

The Grey Lynn Residents Association makes the following submission to the Productivity Commission draft report on land for housing:

In the report the Commission has noted that:

‘Urban planning decisions, such as maintaining “our heritage and distinctive identity” . . . is not without a significant opportunity cost. Like height or other density restrictions, maintaining the heritage character of large parts of residential suburbs close to the city centres has a cost in terms of the ability to economise on the use of land, with consequent costs for individuals and the community.”
(p.43)

The GLRA believes that this is an unbalanced statement that does not take into account the broader economic and social values of heritage and special character. We believe that the Commission has failed to recognise the benefits to the community and the economy that heritage and special character areas provide. In cities including Melbourne, Sydney and San Francisco, inner suburban neighbourhoods with intact character housing are places that both tourists and locals flock to. They give these cities a distinct identity and add vibrancy and interest to these urban environments. These areas attract visitors who bring money into the local economy.

The parts of the Auckland covered by heritage and special character overlays provide attractive and historically interesting parts of the city that add considerably to the appeal of Auckland as a tourist destination and as a place to live. The historic heritage character and amenity of these parts of Auckland contribute to the economic value of these places as these suburbs are considered to be highly desirable places to live.

The inner suburbs of Auckland, including Grey Lynn, are home to the largest intact collection of late nineteenth and early twentieth century timber dwellings in the world, and without the protection afforded by heritage and special character overlays their continued existence is threatened. Without these unique areas, Auckland could become just another city – a place where tourists have little reason to linger and where locals have little sense of a collective city identity.

The retention of the heritage and special character areas of Auckland will have little impact on the availability of land for housing, particularly for social housing. Typically these areas already have small residential section sizes and they represent only a very small area of the Auckland urban area. These places are generally amongst the most expensive real estate in Auckland and this reduces the likelihood of property developers accumulating sufficient land to carry out the type of intensive development that Auckland needs.

The GLRA believes that the economic and social benefits of retaining heritage and special character areas well outweighs the cost of allowing redevelopment in these areas. We see that these economic and social benefits extend well beyond these areas, as these places help to give all Aucklanders an understanding of their history.

We would like to thank the Commission for the opportunity to make this submission.

Grey Lynn Residents Association
4 August 2015