Housing Choice and Preference: A Review of the Literature

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Bianca Wildish
Research and Evaluation Unit
Auckland Council

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1.0   Executive Summary

Auckland requires a range of housing solutions to meet the needs of a growing and diverse population. This literature review supports *The Housing We'd Choose* research by providing background reading on concepts of housing choice, preference and trade-offs and places the research within the wider New Zealand housing research context.

While housing 'choice' relates to the real decisions and trade-offs that people make, housing 'preference' has a more aspirational and long-term orientation. When choosing a housing option, decision-makers are subject to a variety of influences and must make various trade-offs. The process of choosing can encompass the interlinked influences of preference, market conditions, availability, government regulations, real estate agents, friends, family as well as both internal and external personal factors such as lifestyle and socio-economic status (Coolen, Jansen, and Goetgeluk, 2011; Levy, Murphy and Lee, 2008).

Theoretical approaches to residential mobility and housing choice have shifted from a 'life-cycle' (Rossi, 1955) to a 'life-course' framework where life events stemming from individual life course trajectories inform housing preferences and needs, while household constraints and resources determine the degree to which preferences can be fulfilled (Feijten, 2005).

Revealed preferences are often used as a proxy to measure (past) housing choices, focussing on the outcomes of the choice process, while 'stated' preferences are attentive to housing preferences, desires and aspirations (Mulder, 1996; Timmermans, Molin, and van Noortwijk, 1994).

Choice does not exist in a vacuum; there are numerous factors and constraints involved in the selection of housing, location being key (Allen, 2015; Maré et al., 2011; Saville-Smith and James, 2010). While studies highlight a strong bias towards stand-alone houses and lower density suburban living (Haarhoff et al., 2012; Saville-Smith and James, 2010), there is evidence that higher-density living appeals to some. It is often a trade-off that people make to be situated in a preferred location, close to amenities and facilities (Allen, 2015; Carroll et al., 2011; Preval et al., 2010; UMR, 2009).

Previous research has explored people's unconstrained preferences, based on responses to the existing housing stock in Auckland. No research has tested the actual housing choices and trade-offs that people would make, within a price and income constrained context, if a broader variety of housing options were available across Auckland. *The Housing We'd Choose* research works to address this gap.

2.0 Introduction

Auckland requires a range of housing solutions to meet the needs of a growing and diverse population. With a current estimated population of 1.5 million, Auckland is the largest metropolitan area in New Zealand. Population projections released by Statistics New Zealand indicate that the population could reach 2 million by 2033 (Statistics New Zealand, 2015). Population growth places pressure on housing availability and competition for housing has also influenced housing affordability. In addition, Auckland's diverse population has different housing requirements, which are not always understood or met by the market.

Historically, Auckland's housing landscape has been dominated by low-density, detached dwellings on reasonably large lots. In order to accommodate a rapidly growing population, the planning focus in recent decades has been directed towards encouraging medium and high density multi-unit housing in the vicinity of urban centres and transport nodes (Auckland Regional Growth Forum, 1999; Dixon and Dupuis, 2003).

The *Auckland Plan*, a 30-year vision for Auckland, identifies 'increasing housing choice that can meet diverse preferences and needs' as a key priority for ensuring that Auckland is the most liveable city in the world (Auckland Council, 2012). In line with this priority, and with other strategic directions set out in the *Auckland Plan*, the *Proposed Auckland Unitary Plan* (PAUP) encourages the future development of a range of housing options, through setting out the framework of what can be built, and where it can be built (Auckland Council, 2013). This necessitates urban designers, planners and developers to work together to create quality neighbourhoods that offer diversity in housing choice and improve housing affordability.

