues, “careful attention needs to be given to the way in which low-density suburban areas may transition to medium-density environments”. To address this knowledge gap completely will take more than one doctoral thesis. This research contributes by investigating the forms of intensification of which interviewees are accepting. It also links the urban intensification of Auckland to interviewees’ understanding of quality of urban life by considering the role urban amenities play in their neighbourhood satisfaction. In addition, until now, research had not been done to directly address the role that urban
amenities might play in influencing the perceived quality of urban living for residents living in higher density typologies in Auckland neighbourhoods. It is this knowledge gap that is addressed directly through this research by questioning residents about how they value the urban amenities in their neighbourhoods and further questioning them about which urban amenities they favour, and how they access and use them.

This research also contributes to an understanding of the Strategic Urban Design Principles for intensification outlined by Auckland Council. In particular, it contributes to principle six; ‘diversity of urban activities, uses and forms to provide vibrancy’ (2012b, 124). This research argues that urban amenities are a key aspect of housing and urban intensification research because the convenience they provide can change perceived notions about the quality of urban life residents derive from their neighbourhoods. In a Canadian housing study, Randall (2008, 50) identified that “planners need greater appreciation for public attitudes towards intensification and neighbourhood amenities.” Moreover, linking together an understanding of housing choices and aspirations with a knowledge of the role of urban amenities, “may assist in making better decisions about where intensification should occur and the services and amenities required to offset some of the other disadvantages of multi-unit living” (Mitchell 2011, 63).

Because the research is focussed on ways to maintain or enhance the quality of urban life experienced by residents, it contributes a developed set of interview questions, which could be used and adapted in future research on this topic. As identified by Randolph (2006, 488), it will only be “when higher density housing becomes accepted as secure, desirable and (a) long term housing option for a diverse range of households across the income and social spectrum that higher density cities... will become a viable reality.” The questions this research raises contribute to the dialogue about quality of urban life. This is needed to move forward successfully with intensification strategy. Further, it is acknowledged that this research is part of a much larger set of issues facing cities as they continue to deal with growth and try to avoid sprawl, intensifying existing neighbourhoods while trying to maintain and enhance the quality of urban life experienced by their residents.

5.4 Reflections on the use of a Constructivist Grounded Theory methodology

Given that there are a limited number of applications of Constructivist Grounded Theory in urban studies, it is essential to reflect upon the value of employing it in this study. As identified by Mills, Bonner, and Francis (2006), any chosen methodological framework must align to the research aims as well as suit the
cognitive style of the researcher. While the reasons as to why Constructivist Grounded Theory suited both the research and the researcher are interconnected, itemising them in this section assisted the researcher in gaining a sense of clarity while identifying them.

There were two key advantages and one key limitation in employing a Constructivist Grounded Theory methodology in this research. The first identified advantage was the fact that Constructivist Grounded Theory comprises a three-part coding method. It benefited the research because it ensured that the core categories were compared and re-compared and that all the data was line-by-line coded multiple times to significantly reduce the risk of interviewee views and opinions being inadvertently left out by the researcher. This process also helped the researcher to maintain theoretical sensitivity throughout the duration of the study. Given the complex nature of housing and urban intensification research, it is evident that a less systematic approach would not have resulted in such a deep understanding of the embedded issues surrounding the perceived role of urban amenities in the transition to higher density living in Auckland. The second advantage is the way that the methodology is inherently designed to be responsive to emergent ideas and themes. Employing a Constructivist Grounded Theory methodology gave the researcher the flexibility during the interview process to be responsive to ideas introduced by interviewees and enabled the researcher to embrace interviewee vagueness. It also facilitated the integration of literature in response to these emerging ideas. Ultimately, these factors ensured that the research was both inductive and thorough (Bryant and Charmaz 2010, 298).

The main limitation of the research methodology is the time required to complete the data coding. This could be prohibitive for research institutes where time and budgetary constraints are more stringent than they were in this study. As a result of this limitation, a key learning from the coding process was that because coding can be very long and arduous, patience is essential, but if the researcher can persevere it does result in a rich understanding of the data and the potential implications and applications of the research. Other limitations, as noted in section 3.8, included its qualitative origins facilitating the production of in-depth rather than statistically conclusive data, the imbedded respondent biases, and the choices made to narrow the scope of the study to focus on interviewing residents who had already chosen to transition in to higher density housing.

Charmaz (2005, 528) identifies four key criteria for assessing how successful Constructivist Grounded Theory has been for a researcher; credibility, originality, resonance, and usefulness. The first criterion, credibility, is achieved when the researcher succeeds in demonstrating intimate familiarity with the setting or topic. In this research, a sense of achieving credibility corresponded to achieving data
saturation, when the coding process no longer revealed further patterns in the data. At saturation, the researcher had developed a percipient understanding of the complexity of the research topic and considered credibility to be inherent in the research. Reading widely across broad urban studies literature, as is recommended in Constructivist Grounded Theory studies, also aided the researcher’s quest for credibility.

Originality is Charmaz’s second criterion and requires that a researcher is constantly questioning whether their analysis offers new conceptual renderings of the data. It also shows how the research extends, challenges, or refines current ideas and practices. In this research, originality was a term constantly questioned by the researcher. As a result, it was important for the researcher to discuss her research with professionals and industry contacts to directly question its originality and contribution. This happened informally and consistently throughout the research process. Originality was also accomplished by cycling through readings of the literature throughout the interview stages. This assisted the researcher in comparing existing studies with the emergent findings from the study.

The third criterion, resonance, represents the fullness of the studied experience (Charmaz 2005, 528) and requires a researcher to transition smoothly between the macro and micro research issues they are dealing with. The Constructivist Grounded Theory processes of memoing and diagramming help the researcher to achieve resonance. In this study, writing memos enabled the researcher to connect and organise ideas into broader themes that were discovered during the line-by-line coding process. Diagramming was a visualisation tool used by the researcher whenever issues with resonance arose. It prevented the researcher from becoming overwhelmed by the volume of interviewee quotations and helped her to work through stages of confusion during data coding. See Appendix 12 for examples.

