
PAVLOVA PARADISE AND THE CURSE OF THE SIDE YARD

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One definition of madness is to do the same thing over and over again, and expect a different outcome. New Zealand has a housing problem and this will not change if the same housing model is constructed time after time. To build better, therefore, we need to think different, and we need to build different.

The New Zealand housing model is that of a suburban ideal, developed in the last century and heavily related to the use of the automobile. Oil has a limited future, and our suburbs cannot keep expanding forever. District Plan standards that dictate the size and shape of individual sections and the houses we build upon them are outdated and need to be changed to reflect our changing needs and wants. To build a better New Zealand, we need to change our District Plans.

This paper explores the possibilities of density within the New Zealand suburban housing model, using examples of successful housing developments that have created desirable homes at densities higher than those in our recent history. It looks at issues of mandatory side yards, front yards and other setbacks, to ascertain how our cities can avoid aesthetic blandness and spatial wastage by challenging some of the basic premises that our “pavlova paradise” has been created on. Projects such as The Waterfront in Seatoun, Wellington, and the Beaumont Quarter in Auckland are used as examples in how an alternative vision for New Zealand can be encapsulated within New Zealand planning law.

References -

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