2.1 Background to this literature review

Understanding the choices and trade-offs that households make between location, dwelling size and dwelling type is an essential step in the process of encouraging and increasing a range of housing choices across Auckland, as identified in the Research and Evaluation Unit's *Research Strategy 2013-2016* (Auckland Council, 2015). To that end, RIMU has commissioned a substantial research project titled *The Housing We'd Choose: A study of preferences, choices and trade-offs in Auckland* (Yeoman and Akehurst, 2015). This project replicates previous studies undertaken in Australia (Kelly, Weidmann and Walsh, 2011; Department of Housing and Department of Planning in Western Australia, 2013) and has been modified to suit the Auckland context.

The Housing We'd Choose aims to investigate the housing choices that people say they would make, if it was available, compared to Auckland's existing housing stock as well as the type of homes that are currently being built. The primary benefit of this research is that

it will provide Auckland Council with a new and applied understanding of the demand side of the housing equation in both an unconstrained and price constrained context.

The aim of this literature review is to support *The Housing We'd Choose* research by providing background reading on concepts of housing choice, preference and trade-offs, and to place the research within the wider housing research context in Aotearoa New Zealand.

It comprises two main sections. The first section explores the concepts of housing 'choice' and 'preference' and outlines key theoretical and methodological approaches. The second section outlines the findings of previous relevant studies undertaken in New Zealand and identifies gaps. The focus is primarily on research that has been undertaken in New Zealand, but overseas literature is referenced in the conceptual frameworks section.

3.0 Conceptual Frameworks

This section starts with a discussion of the dynamics of the concept of housing 'choice', followed by an overview of the multiple influences on housing choice and the requirement to make trade-offs. Key theoretical approaches to understanding the drivers of residential mobility including the life-course and decision-making model are then described. The section ends with an overview of the concept of revealed and stated references – revealed preferences are often used as a proxy to measure (past) housing choices.

The understanding of the concept of 'choice' throughout the literature is inconsistent; often the terms housing 'choice' and 'preference' are used interchangeably. To an extent, the concepts are interrelated and they (in)form one another. However, there are important differences between housing 'choices' and housing 'preferences' which affect the theoretical and practical applications of the research. In short, while housing 'choice' relates to what people do in the housing environment they find themselves in and is attentive to the real decisions and trade-offs that people make, housing 'preference' has a more aspirational and long-term orientation.

3.1 The concept of housing choice

Broadly speaking, the term 'choice' elicits notions of responsibility, freedom and autonomy. However, choice is not devoid of limits and constraints. In simple terms, having a choice implies having the ability to pick from alternatives, even if the options are imperfect solutions. Additionally, it suggests the capacity to have preferences and to therefore differentiate between options.

Brown and King (2005) discuss choice as a concept in the housing context, drawing on Elster's (1986) theorising of rationality, which entails the interaction of three key dimensions - one's beliefs, desires and information sets. Tying these three dimensions together, Elster (2000, p. 145) states that rational choice is the principle that "people make the most out of what they have." Brown and King (2005) highlight the importance of this definition, as it emphasises the subjective nature of rationality, which is contingent on the decision-makers' beliefs, desires and access to information. Choice is subject to numerous constraints.

As explained in the *International Encyclopedia of Housing and Home*, the term 'real housing choice' has been coined as a critique of the use of the term 'housing choice', and is defined as "being able to choose a preferred option from a set of distinctive alternatives" (Brown and King, 2005; van Ham, 2012, p. 42). This acknowledges that distinctive alternatives are not accessible to everyone who actively searches the housing market, and that for many, their choice set is limited. Choice set is "the total set of realistic options available to households given their needs, preferences, resources, and restrictions, within the opportunities and constraints offered by the housing market" (van Ham, 2012, p. 42).

3.2   Influences on housing choice

When choosing a housing option, decision-makers are subject to a variety of influences and must make various trade-offs. The process of choosing can encompass the interlinked influences of preference, market conditions, availability, government regulations as well as both internal and external personal factors such as lifestyle and socio-economic status (Coolen, Jansen, and Goetgeluk, 2011). Realistic housing choice options are often limited by a myriad of factors which impact on consumer behaviour, including time constraints, culture, perception, motivation, goals, information-seeking behaviour and reference groups (Gibler and Nelson, 2003).