Lastly, usefulness, the fourth criterion, requires a researcher to ask whether the research offers interpretations of complex phenomena that are accessible and relevant to everyday life. Ultimately, this study was designed to investigate a complex issue, that of housing choices and the role of urban amenities in the transition to higher density living in Auckland. Usefulness was achieved by asking residents about their perceptions in order to identify accessible results from the data that address real-world, real-time, intensification issues. Achieving usefulness also required the researcher to ask whether the findings could spark further research in other related substantive areas; this is addressed in section 6.2 of the concluding chapter of this thesis.
Chapter 6 Conclusion

In Chapter 6 the future research possibilities and challenges are identified. Recommendations for urban design and planning practice are presented and concluding remarks about the study are made.

6.1 Summary of the research findings

In summary, the findings from this research are threefold and correspond to the three research questions. Firstly, this research has found that perceptions of density, intensification, and higher density typologies inform perceptions of higher density living. Secondly, the research findings support the idea that trade-offs are made by residents when they are making their housing choices. The process of making trade-offs is a complex and hierarchical one, affected by residents’ life stage, their lifestyle preferences, the location convenience an environment can offer them, the typological features they favour in a home, the affordability constraints they face, their prioritisation of ownership, and their sense of place attachment to suburbs in which they have previously lived. Thirdly, the research findings reveal that urban amenities do inform and shape the neighbourhood satisfaction residents derive from their environs. Most significant is the idea that urban amenities are used both within a resident’s neighbourhood as well as beyond it. The urban amenities residents use most frequently are the ones that most directly contribute to the satisfaction they derive from their neighbourhoods, yet all urban amenities they use and value contribute to the quality of urban life they derive from living in their city.

6.2 Future research possibilities

A number of future research possibilities have emerged out of this study and this section is focussed on describing some that are considered significant. In a general sense, a replication and repetition of the research focus and method on a larger scale across other Auckland suburbs would build data about how residents make housing choices and trade-offs and use the urban amenities in their neighbourhoods. The research could also be replicated internationally, and the data compared across different regions and
cities. Similarly, specific demographic or ethnographic groups could become the focus of individual research projects to identify the specific preferences, aspirations, and whether there were trade-off hierarchy patterns among such groupings. Grouping potential interviewees according to their life stage may prove to be the most useful way to divide up demographic categories.

Included within such future studies could also be a focus on any stigma attached to dwellings of different time-periods in Auckland’s, or indeed any other cities, history. This was one area that emerged from the research findings as a possible issue which was beyond the scope of this research to consider in sufficient depth.

A longitudinal study could be beneficial to track shifting perceptions of quality of urban life, density, and intensification as neighbourhoods change. Whereas this study provides a time-specific snapshot of housing choices and aspirations, a longitudinal study would provide an opportunity to examine how residential housing choices and aspirations change over time and how individuals are affected by their various life stages as well as shifting societal memes.

There needs to be further research on the usage patterns of urban amenities. An extension of this study that further interrogates the differences between the usage patterns of various categories of urban amenities could add to the knowledge around how residents engage with their neighbourhoods. Simultaneously, future studies could also examine in greater detail how the convenience enabled by the presence of urban amenities in a neighbourhood relates to the preparedness of residents to live in higher density typologies. Any such study would also need to take into account different perceptions of proximity and accessibility and the effect of these factors on the usage of urban amenities. A large scale digital mapping project could be developed to track the complex ways in which residents engage with their neighbourhoods. Future research could also consider the relationship overlaps between the role of infrastructure as well as that of urban amenities. Considering infrastructure was beyond the scope of this study and yet there is likely to be a strong corresponding link between the role of infrastructure and the role of urban amenities in ensuring neighbourhood satisfaction and the delivery of quality of urban life.

An auxiliary research area could see engagement with developers on the supply side of housing and of urban amenities to further understand the mismatch identified in this study between shifting housing demands and current and projected housing supply. Likewise, understanding the perspective of local and regional councils would also add value to the research conducted with local residents in an area. Relevant professionals and council staff could be interviewed about their views of the impediments to
intensification. This data could then be comparatively analysed with data on residents’ perceptions to understand both the provision, as well as the uptake, of higher density living. In turn, an opportunity would be created to consider if the growth strategies in place in a city are designed to address the intensification of existing neighbourhoods in a way that would enable quality of urban life to be experienced by residents. A further practical application of the research would be for it to be carried out in conjunction with the development of Area Plans, which shape the development of neighbourhoods. Questioning residents in this way before these plans are developed could become a valuable consultative process. In cities such as Auckland this would enable the findings to shape future planning policy.

Lastly, when identifying the characteristics of a successful neighbourhood, Auckland Council (2011c, 11) indirectly recognises the role of urban amenities by commenting that the essential qualities of a successful neighbourhood include factors such as proximity to basic shops and services, proximity to good quality schools, parks, open spaces, and leisure facilities. However, beyond this there is a concern that urban intensification and neighbourhood design strategy is not directly listed as a priority in the Auckland Council Research Strategy (2013a). The research themes of ‘People,’ ‘Infrastructure and Land Use,’ ‘Environment,’ and ‘Housing’ consider a variety of factors, ranging from investigating housing preferences, choices and trade-offs across the population to exploring the sense of wellbeing of Auckland’s diverse groups. However, the spatial implications of the perceptions of density held by residents feature much less. Research theme four, ‘Housing,’ considers a wide variety of aspects ranging from supply and demand issues to investigating the likely effects of actual and projected demographic trends, including population growth and ageing and changing ethnic diversity on the demand for housing. Embedded within is the need to research the spatial dynamics of Auckland’s housing market. This indicates that Auckland Council’s research strategy is already aligned to the approach taken in this research and the methods used in this research are therefore well-placed to benefit Auckland Council’s research framework as it develops.

6.3 Recommendations for urban design and planning practice

There are three key recommendations for urban design and planning practice that have arisen from this research. Firstly, there needs to be a greater focus and prioritisation on the strategic integration of urban amenities into the planning of existing neighbourhoods as they intensify. This, in part, requires urban amenities with complementary functions to be spatially clustered to add to the convenience of these neighbourhoods as part of maintaining neighbourhood satisfaction. This will require a shift away from
considering housing provision in a silo and also a change in zoning to reflect modern lifestyles and the ways in which residents engage with their neighbourhoods.

