

Hearing Stream 2 Submission

Antony Kitchener and Simin Littschwager

Introduction

- Originally from England and Germany respectively
- Have lived in Wellington for 13 years
- Suffered the indignity of renting in Brooklyn for 10 years
- Bought a moderately-sized bungalow in Ngaio, for a less-than moderately-size price, in 2020
- Initially wanted to live closer to town but were priced out of the inner suburbs
- Have come to love the “semi-urban” garden feel of the Western suburbs because of the large number of mature native trees and the amount of birdlife these suburbs support.

Introduction

- understand, and support in principle, the need for increased density in urban areas
- recognize the need for affordable spaces that allow people to feel at home in this city (rather than merely being housed)
- we do not support the scale of intensification that would be enabled by declaring the Johnsonville rail line as rapid transit and allowing at least six storey buildings to be built within 15-minute walking catchments of its stations
- We do not believe that the suburbs on along the Johnsonville Line have been effectively consulted with regarding the proposal change from medium to high density.

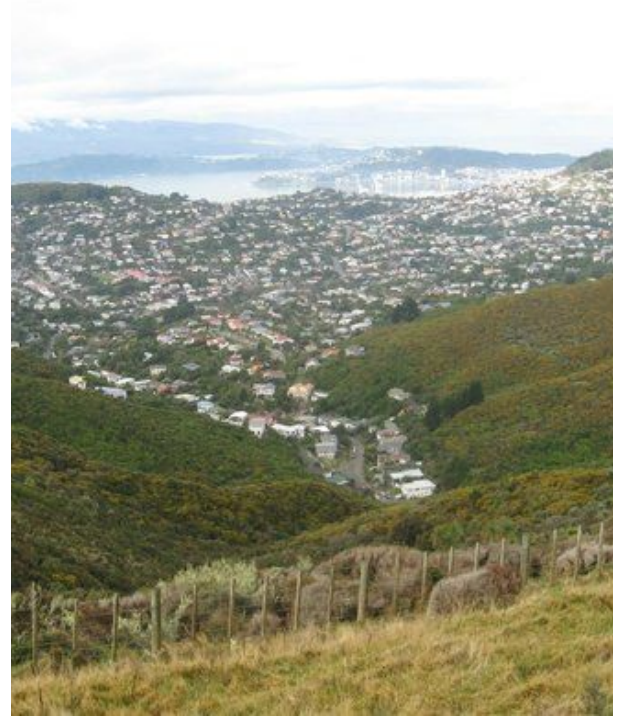
Ngaio

“Ngaio’s quiet and intensely green character belies its location as a 15-minute train ride from the Central City. Mature native and exotic trees, within both the public and private realm, give this suburb its notably leafy structure and evoke its history of timber industry.”

“Located in an inland valley, Ngaio’s western slopes, which lead up to the Outer Green Belt, are markedly steeper than its more gradual, undulating eastern half.”

“Views toward the escarpment banks within this green corridor from residences and public spaces are a major contributor to Ngaio’s natural feel.”

“Large lot sizes (measuring around 800 – 1000 m²) are married with low site coverage”



Ngaio - our backyard



“Steeper than the eastern half of Ngaio, a strong green character is created along the western slopes by informal vegetation grown almost entirely in the private realm. Houses along these sloping sections have the feeling of being tucked into the regenerating bush of the Outer Green Belt.”