Due to such restrictions which confine households' dwelling choices, decisions do not always align with people's preferences (Jarvis, 2003; Vasanen, 2012). Dwellings are 'composite goods' and choosing a house typically involves households trading-off different dwelling characteristics (van Ham, 2012). The numerous features of a dwelling including its size, quality, and style cannot be independently bought (or rented). The package of characteristics also comprises the relative location of the house, including neighbourhood qualities, such as reputation and access to public amenities. For example, a household may choose a dwelling that satisfies their preference to be situated in a particular locality, but that does not meet their preference for size (number of bedrooms).

Seeking a new home is "a dynamic problem-solving process in which a relatively unfamiliar, complex, and ill-structured problem must be solved" (Coolen et al., 2011, p. 6). Those searching for a home do not typically have concrete, well defined preferences; rather, housing preference is (re)shaped during the problem-solving process. Coolen et al. (2011) explain problem-solving as comprising of a number of stages: recognition; formulation; designing and screening; choice; deliberating about commitment; action; and feedback (see Coolen et al. (2011) for a detailed description of each stage in the housing choice process). Furthermore, housing choice as problem-solving behaviour is centred on values and directed by goals (see Coolen and Hoekstra, 2001; Coolen et al., 2011; Jansen, 2014). Consumers choose how to decide through considering several goals, in particular: increasing the accuracy of their choice, reducing the cognitive effort required to make a decision, minimizing the experience of negative emotion, and maximizing the ease of justifying the decision (Bettman, Luce, and Payne, 1998, p. 193).

Furthermore, the decision-making process and final choice is often subject to the influence of others. Levy and Lee (2004) studied the impact of family members on housing purchase decisions through analysing estate agents' experiences. Building on this work, Levy, Murphy and Lee (2008) explored the process of housing choice at the level of the family. They contend that the process of purchasing a house is an "inherently social activity", encompassing goal setting, discussion and negotiation of family needs and wants, engaging with housing intermediaries, envisioning renovations to potential purchases as well as deducing market trends (Levy et al., 2008). Family structures, ethnicity, gender

roles and socio-economic status all play an influential role in shaping these activities. Focussing on both estate agents and adult family members who recently purchased a house, their study highlights the importance of other people in shaping the decision process. The involvement of extended family members and friends can intersect what was initially a logical search process and can generate unanticipated outcomes.

Estate agents are 'active participants in creating markets' in Auckland, and are often powerful in shaping housing choices (Levy et al., 2008, p. 277). Agents sometimes assume the role of 'friendly' advisor to families, particularly to those who find the decision process confusing.

Where previous studies on residential mobility tended to focus on the planned and calculated nature of housing choice and decision-making, Levy et al. (2008) offer a more nuanced perspective. Interviewees highlighted the strong influence of emotions in their decision strategies, expressing their search for houses that 'feel' right (p. 286). Hence choosing a property can be contingent on emotions which are hard to articulate; emotional influences are not inevitably irrational and might well be utility maximising, but nevertheless shape choices which are potentially challenging to forecast employing a traditional decision-making model.

3.3   Theoretical approaches to residential mobility and housing choice

At the time of its release, 'Why Families Move' (Rossi, 1955) was a seminal piece of work in theorising residential mobility and associated housing choice. Rossi connected the notion of a 'family life-cycle' to housing requirements and preferences, positing that different stages in the life-cycle correspond to the requirement of more, or less, space. These stages were based on the nuclear family model and included formation (living together/marriage), expansion (having children), contraction (children moving out), and dissolution (divorce or death of a spouse). However, the emergence of alternative household circumstances and life paths (people being single, childless, divorced, remarried etc.), has consequences for both short- and long-term housing choices.