Emerging out of the first recommendation is the second. In order to cater for broader demographic profiles than the majority of current higher density developments allow, the findings from this research indicate that there needs to be an increasing number of family-sized terraced housing and low-rise apartments built with three or more bedrooms that are located in close proximity to a range of urban amenities. For this type of development to work in practice it must be financially feasible. It is yet to be seen whether current land agglomeration and consenting processes are compatible. This would enable the disparity between the supply of a greater range of typologies to be better aligned with the evolving demand for varied higher density housing solutions to suit the increasingly diverse demographic needs and lifestyle preferences of residents.

The third recommendation for urban design and planning practice is connected to the prioritisation of further research focussed on connecting the complexity of how residents use their neighbourhoods and the wider city with an understanding of their perceptions of their quality of urban life. Whereas, much research considers the value of walkability and relating urban amenities to the local neighbourhood scale, this research reveals that it is not just what is in the neighbourhood but also beyond it that contributes to quality of urban life. This research would then need to be acted upon in both strategy and policy documentation and aligned to funding streams in order to see implementable changes to the strategy informing the long-term planning vision of a city.

6.4 Concluding remarks

This study has responded to the urban intensification debate by investigating the acceptance of attached typologies in traditionally low density suburbs. Data was gathered through interviewing residents who have chosen to live in attached typologies. In this research, the complex trade-offs residents make when deciding where to live have been explored and the ways that residents use and value the urban amenities in their neighbourhoods have been examined.

The research concludes that the integration of urban amenities into neighbourhoods must go hand-in-hand with the provision of additional attached typologies if quality of life is to be experienced in tomorrow’s urban Auckland. Therefore, “instead of taking each building project individually and
responding to the minutiae of market forces, we need to conceive of towns and cities in a people-centric holistic way, to meet the major challenges facing society” (Allen 2008, 13). If higher density living is to be embraced in established neighbourhoods, what must be understood is the role of urban amenities both within the neighbourhood, and within the wider city, in meeting the quality of urban life expectations of residents. The apparent risk of not considering urban amenities in this way is to misunderstand the nature of contemporary urban life and the effects of changing demographics and household structures on housing choices.
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Appendix 1 The evolution of Constructivist Grounded Theory

To engage a constructivist approach to grounded theory it is important to consider the evolution of the theory and the varied and contested re-modellings that have shaped it (Breckenridge 2012). This leads to an understanding of how the methodological underpinnings of the theory influence contemporary research, as Constructivist Grounded Theory continues to evolve (Charmaz 2005, 508). Mills, Bonner, and Francis (2006, 2) argue that “all variations of grounded theory exist on a methodological spiral and reflect their epistemological underpinnings.”

The three best-known iterations of Grounded Theory that researchers must decipher before determining which is the most appropriate for their own study are Classic, Straussian, and Constructivist. Classic Grounded Theory emerged in 1967 with the publication of ‘The Discovery of Grounded Theory’ by medical sociologists Glaser and Strauss. Grounded Theory was Glaser and Strauss’s response to criticisms levied at qualitative methodologies at a time when quantitative studies were the preferred norm in scientific research. Glaser remains fervent in his support for the original incarnation of the methodology. Classic Grounded Theory was remodelled by Strauss and Corbin, due to their differing ontological and epistemological perspectives from those of Glaser (Mills, Bonner, and Francis 2006). Strauss and Corbin published their seminal text expounding their version of Grounded Theory in 1990. A key way that Strauss and Corbin’s (1990) conception of the theory differed from Classic Grounded Theory was the addition of Axial Coding as another layer to the coding process. This was an attempt to increase the legitimacy of the findings borne from this type of research approach (Evans 2013, 44). However, Mills, Bonner, and Francis (2006, 4) also criticize Strauss and Corbin’s work for not stating a clear paradigm of thought underpinning their approach and comment that “their work demonstrates a mixture of language that vacillates between post positivism and constructivism, with a reliance on terms such as ‘recognizing bias’ and ‘maintaining objectivity’.” Despite its inconsistencies at a methodological level, Heath and Cowley (2004) argue that the process of Axial Coding provided the necessary practical guidance to novice researchers at a time when its use as a research method was less prevalent. Strauss’ death in 1994 has meant that many of the questions asked of Straussian Grounded Theory remain unanswered.

Constructivist Grounded Theory, the most recent remodelling, does not “subscribe to the objectivist, positivist assumptions” (Charmaz 2005, 509) of earlier versions of the theory and instead takes an interpretivist stance congruent with the ontology of relativism and the epistemology of social constructivism. Evans (2013, 45-46) argues that a constructivist approach focuses on the creation of descriptive theory based on the belief that concepts are constructed as opposed to discovered, whereas
Classic Grounded Theory focuses on explanatory theory. It follows that in Constructivist Grounded Theory the researcher is actively repositioned “as the author of a reconstruction of experience and meaning” (Mills, Bonner, and Francis 2006, 2). Charmaz (2000, 510), a former student of Glaser and Strauss, aptly comments:

Constructivist Grounded Theory celebrates first-hand knowledge of empirical worlds, takes a middle ground between postmodernism and positivism and offers accessible methods for taking qualitative research into the 21st century. Constructivism assumes the relativism of multiple social realities, recognizes the mutual creation of knowledge by the viewer and the viewed, and aims towards interpretive understanding of subjects’ meanings.