Beca Western Suburbs Evaluation,
March 2020/

Ngaio - our backyard

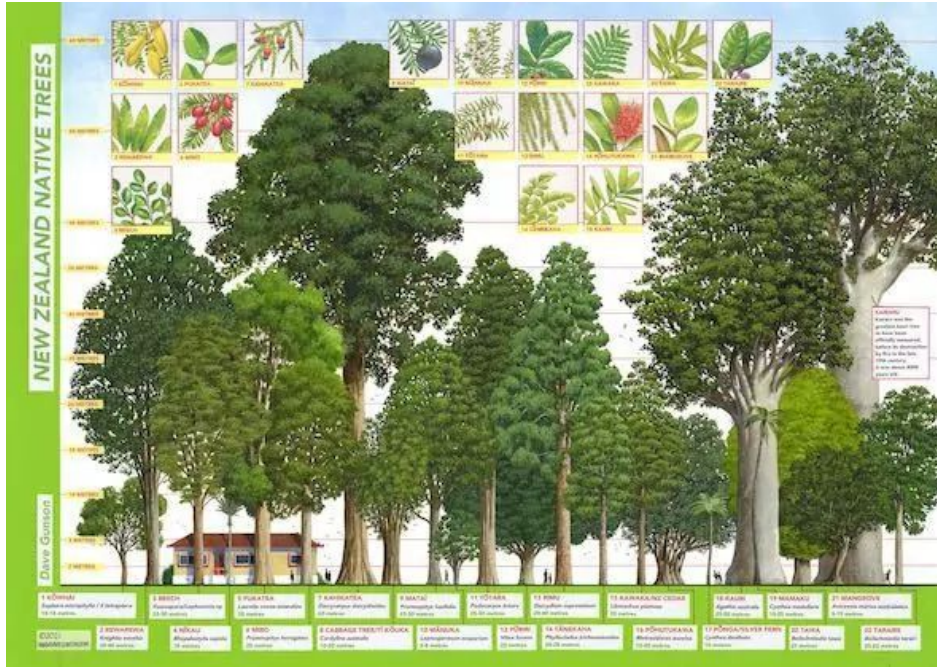
We regularly see and/or hear all of these [mostly] native birds in our backyard:



Plus all of the other exotic or introduced species that are regular visitors

Ngaio - our backyard

This abundance of birdlife is most likely due to an abundance of mature trees:



Mature trees are pillars of biodiversity in the ecosystem. They provide habitat for wildlife, nurseries for seeds to grow and facilitate vital soil processes.

Trees provide food, water, shelter and nesting sites for birds. They allow birds to spread out and can tie in wildlife corridors. Birds spread seeds and help with forest regeneration. Planting different species gives birds many options to suit their preferences.

The Original Draft Spatial Plan

Our City Tomorrow - Draft Spatial Plan for Wellington City

Planning for Growth

Absolutely Positively Wellington City Council
Me Heke Ki Pōneke

How to use this document | Summary | Table of Contents | Overview | Goals & Directions | Central City | Inner Suburbs | **Outer Suburbs**

Submissions closed

Outer Suburbs

Ngaio

What is anticipated here?

- **Mixed use and apartment buildings (type 4b):** At least **6 storeys** enabled in the Ngaio commercial centre and within a **5-minute walking catchment** of railway stations.
- **Medium density housing (type 2):** **2-3 storey terrace type** housing within convenient walking distance to good public transport links.
- **Medium density** that is supported by a range of measures to promote good development, design and environmental outcomes, including:
 - Require resource consent for all **new multi-unit developments**, with a strong emphasis on building design and residential amenity and ensuring that new development makes a positive contribution to the neighbourhood.
 - Ensure new development within the **commercial centre** is designed and sited so that the **scale and bulk** of buildings