Criticised for being too deterministic, normative and lacking compatibility with mobility research (Clark and Dieleman, 1996; Pickles and Davies, 1985) the 'life-cycle' approach has been superseded by the more holistic 'life-course' approach which is attentive to both micro and macro level processes; individuals and households as well as the housing market and broader society respectively (Kok, 2007). Life events stemming from individual life course trajectories inform housing preferences and needs, while household constraints and resources determine the degree to which preferences can be fulfilled (Feijten, 2005). Furthermore, a household's choice set is regulated by the opportunities and restrictions of the housing market as well as political, economic, and sociocultural conditions (Mulder and Hooimeijer, 1999). The life-course approach is advocated to provide "a framework for

studying phenomena at the nexus of social pathways, developmental trajectories, and social change" (Elder Jr, Johnson, and Crosnoe, 2003, p. 10).

Mulder (1996) asserts that bounded rationality underpins the housing choice process. The consideration of moving is not continuous, but is instigated by trigger events (change in occupational, familial or life-course circumstances) (Mulder, 1996).

Within the life-course framework, people engage in parallel, interwoven 'careers' across distinct life spheres. Four types of careers may explain residential mobility, namely, family, education, labour and housing (Coolen et al., 2011; Mulder and Hooimeijer, 1999). Each of these four careers can be triggers for moving house, and those which are not the actual trigger in a given circumstance are still influential in the choice to relocate (Mulder, 1993; Mulder and Hooimeijer, 1999). For instance, commencing university (educational career) may require a move if commuting is not a viable option (Clark and Onaka, 1983). The housing choice of a student typically would not be optimum from the housing career viewpoint.

Satisfying the triggering career can often have detrimental impacts on the careers of the individuals or those of other household members (Mulder and Hooimeijer, 1999). Moving house is an expensive and spatially strategic process which entails trade-offs and combining all the different household members' short- and long-term careers (Coolen et al., 2011).

The strength of the life-course perspective is that it allows for feedback effects between the intricacies of these life-course trajectories or careers. The work of Mulder (1993) also shows that these careers impact on households' urgency to move, the search-time, and consequently their familiarity and awareness of the market, the quantity of house attributes considered, the necessity to accept an option as well as the likelihood of actually moving.

3.4   Revealed preference as a proxy for understanding choice

The revealed preference theory was pioneered by American economist Paul Samuelson (Samuelson, 1938). It is a method of analysing choices made by individuals, mostly used for comparing the influence of different policies and practises on consumer behaviour. This method assumes that the preferences of consumers can be 'revealed' by their purchasing habits. Revealed preferences focus on the outcomes of the choice process, while 'stated' preferences are attentive to housing preferences, desires and aspirations (Mulder, 1996; Timmermans, Molin, and van Noortwijk, 1994).

With regard to attempts to understand housing choice and preference, studies of revealed preference principally involves examining how particular household types are distributed across different dwelling typologies, locations and tenure. The examination of revealed residential preferences is interlinked with understanding the form and development of the built landscape. Storper and Manville (2006) argue that as they are built over an extensive

period of time, urban spatial structures can be conceived of as an accumulation of past preferences. Preferences of numerous different interests over time and space including residents, developers, politicians, and urban planners, shape what housing is available to choose from. Relative to the existing stock, comparatively small amounts of new housing is constructed annually. What new dwellings are built is dictated by operative planning policies and a minority of home buyers, which in turn, as houses become occupied, determine which types of residential preferences are revealed (Myers and Gearin, 2001).

Investigating stated preferences fundamentally entails questioning people about how and where they would prefer to live, and can include the measurement of people's reactions to hypothetical house typologies. This approach can be regarded as problematic as people tend to alter their preferences to fit within the possibilities of their realistic choice set (van Ham, 2012). Stated preference and choice models are grounded on the principle that observed choices reflect the combined influences of market conditions, preferences and availability (Timmermans et al., 1994).

4.0   Applied Research: New Zealand Context

This section outlines housing studies that have been undertaken to date in Auckland and New Zealand, particularly those that explore housing aspirations and preferences. Most of the previous research undertaken has explored the experiences and aspirations of New Zealanders in a financially unconstrained context, and there has been quite a lot of specific work in Auckland of the experience of those living in medium density environments.