Like many methodologies, Constructivist Grounded Theory is not without its critics (Jones and Alony 2011, 98). Despite Glaser’s insistence that Constructivist Grounded Theory is a “misnomer” (2012) the approach has received significant support (Charmaz 2000, Bryant and Charmaz 2010, Mills, Bonner, and Francis 2006, Breckenridge 2012). This support has been validated by the broad application of Constructivist Grounded Theory in various research disciplines, which include social justice (Charmaz 2005, 511), nursing (Elliott and Lazenbatt 2005, McCann 2004) occupational and environmental medicine (Mills, Bonner, and Francis 2006, 6), as well as knowledge management (Sousa and Hendriks 2006), leadership (Kempster and Parry 2011), organizational change (Whiteley 2004), strategy (Locke 2001, O’Reilly, Paper, and Marx 2012), and marketing and consumer behaviour research (Goulding 2005, 1998).
Appendix 2  Methodological considerations in Constructivist Grounded Theory

There are three main methodological considerations that must be contemplated before employing Constructivist Grounded Theory. First, it is important to avoid ‘methodological slurring,’ which is characterized by a generic use of the term ‘grounded theory’ without specifying which methodological iteration of the theory is most relevant to the research and, correspondingly, carefully following the associated data coding methods (Suddaby 2006, 48, Evans 2013). The mixing of Grounded Theory methodologies and their corresponding methods is often criticized by established grounded theorists because it erodes the credibility of the research (Evans 2013, Charmaz 2005, Breckenridge 2012, Glaser and Holton 2004). This concern caused the researcher to read widely about the theory’s evolution and to closely examine which iteration was the most appropriate for this research; a constructivist approach was found to be most suitable.

The second methodological consideration in a Constructivist Grounded Theory study is theoretical sensitivity, “openness to new or unexpected interpretations of the data, the skill with which they combine literature, data, and experience, and... attention to subtleties of meaning” (Suddaby 2006, 637). Theoretical sensitivity is “a multidimensional concept that includes the researchers’ level of insight into the research area, how attuned they are to the nuances and complexity of the participant’s words and actions, (and) their ability to reconstruct meaning from the data generated with the participant.” (Mills, Bonner, and Francis 2006, 4). Glaser and Holton (2004, 11) aptly describe theoretical sensitivity as follows:

A researcher requires two essential characteristics for the development of theoretical sensitivity. First, he or she must have the personal and temperamental bent to maintain analytic distance, tolerate confusion and regression while remaining open, trusting to preconscious processing and to conceptual emergence. Second, he/she must have the ability to develop theoretical insight into the area of research combined with the ability to make something of these insights. He/she must have the ability to conceptualize and organize, make abstract connections, visualize and think multivariately.

Jones and Alony (2011) consider that theoretical sensitivity is achieved when a researcher remains open to emerging ideas, even those that may change how the researcher thinks about the field of study. This study acknowledges the importance of finding a balance between understanding the issues in the field and being open to the direction of the research.
Thirdly, a review of the Grounded Theory literature made cognizant a number of misconceptions that exist regarding the appropriate use of literature in Grounded Theory studies (Christiansen 2011, Martin 2006). In Classic Grounded Theory, Glaser considers close reading of the literature from the specific field of study to be problematic if it is completed before beginning the research. He states that “there is a need not to review any of the literature in the substantive area under study” (Glaser 1992, 31) to avoid being led astray by it. Instead, the literature is integrated throughout the coding process and particularly when sorting the data and writing up the research (Glaser 1992, 33). However, reviewing the literature in unrelated fields to broaden the researcher’s contextual understanding of the issues at hand is considered vital (Glaser 1992, 35). Therefore, as identified by Christiansen (2011, 21), “this restriction with regard to preliminary literature studies does not prevent the researcher from carrying out literature studies to find a loosely defined research topic that fits to his/her interests” (2011, 21). Evans (2013) agrees that having knowledge in a particular topic area does not constitute or mean that the researcher holds preconceived ideas. Furthermore, it is expected that most professionals and researchers would likely already have a familiarity with the literature in their chosen field (McCallin 2006, 11, Evans 2013). As a study progresses it is very likely that knowledge of the literature will act as a stimulant for effective analytical thinking (McCallin 2006, 16). At a micro level, prior knowledge can help distil the relevant key ideas as they emerge from the literature. At a macro level, prior knowledge of the literature can help shape new interpretations and abstractions of the study area to change and develop the research focus.

Considering Constructivist Grounded Theory, Charmaz (2005, 510) comments that what researchers “see and hear depends upon their prior interpretive frames, biographies, and interests as well as the research context, their relationships with research participants, concrete field experiences, and modes of generating and recording empirical materials.” Therefore, the researcher with or without prior knowledge of the literature will always be making value-laden judgments on what he or she is seeing and hearing. Additionally, in the absence of prior knowledge or a literature review how could a researcher determine what the essential data incidents were? (O'Reilly, Paper, and Marx 2012, 255). As Suddaby (2006) explains, the challenge is not that prior knowledge will debase any given study but that it might force the researcher into, consciously or unconsciously, testing hypotheses based on their prior knowledge instead of simply observing while collecting data.

In this research, the literature review process continued for the duration of the work and was seen as an important mechanism for ensuring the theoretical sensitivity of the researcher (Holton 2010, 23). Initially, it enabled the researcher to identify “gaps in the literature in order to identify untested hypotheses” (Christiansen 2011, 21) and as the study progressed, the literature also became “an effective analytic tool
to stimulate thinking” (McCallin 2006, 16). This is in line with the thinking of McCallin (2006, 18) who identified that literature “takes its place as part of the macro-context shaping a study, or can be woven into the micro context if it is relevant to emerging concepts.”
Appendix 3  An outline of the research process

The research process was organised around eight research tasks or phases, shown in Figure 66.

**PHASE A Initial literature review**  
Urban intensification and urban growth management literature [Develop research aims]  
*Also: Research trip to Vancouver and Portland and informal interviews with built environment professionals to develop and refine the research topic.*

**PHASE B Literature review**  
Overview of quality of life and quality of urban life literature  
Review of subjective quality of urban life research approaches  
Review of housing choices literature  
Review of neighbourhood satisfaction literature  
[Develop key questions]

**PHASE C Choice of a research method**  
(qualitative interviews)  
+ Choice of a case study city, suburbs, and developments

**PHASE D Develop interview questions**

**PHASE E Ethics approval**

**PHASE F Data Collection**

**PHASE G Data Analysis**  
Three-tiered Constructivist Grounded Theory data coding

**PHASE H Review and Write-up**

**Figure 66.** Diagram of the research process

During phase A, the researcher read widely across the broad topics of urban governance, urban growth management, and quality of life, to become familiar with how the growth issues facing cities were conceptualised and addressed in the literature. The integrated analysis of policy and strategy documentation was also important for comparing established growth management practices to the more theoretical discussions in the literature. During this process the researcher also travelled to Vancouver, British Columbia, and Portland, Oregon, to learn first-hand about the urban growth issues facing other Pacific Rim New World cities. The researcher had also spent time in Brisbane and Sydney prior to officially commencing doctoral studies. All these experiences shaped the researcher’s understanding of growth issues and were the initial steps that framed the research development before a refined topic emerged.
from the data. This was in keeping with a Constructivist Grounded Theory approach to the research design.