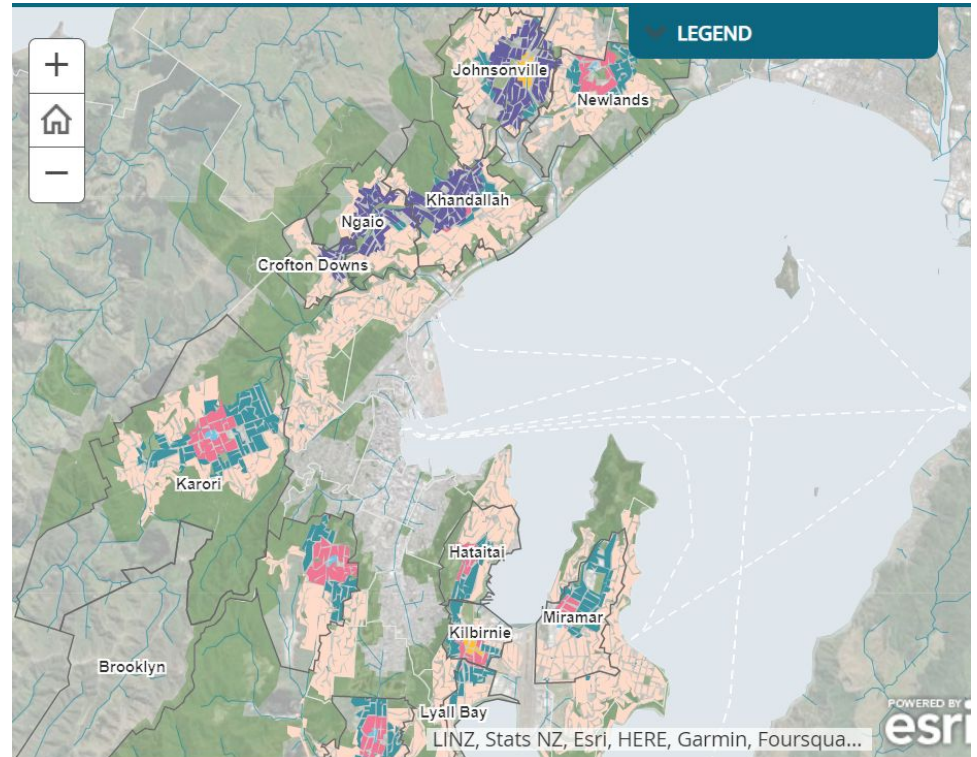
Source: Esri, Maxar, Earthstar Geographi... esri

The original draft spatial plan had a much smaller footprint of high density +6 storey buildings proposed

Proposed High Density along Johnsonville Rail line

- From adopted spatial plan
- Shows proposed high density for outer suburbs and clearly shows the increased level of high density (at least 6 storey) building types in the Western outer suburbs.

- Type 1: 1 to 2 storeys
- Type 2: 2 to 3 storeys
- Type 3: 3 to 4 storeys
- Type 4a: Up to 6 storeys (intensification area)
- Type 4b: Enable at least 6 storeys (walkable catchment)



Proposed High Density along Johnsonville Rail line

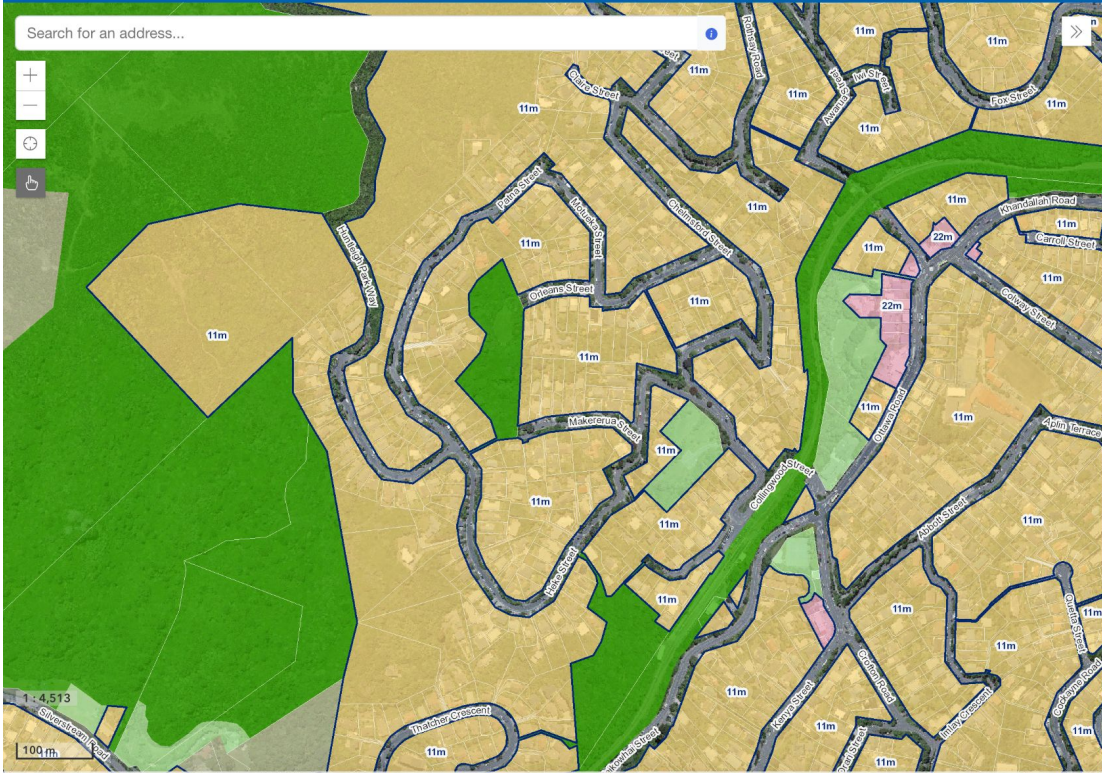
The High Density Residential Zone encompasses areas of the city located near to the City Centre Zone, ~~Johnsonville~~ Metropolitan Centre Zones and ~~Kenepuru and Tawa~~ railway stations. These areas are used predominantly for residential activities with a high concentration and bulk of buildings and other compatible activities.