4.1   Complexity of factors in decision-making process

A number of different housing focussed studies have explored the complexity of factors involved in selecting a housing option in New Zealand (e.g. Filippova, 2009; Filippova and Rehm, 2011; Haarhoff and Beattie, 2013; Levy and Lee, 2011; Levy et al., 2008; Rehm, 2009; Rehm and Filippova, 2008; Walton, Murray, and Thomas, 2008).

People make choices between dwellings, location and tenure, within a rigidly constrained group of parameters (Saville-Smith and James, 2010). Housing choice is constrained by an array of factors such as the location of household members' work, education, families and friends as well as household income and available housing supply. Therefore navigating household need and resources alongside housing stock, price and location of available dwellings, results in extraordinarily subtle trade-offs (Saville-Smith and James, 2010). In their study of the tenure and locational choices of people aged 20 to 40 years in Auckland, Saville-Smith and James found that common trade-offs include between home ownership and rental in an attempt to access bigger or better located houses. Renters said that their choices were often price driven, providing examples of trading-off house condition and performance for a cheaper rental.

4.2   Underlying preference for detached dwellings

The dominant narrative around housing preference and choice in New Zealand continues to emphasise the goal of owning a stand-alone dwelling on a suburban private lot. This has been referred to as the 'quarter acre pavlova paradise' (Mitchell, 1972, 2013).

Previous studies that have explored housing preferences and aspirations (in an unconstrained context) have generally found a strong underlying preference for suburban living (with associated larger house size, more land, and stand-alone houses) and a willingness to accept a trade-off with longer travel time. For example, a national study undertaken in 2010 found that 53 per cent favoured a larger house further out of a city centre compared to 23 per cent who preferred a smaller dwelling in the city (Preval, Chapman, and Howden–Chapman, 2010). In terms of commuting and space trade-offs, 56 per cent favoured more space and a longer commuting time, whereas 15 per cent preferred a shorter commute and less space (Preval et al., 2010).

Additionally, research conducted on locational preferences as a component of its omnibus survey of 750 New Zealanders found that 39 per cent preferred to live in a suburb, 11 per cent preferred to live in a city centre and 22 per cent in a small town (UMR, 2009). Of the 49 per cent of residents located in the suburbs, 75 per cent signalled that this was their preference, and of the 13 per cent living in a central area, 64 per cent were happy with this location (UMR, 2009).

These findings suggest a strong underlying preference for suburban living in large, detached housing, as well as highlighting a significant minority which prefer centrally located smaller housing.

4.3   The importance of locational considerations

Location is found to be a driving factor in housing choice. In their study of tenure and location choices of younger households (households with a reference person in the 20–40 year old age bracket) in Auckland, Saville-Smith and James (2010) noted location to be the key driver of housing choice and therefore demand. They found that this demographic prioritised locations in which they feel safe, and to which they feel connected, as well as able to accommodate their privacy, space and comfort needs at an affordable price. When moving within Auckland, younger households were likely to seek dwellings in the vicinity of their current residence (particularly the case for lower resourced households).

Within the study discussed above, results showed a propensity for trade-offs between locality and dwelling characteristics. Three key dynamics were identified. First, affordability constraints are likely to limit households to specific localities, including their current location; location inherently recognises housing price and cost. Second, households' current location tends to reflect previous decisions to optimise needs and preferences which are likely to endure unless circumstances have substantially changed. Finally, households can have strong attachment to their current locale of residence. Other aspects of location which influenced decisions were tied to accessibility of public transport, green spaces, education and existing social ties.