While in North America the researcher took part in a research field trip and an urban design master class at the University of British Columbia. As well as benefitting from the academic learning experience this trip provided, the researcher also visited a number of housing developments and met with planning officials to learn directly about how urban growth issues were addressed in these cities. The researcher conducted a series of fourteen informal qualitative interviews with built environment professionals to question the urban growth paradigms experienced in Vancouver and Portland. A list of the professionals interviewed is provided in Figure 67.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bill Pechet</td>
<td>Pechet Studio</td>
<td>Consultant and Lecturer (University of British Columbia)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christina DeMarco</td>
<td>Policy and Planning Department, Metro Vancouver</td>
<td>Regional Development Division Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr Anne McAfee</td>
<td>City Choices Consulting</td>
<td>Director / Adjunct Professor UBC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eric Vance</td>
<td>Eric Vance and Associates</td>
<td>Director / Adjunct Professor UBC (1999-2011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Larry Beasley</td>
<td>Beasley and Associates</td>
<td>Director / Adjunct Professor UBC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark Raggett</td>
<td>City of Portland Bureau of Planning and Sustainability</td>
<td>Manager, Urban Design Studio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Megan Gibb</td>
<td>Oregon Metro</td>
<td>Manager of the Development Center/TOD Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael Armstrong</td>
<td>City of Portland Bureau of Planning and Sustainability</td>
<td>Policy, Research and Innovation Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael Mehaffy</td>
<td>Structura Naturalis Inc.</td>
<td>President</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nathan Edelson</td>
<td>42nd Street Consulting</td>
<td>Consultant / Adjunct Professor UBC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olson Lee</td>
<td>Mayor’s Office of Housing</td>
<td>Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ray Young</td>
<td>Young Anderson Barristers and Solicitors</td>
<td>Director / Adjunct Professor UBC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah Dennis</td>
<td>San Francisco Planning Department</td>
<td>Senior Planner Manager, Plans and Programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tom Armstrong</td>
<td>City of Portland Bureau of Planning and Sustainability</td>
<td>Supervising Planner</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 67.** List of professionals interviewed in Portland and Vancouver

Each interview was recorded and transcribed with the permission of the interviewees. Professionals were asked in particular to discuss whether they thought mixed-use residential developments could address urban growth issues. The link between attached housing and quality of urban life was also discussed. It
was through the analysis of these interviews that a more refined topic emerged around the relationship between the acceptance of the intensification of existing neighbourhoods and the role of urban amenities in residents’ satisfaction with their neighbourhoods and their perceived quality of urban life. The professionals interviewed, in Vancouver in particular, identified the intensification of existing neighbourhoods as the next critical area in urban studies research – especially given the plethora of work that had already been done around the urban regeneration of downtowns and water front s. A number of the professionals questioned whether or not neighbourhoods had been or could be strategised in their design in a way that would encourage the transition to higher density living and also see greater demand for attached housing typologies developing. Being able to talk with experienced researchers and professionals about the urban intensification issues they were facing in these cities, while concurrently having the opportunity to explore these urban environments, proved invaluable to the development of the research.

Upon the researcher’s return to New Zealand, phase B of the research process began. The researcher was able to re-examine the literature on quality of life and urban intensification and refine the literature searches and began to focus on the literature that addressed quality of urban life issues, housing choices, and neighbourhood satisfaction. Comparative analysis of this literature with the North American interview data helped to reveal that the role of urban amenities in delivering quality of urban life was an important yet under-researched issue, strongly connected to housing choices research. Further close reading of additional housing choices and neighbourhood satisfaction literature served to confirm this observation.

With a substantive field and a clear research gap identified, it was possible to progress the research in phase C by identifying a qualitative interview process as the most appropriate method to gather data to address the research questions. The selection of Auckland as the case study city, and the choosing of the case study suburbs and developments followed. The interview questions were subsequently developed in phase D. In keeping with the Constructivist Grounded Theory notion that research enabled, “an interpretive portrayal of the studied world, not an exact picture of it” (Charmaz 2006, 10), it was decided that the interviews would best be conducted with residents of attached housing typologies, rather than with design professionals or developers involved in the process of delivering attached forms of housing. Case study suburbs and developments were chosen to focus on interviewing residents who had already made the transition to higher density housing in traditionally low density suburbs, as a means to gather comparable perceptions and opinions. Further information about the development of the interview questions is outlined in section 3.3.
Following phase E, the ethics approval process, phase F began with data collection in the form of face-to-face qualitative interviews with residents who lived in attached housing typologies. The literature continued to support this process while analysis also began in phase G. The results were developed through a three-tiered Constructivist Grounded Theory substantive data coding method. This is described in section 3.5. The research concluded in phase H, with the review of the findings, including a comparison back to the key questions and the literature, and ultimately with the writing of the thesis.
Appendix 4  Mailbox-drop letter to introduce the research to potential interviewees

**PLEASE SHARE YOUR VIEWS**

to help me with my PhD

QUALITY OF URBAN LIFE RESEARCH

Hello residents of (insert case study development name),

My name is Natalie Allen and I’m currently doing my PhD at The University of Auckland. My research is about urban intensification and quality of urban life experienced by you, in your neighbourhood. I would really appreciate your time for a 45 minute to 1-hour interview to help me with my research.