Does it make sense to locate the bulk of Wellington's high density housing along a single track, vulnerable rail line?

Why are other suburbs, that are within easy walking distance to the CBD or easily accessible by public transport (i.e. buses) not also taking their fair share of high density development?

It is highly unfair to expect the Western suburbs to take the bulk of high density developments and poor planning based upon the over-reliance of a single track rail line that travels through steep terrain i.e. Ngaio gorge.

Search for an address...



Map Tools

Map Layers

- Zones
- Precincts
- Specific Controls
 - Active Frontages
 - Non-Residential Activity Frontage
 - Curtis Street Building Setback Controls
 - Height Control Areas
 - Horokiwi Area
 - Lyall Bay Parade Frontage Control
 - Minimum Sunlight Access - Public Space
 - Old St Paul's - Adjoining Building Control
 - Queens Wharf Buildings
 - Spenmoor Street Area
 - Tapu Te Ranga Site
 - Verandah Controls
 - Waterfront Areas of Change
 - Waterfront Public Open Space
- Energy Infrastructure and

Legend

Help

Medium Density - Beca Outer Suburbs Density Assessment & Evaluation

“Ngaio has limited collections of shops predominately on the western edge of Ottawa Road and the lack of a main street results in a gateway landscape character for the community. There is no supermarket in the neighbourhood, and residents travel to Crofton Downs, Johnsonville or Thorndon for groceries.”

“It was acknowledged that the existing road networks on the upper slopes of Ngaio are narrow and would not support medium density without a possible negative impact on the road network. Hence the medium Category 2 density is limited to the areas that are walkable to the rail stations and Ottawa Road.”

“Ngaio’s low infrastructure investment requirements makes some medium density possible. These factors support limited medium density development in Ngaio.”

Why has there not been a similar suburb assessment undertaken that demonstrates the feasibility of high density in these suburbs since the change to high density has been proposed? Where is the evaluation of the positive or negative impacts of high density in Ngaio?

Impacts of HD in a MD Suburb Evaluation

Traffic congestion - Field of Dreams this isn't

- 9,500 people live within a 10 min walk of a Jville Line station and 40,000 people within a 10 min cycle
- around 1200 boardings Avg. AM peak inbound
- over 50% of people living within a 10-minute walk of stations on the Johnsonville line who work in Wellington CBD travel to work by car;
- around 150 people live within 1km (a 10-minute walk) of their boarding station and drive to station

Wellington Transport Analytics Unit - Johnsonville Line Station Access Evidence Base



What will be the impact of all the non-work related journeys where people need to actually use their cars?

How is train use to be incentivised or car use disincentivised for high density development? Will a congestion charge be introduced?

Google Maps Estimated Walking Times - Inner/Outer Suburbs

Suburb	Estimated Walking Time to Civic Square	Suburb	Estimated Walking Time to Civic Square
Ngaio	1h19m (6.5km)	Kelburn	18m (2km)
Khandallah	1h19m (7.9km)	Hataitai	37m (3.7km)
Karori	58m (5.4km)	Miramar	1h17m (7km)
Brooklyn	30m (2.4km)	Mt Cook	20m (1.9km)
Aro Valley	18m (1.5km)	Newtown	40m (4.1km)
Mt Victoria	17m (1.6km)	Thorndon	21m (1.9km)

Impacts of HD in a MD Suburb Evaluation

Resilience of Johnsonville Rail Line

- The single track travels through a steep-sided gorge between Wellington and Crofton Downs station
- Between 2004 and 2009, the Johnsonville line experienced 14 slips blocking the track, plus 2 train derailments (www.taic.co.nz (transport accident investigation commission))

A new climate change report shows rainfall in Wellington could increase by up to 40 per cent during the most extreme bursts of weather, leading to more severe flash flooding and slips.

The region experienced its wettest winter on record this year, which resulted in hundreds of slips falling across Wellington City.

The city council received 1143 calls reporting slips throughout July and August – three times the amount of last year, and six times the amount of 2020.

Impacts of HD in a MD Suburb Evaluation (BECA Report 2020)

Loss of Biodiversity and Landscape Character

“There are some character values that are typical of Wellington outer neighbourhoods. Wellington’s rolling landscape of valleys, hills and coastal escarpment create a high degree of green landscape viewed from most houses and the public realm...”

“Not many of the fifteen Wellington outer neighbourhoods have a significant number of mature street trees compared to other flatter cities around New Zealand”

“It is interesting to note in the less coastal neighbourhoods that there are a large number of mature trees on private property (especially in Ngaio and Khandallah) that significantly contribute to the green image of both the community and to Wellington in general.”

“Due to the lack of street trees in these neighbourhoods, these large mature trees...have a significant role in providing the positive green image on the public realm and streetscape”.

Impacts of HD in a MD Suburb Evaluation

Loss of Biodiversity and Landscape Character

Given the loss of the consenting process for all builds except multiple story apartments, how is this loss of biodiversity and character amenity going to be controlled? Mature trees are not easily replaced once lost.

	precinct.
HRZ-P9	Permeable surface Require development to provide a minimum level of permeable surface to assist with reducing the rate and amount of storm water run-off.

Appendix A - High Density Residential Zone

With the proposal to remove the permeable surface requirement from HDRZ, MDRZ and LLRZ, presumably this precludes any requirement to retain plant life in any form, including mature trees.


In light of the recent devastation wrought by flooding in Auckland and cyclone Gabrielle, is more hard surfaces what Wellington needs?