You can choose the time and place for the interview (at your home, your place of work, or over coffee at your favourite café). A $50 **supermarket voucher** will be given to you at the end of our interview to thank you for your time.

I would like to ask you about:

- Your housing experiences and aspirations
- What you like or dislike about your neighbourhood and why you choose to live in your suburb
- What local urban amenities you use and value

The interview, with your permission, will be voice recorded and transcribed so that I can ensure accuracy in any comments I anonymously quote in my research. The transcription specialist will be required to sign a confidentiality agreement. To ensure anonymity, your name and any other personal information will not be published in my thesis or related academic publications. To ensure confidentiality, your name and any other personal information will not be given to any third parties.

Please email me at natalie.allen@auckland.ac.nz if you would like to take part or would like further information.

Thank you so much, your time is really appreciated.

Warm regards,

Natalie Allen

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 03.09.13 FOR 3 YEARS. REFERENCE NUMBER 10005.
PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

School of Architecture and Planning
Level 6, Building 421
26 Symonds St
Auckland
Ph.: 09 373 7599 ext. 88134 or 88596

Project title: Quality of urban life when living at higher densities

Please read the information below and ask the researcher any questions you have about this research project.

Project description and invitation

As an Auckland resident (over 16 years of age) currently living in an attached housing typology, you are invited to take part in a research project exploring housing choices the role urban amenities play in promoting quality of urban life for residents living at higher densities in Auckland.

Project Procedures

The research will involve a 45-minute to 1-hour interview, conducted by researcher Natalie Allen. Please see the attached Interview Questions for further information and please feel free to ask any questions.

Participation in this research is voluntary. Upon completion of the interview a $50 koha, in the form of a supermarket voucher, will be provided to thank you for your time.

Data storage/retention/destruction/future use

Your interview will be digitally voice recorded by the researcher, Natalie Allen to enable her to ensure an accurate record of the data is available for use in the development of her PhD thesis and associated academic publications. You may choose to have the recorder turned off at any time during the interview. Your digital voice recording and your signed consent form will be securely stored for 6 years at the University of Auckland, after which time they will be securely destroyed.

The recording will be transcribed by a transcription specialist. They will be required to sign a confidentiality agreement before commencing the transcription and your name and address will also be deleted prior to them being given your recording.
Right to Withdraw from Participation

You have the right to withdraw from participation at any time during the interview. Once you interview has been conducted, you will have the opportunity to withdraw the content of your interview from the research project for up to 2 weeks after the date of the interview.

Anonymity and Confidentiality

Your name and unit number will not be published in any publications or shared with any third parties to ensure your anonymity and confidentiality is maintained.

Thank you for your time, I hope you find your interview useful and interesting.

Contact Details

Researcher:
Natalie Allen
Level 6, Building 421
26 Symonds St
Auckland 1142
natalie.allen@auckland.ac.nz

Supervisor:
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HOD Architecture and Planning:
Elizabeth Aitken-Rose
Level 6, Building 421
26 Symonds St
Auckland 1142
e.aitken-rose@auckland.ac.nz

For any queries regarding ethical concerns you may have regarding this research please contact:
C/o Chair, The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee
The University of Auckland Research Office
Private Bag 92019
Auckland 1142
humanethics@auckland.ac.nz
09 373 7599 ext. 87830/83761

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 03.09.13 FOR 3 YEARS. REFERENCE NUMBER 10005.
Appendix 6  Consent form

CONSENT FORM

THIS FORM WILL BE HELD FOR A PERIOD OF 6 YEARS

Project title: Quality of urban life when living at higher densities

I have read the Participant Information Sheet, have understood the nature of the research and why I have been selected to take part. I understand the voluntary nature of the participation. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction.

I agree to take part in this research.

I understand that the research involves a 45-minute to 1-hour interview and that I will be asked the questions provided by Natalie Allen on the ‘Interview Questions’ Information Sheet.

I understand that I am free to withdraw my participation at any time during the interview. I understand that I am free to withdraw from the research up to 2 weeks after the date of the interview, following notification to Natalie Allen by email at natalie.allen@auckland.ac.nz

I understand that the information I provide will be used by Natalie Allen to write her PhD thesis and for the purposes of writing academic publications.

However, my name and address will not be listed in any publications or shared with any third parties to ensure anonymity and confidentiality.

I agree to be digitally voice recorded for this interview.

I understand that the recording will be transcribed by a transcription specialist who will be required to sign a confidentiality agreement. My name and address will be deleted before them being given my recording. I understand that the research will be kept for 6 years, after which it will be destroyed.

Name ____________________________

Signature __________________________ Date __________________

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 03.09.13 FOR 3 YEARS. REFERENCE NUMBER 10005.
Appendix 7  Interview questions

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Project title: Quality of urban life when living at higher densities

Section 1: Household structure, dwelling tenure, current employment and travel habits

1. Please describe who lives in your home, their ages and relationship to you?
2. Do you own your home or is it a rental property?
3. Where in Auckland do you and others living with you currently work?
4. What methods of transport do you and the people living with you each use to travel to work most days?

Section 2: Housing experiences and aspirations

5. How long have you lived in your current home?
6. Why did you move to your current home?
7. Did the type of house you currently live in affect your choice for moving?
8. Where were you living before you moved to your current home? Please state the city and suburb.
9. What type of house did you used to live in? Please refer to the attached ‘CARD A – HOUSING TYPES.’
10. Where do you see yourself living in 5 years’ time? [or what are your long term housing aspirations]
11. What type of house do you see yourself living in? Please refer to the attached ‘CARD A – HOUSING TYPES.’
12. Why would you like to live here?
13. If you couldn’t live there, where else might you be happy to live?

Section 3: Neighbourhood satisfaction

14. What area do you define as your neighbourhood?
15. What do you like about living in your neighbourhood?
16. What do you dislike about living in your neighbourhood?
17. How do you think your neighbourhood could be improved?

Section 4: Quality of urban life

18. What do the words ‘quality of life’ mean to you?
19. When you hear the words ‘quality of urban life’ does this mean the same or something different to you?
20. How do you think your neighbourhood affects your quality of urban life?
Section 5: Urban amenities

21. When you hear the term “urban amenities,” what do think this term means?
22. What do you think the role of urban amenities are in the neighbourhood?
23. Can you please identify the urban amenities in your neighbourhood under the following categories and talk about where they are and how often you use them?