Impacts of HD in a MD Suburb Evaluation

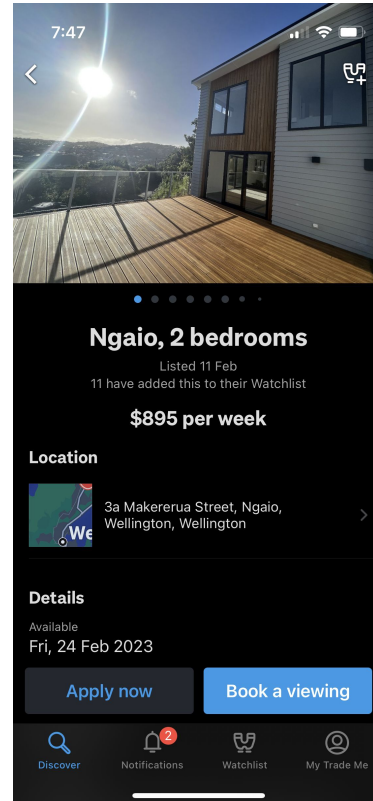
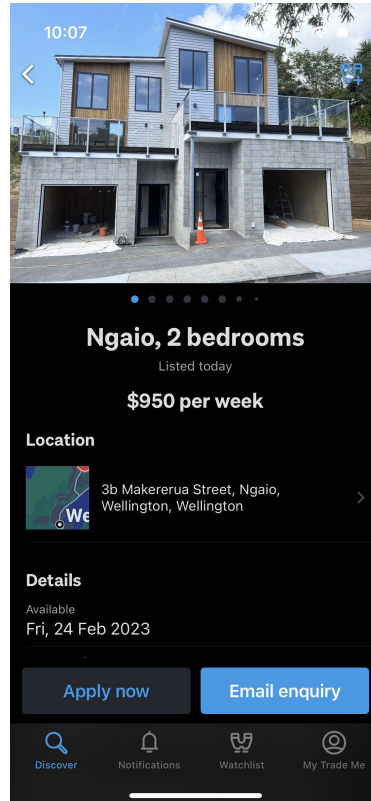
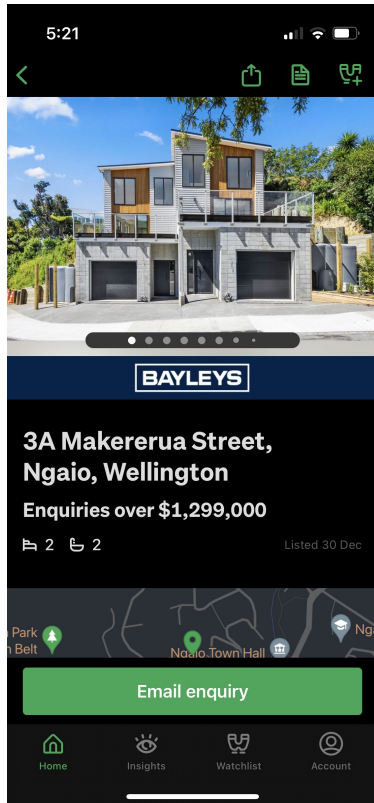
Loss of Biodiversity and Landscape Character

HRZ-P10P9 Vegetation and landscaping

Encourage the retention of existing vegetation, particularly native vegetation and visually prominent trees that may not otherwise be protected, and where vegetation is proposed to be removed, seek new landscaping of equal or better quality to help integrate new development into the surrounding environment and minimise hard surfacing.

HRZ-S9 	Landscaped area
<p>1. A residential unit at ground floor level must have a landscaped area of a minimum of 20% of a developed site with grass or plants, and can include the canopy of trees regardless of the ground treatment below them.</p> <p>2. The landscaped area may be located on any part of the site, and does not need to be associated with each residential unit.</p> <p>This standard does not apply to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Multi-unit housing.b. Retirement villages.	<p>Assessment Criteria where the standard is infringed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">1. Streetscape and visual amenity effects; and2. Hard surfacing is minimised as far as practicable.

Increased supply and density does not equal affordability



Large Lot Residential Zones

- The PDP describes Large Lot residential zones as being:

“... for lower density development on typically larger sites which are located on the periphery of the urban area. The zone provides a transition from the medium density residential zone to the rural zone. It allows people to live in a semi-urban area with an enhanced sense of privacy that is not always available within the residential areas.”
- Where is the logic in developing a gorse-covered hillside into a semi-urban zone, while destroying the biodiversity of another suburb which currently fits the definition of a semi-urban zone with its mature native trees and houses on large lots, to convert it to high density, especially considering people live here for these very semi-urban characteristics.



Photo of Ngaio townhall By Roue2 - Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=77655775>

Shifting Goalposts



However, during the meeting Mayor Andy Foster put forward an amendment to remove the Johnsonville train line from the rapid transit list, meaning densification along this route would be made harder.

Including this train line would have meant buildings within its walking catchment would be allowed to reach six storeys, which would be “a big change” to the face of the city. Foster said a decision like that needed more consideration.



In Summary

- How many cities concentrate the bulk of their high density residential areas several kilometres outside the city?
- Clearly from the documents we have linked to in this submission - the Beca outer suburbs and Wellington Transport analytics report - a more holistic focus is needed when looking at high density, rather than this single focus on the Johnsonville rail line.
- Good planning and controls need to be in place to ensure there are good outcomes for everybody, not just developers. Once the damage is done, it will be too late to counteract the negative impacts or downstream effects of density done poorly.
- Looking at the Expert Submitter list for Hearing Stream 2, this process appears to be unfairly weighted in favour of wealthy and powerful lobbying groups without sufficient consideration for residents.