A. **FOOD-RELATED AMENITIES** e.g. for your daily and/or weekly food shopping, restaurants, takeaways, café’s, and bars
B. **SERVICES** e.g. medical services, financial services, maintenance/vehicle services, petrol stations, beauty services
C. **RETAIL AMENITIES** e.g. clothing and gift shops, homemakers, electronics and home appliances
D. **CULTURAL AMENITIES** e.g. theatres, art galleries, performance spaces
E. **RECREATION AMENITIES** e.g. sports clubs and grounds, natural amenities, walking/running/cycling tracks
F. **COMMUNITY FACILITIES** e.g. libraries and faith centres
G. **PUBLIC SPACES** e.g. parks, reserves, courtyards, and plazas
H. **EDUCATION AMENITIES** e.g. schools, childcare, age care, training facilities
I. **PUBLIC TRANSPORT FACILITIES** e.g. bus stops and train stations

24. Are there any **OTHER** urban amenities that are outside your neighbourhood that you consider to be important? i.e. museums, sporting facilities, shopping facilities, natural resources
25. Which of the above categories is the most important for you?
26. What amenities are you aware of in your neighbourhood that you might not use but you think may be useful for other residents?
27. How often do you use the urban amenities in your neighbourhood?
28. How do you usually travel to these amenities? (i.e. walk, cycle, car, bus, train)
29. How much would you say you value the urban amenities in your neighbourhood? It may help to first explain what you understand the word ‘value’ to mean when considering urban amenities.
30. How easy do you think it is to access the urban amenities you use and value?
31. Does accessibility affect how you value the urban amenities in your neighbourhood?
32. How do you think the urban amenities in your neighbourhood contribute to your quality of urban life?
33. If the numbers of higher density developments in your neighbourhood increased, what additional urban amenities do you think the area would need?
34. Do you think there is a link between what urban amenities people value and their life stage? Can you talk about this for me – what do you think this means for your neighbourhood?

Section 6: Urban intensification and density

35. When you hear the term ‘urban intensification’ can you describe what this makes you think of?
36. And what about the term ‘density’?
37. How do you feel about intensification in your neighbourhood?
38. How do you think intensification might change your neighbourhood?
39. Looking at CARD A – HOUSING TYPES, what housing types would be acceptable to you if this neighbourhood were to intensify?
40. Do you think your neighbourhood is typical of Auckland or is Auckland as a whole city different?
41. Do you think there is a link between the role of urban amenities in your neighbourhood and whether or not intensification is successful?
42. Did you have any final comments you’d like to make about urban amenities or about this research?
| A. | Standalone house on a large site (>400 m²) |
| B. | Standalone house on small site (≤400 m²) |
| C. | Double or triple unit |
| D. | Cluster housing |
| E. | Terraced housing |
| F. | Low-rise apartments (3 to 5 storeys) |
| G. | High-rise apartments (6 or more storeys) |
| H. | Other (please describe) |
Appendix 8  Transcriber confidentiality agreement

TRANSCRIBER CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

Project title: Quality of urban life when living at higher densities

Researcher: Natalie Allen

Supervisor: Professor Errol Haarhoff

Transcriber: Insert name and email

I agree to transcribe the audiotapes for the above research project. I understand that the information contained within them is confidential and must not be disclosed to, or discussed with, anyone other than the researcher and her supervisor(s).

Name: _____________________________

Signature: ___________________________

Date: _____________________________

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 03.09.13 FOR 3 YEARS. REFERENCE NUMBER 10005.
Appendix 9  Core categories identified during open coding

Categories identified while coding the literature review:

- Urban growth management
- Urban form, density, and typology
- Liveability/quality of life /quality of urban life
- Compact City/Urban consolidation/Intensification/MUL/Greenbelt
- Brownfield vs. greenfield/Infill + refill
- Mixed Use/Higher density/Attached housing/Attached typologies
- Demographics/Dwelling patterns/Supply + demand
- Housing choices/Housing experiences/Housing aspirations/Trade-offs
- Neighbourhood satisfaction
- Urban amenity and amenities

Categories identified during the open coding of the interview data and transferred into NVivo:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Housing Choices + Aspirations</th>
<th>Quality of Urban Life/ Neighbourhood Satisfaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Typologies experienced</td>
<td>Definition</td>
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<td>o Standalone house large site</td>
<td>o Broad scale meaning</td>
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<tr>
<td>o Standalone house small site</td>
<td>o Relationship to neighbourhood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Double or triple unit</td>
<td>o Quality of urban life</td>
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<tr>
<td>o Terraced housing</td>
<td>o Same understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Low-rise apartment (three- to five-storeys)</td>
<td>o Different understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o High-rise apartments (six or more storeys)</td>
<td>o Definitions of neighbourhood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Other</td>
<td>o Immediate suburb</td>
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<tr>
<td>o Proximity or ease of access to work</td>
<td>o Larger parts of Auckland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Affordability (of neighbourhood)</td>
<td>o Neighbourhood likes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Life stage</td>
<td>o Vibe + Environmental factors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Pre-family</td>
<td>o People + Human connectivity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Family</td>
<td>o Accessibility + Proximity + Physical connectivity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Post-family + Retirement</td>
<td>o Convenience + Urban amenities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Typology</td>
<td>o None + Unsure</td>
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<tr>
<td>o Yes</td>
<td>o Neighbourhood dislikes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Affordability</td>
<td>o Vibe + Environmental factors</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Ease of maintenance</td>
<td>o People + Human connectivity</td>
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<td>- Safety + security</td>
<td>o Accessibility + Proximity + Physical connectivity</td>
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<td>o No</td>
<td>o Dis-amenities + Lacking amenities</td>
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<tr>
<td>o Ownership + social pressure or suburban hegemony</td>
<td>o Lacking Infrastructure</td>
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<tr>
<td>o Neighbourhood improves</td>
<td>o None + Unsure</td>
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<tr>
<td>o Additional + Improved amenities</td>
<td>o Neighbourhood improvements</td>
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<tr>
<td>o Additional + Improved Infrastructure</td>
<td>o Housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Housing</td>
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<td>o Relationships between neighbourhood and quality of life</td>
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<td>o Vibe + Environmental factors</td>
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<td>o People + Human connectivity</td>
<td>o People + Human connectivity</td>
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<td>o Accessibility + Proximity + Physical connectivity</td>
<td>o Accessibility + Proximity + Physical connectivity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Convenience + Urban amenities</td>
<td>o Convenience + Urban amenities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Urban Amenities

- Definitions
  - All services + infrastructure
  - Council provided only
  - Other definitions
  - Unsure

- Perceived role
  - Links to life stage + ethnography
  - Links to quality of life i.e. accessibility and convenience
  - Links to sense of community
  - Links to urban intensification
  - Related to lifestyle

- Specific amenity experiences and perceptions
  - Community facilities
    - Libraries
    - Faith centres
    - Community recreational facilities i.e. pool
  - Education
    - Age care
    - Childcare
    - Not relevant
    - Primary Schools
    - High Schools
    - Tertiary
    - Training facilities
  - Entertainment and Cultural Amenities
    - Art galleries
    - Casino and gambling
    - Clubs and dancing
    - Concert facilities
    - Movies
    - Theatres
  - Food-related amenities
    - Bars
    - Cafes
    - Dairy or corner store
    - Markets
    - Restaurants
    - Specialty food shops
    - Supermarkets
    - Takeaway
  - Natural Amenities i.e. beach or lake
  - Parking
  - Public Spaces
    - Courtyards and plazas
    - Parks and reserves
    - Playgrounds
  - Public Transport
    - Bus
    - None (and reasoning)
    - Train
    - Walking, running, cycling commute
  - Recreation Amenities
    - Gyms
    - Pools
    - Sports clubs and grounds
  - Walking, running, cycling tracks
  - Regional Scale Amenities
    - Retail Amenities
      - Clothing Stores
      - Electronics and home appliances
      - Gift Shops
      - Homewares
      - Malls
      - Online
      - Other town centres
      - Overseas
    - Services
      - Beauty services
        - Hair dresser
        - Other beauty services
      - Financial services
        - Bank (including ATM)
        - Online
        - Lawyer + Accountant
      - Medical services
        - Hospital
        - Doctor
        - Dentist
        - Optometrist
        - Chemist
      - Vehicle services
        - Maintenance or repairs + WOF
        - Petrol stations
  - Favourite types of urban amenities
  - Awareness but not use of amenities
  - Links between different categories of urban amenities
  - Perceived value
  - Access to amenities
  - Food
    - Travel methods to work
      - Car
      - Public transport
      - Cycling
      - Walking
      - Other
    - Travel methods to urban amenities
      - Car
      - Public transport
      - Cycling
      - Walking
      - Other
  - Additional amenities if intensification
    - Additional specifics
    - Already enough amenities for intensification
    - Concerns with additional amenities
    - More of the same or more of everything
  - Relationship between the success of urban intensification and urban amenities
Urban intensification and density

- Definitions of urban intensification and density
- Perceptions of Intensification (including relationship to neighbourhood)
  - Concerned about busyness and/or crowding
  - Concerned about height
  - Mixed
  - More of the same
  - Negative (no reasoning given)
  - Opinions about other people’s perceptions
  - Other (including demographic and ethnographic changes)
  - Sees potential positive benefits or thinks it’s a natural progression

- Additional socio-cultural findings
  - Comparing Auckland Suburbs (each suburb requires specific intensification)
  - Comparing Auckland to other cities
  - Council related
  - Pavlova paradise
  - Mixed
  - More of the same
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<th>Created By</th>
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Appendix 11: Interviewee attribute categories used in NVivo

- **Location**
  - Takapuna
  - Kingsland
  - Botany
  - Te Atatu Peninsula

- **Current housing typology**
  - Terraced housing
  - Low-rise apartment (three- to five-storeys)
  - High-rise apartments (six or more storeys)

- **Age range** (exact ages also?)
  - 19-34
  - 35-54
  - 55-74
  - 75+

- **Gender**
  - Male
  - Female

- **Ethnicity**
  - New Zealander
  - Other

- **Place of Origin**

- **Partner**
  - Yes
  - No

- **Dependent Children**
  - 0
  - 1
  - 2

- **Other Occupants**
  - 0
  - 1
  - 2

- **Dwelling tenure**
  - Own
  - Rent

- **Employment Location (Same vs. different suburb)**
  - Same suburb
  - Different suburb

- **Employment Location (Specific suburb)**

- **Travel method to work**
  - Car
  - Public transport
  - Cycling
  - Walking
  - Other

- **Time in current home**
  - 0-1 years
  - 1-2 years
  - 3-4 years
  - 4-5 years
  - 6+ years

- **Previous suburb (same or other)**
  - Same as current suburb
  - Other

- **Previous suburb (specific)**

- **Suburb aspiration (same or other)**
  - Same as current suburb
  - Other

- **Suburb aspiration (specific)**

- **Typology aspiration (same or other)**
  - Same as current typology
  - Other

- **Typology aspiration (specific)**
  - Standalone house large site
  - Standalone house small site
  - Double or triple unit
  - Cluster housing
  - Terraced housing
  - Low-rise apartment (three- to five-storeys)
  - High-rise apartments (six or more storeys)
  - Other

- **Backup typology aspiration (specific)**
  - Standalone house large site
  - Standalone house small site
  - Double or triple unit
  - Cluster housing
  - Terraced housing
  - Low-rise apartment (three- to five-storeys)
  - High-rise apartments (six or more storeys)
  - Other

- **Acceptable typologies if neighbourhood intensifies**
  - Standalone house large site
  - Standalone house small site
  - Double or triple unit
  - Cluster housing
  - Terraced housing
  - Low-rise apartment (three- to five-storeys)
  - High-rise apartments (six or more storeys)
  - Other
Appendix 12 Sample memos