Maré and Coleman (2011) analysed the location choices of new entrants to Auckland over a ten year period (1996-2006). Their aim was to discern whether a systematic relationship existed between residential location choices and features of local areas. These features included neighbourhood population density and composition, accessibility to diverse amenities, as well as housing and land affordability. Their findings highlight the significance of own-group attraction. Groups categorised by qualification, ethnicity, income or country of birth were all attracted to neighbourhoods in which their group had an extant strong presence. This aligns with other research that has emphasised ethnoburbs and ethnicity-based clustering as a notable feature of Auckland's spatial population distribution (Johnston, Poulsen, and Forrest, 2008, 2011; Maré, Coleman, and Pinkerton, 2011). Maré and Coleman's (2011) results reveal that this locational sorting is indicative of attraction to

fellow group members, as opposed to group members sharing the same preferences for local amenities.

Other studies conducted in Auckland have noted drivers of residential location choices. A common driver of choice is access to particular schools, this is supported by research conducted by Rehm and Filippova (2008). Additionally, Levy and Lee (2011) investigated the effect of neighbourhood identities and self-identity on household location choice. Their findings advocate that factors including self and suburb identity as well as housing availability of affordable and suitable dwellings, have a significant impact on neighbourhood choice.

4.4   Living in medium and high density housing

With the emergence of increased medium and high density housing options and developments in Auckland in recent decades, there has been quite a lot of research attention given to investigating who lives in these housing typologies, why they chose them, whether they would stay there and how they experience it (Haarhoff et al., 2012; Mead and McGregor, 2007; Syme, McGregor and Mead, 2005; Research Solutions and Auckland Regional Council, 2000).

Research has found that residents of medium density developments chose these dwellings because of their geographic proximity to everyday urban amenities that they valued (shops, restaurants, workplaces, schools, public transport and spaces), and the convenience this afforded (Haarhoff et al., 2012; Mead and McGregor, 2007; Syme, McGregor and Mead, 2005).

The *Building a Better Future* research (Research Solutions and Auckland Regional Council, 2000) asked higher density housing dwellers why they chose to live this way. Once again, location was the chief consideration, moderated by price. Other important reasons for this choice included security and low maintenance.

Walton, Murray and Thomas' (2008) study of population density and perceived quality of neighbourhoods highlighted a small but significant preference for medium-density neighbourhoods. Additionally it was noted that residents' trade-offs between features including transport accessibility, building aesthetics, security, and maintenance and place attachment at the scale of the neighbourhood, lead to insignificant variances in general levels of satisfaction with different residential densities. Haarhoff and Beattie (2013) found that residents of some medium-density developments in Auckland were generally satisfied with their situation, although a majority anticipated moving into a standalone suburban house in the future. They contend however that there is a disjuncture between the desire and aspiration to live in a standalone home and affordability considerations. The aspiration for suburbia (no matter how unrealistic) is a barrier to the promotion of visions for a compact city that needs to be better understood, and the promotion of compact development and associated higher density housing typologies, would benefit from having

a better understanding of the dynamics being introduced by the changing household structures and demography of cities, and how this may interrelate with any 'trade-offs' (page 12).

Recent research by Allen (2015) used Auckland as a case study to investigate the importance of urban amenities and to consider the trade-offs households made when choosing medium density housing typologies. The value placed on neighbourhood amenities and their contribution to location satisfaction was also examined. From four case study neighbourhoods (Botany Downs, Kingsland, Takapuna and Te Atatu Peninsula), 57 residents were interviewed. Of these interviewees, 41 cited proximity to urban amenities and the consequential convenience as a main reason for choosing their current dwelling.

This research also pointed to a growing popularity of low-rise apartments, which is attributable to shifting lifestyle expectations of diverse demographics and life stages (Allen, 2015). Standing apart from previous studies, where standalone houses featured prominently as the favoured typology residents saw themselves living in, was the relatively even divide between those who aspired to live in low- versus medium-density housing typologies. Allen noted that her findings highlight a disjuncture between present supply and likely demand for higher density typologies in suburban Auckland. She concluded that:

> The majority of those interviewed would trade-off standalone living for low-rise apartment or terraced house living in their current neighbourhoods, if the medium density options available to them were of a size and spatial layout that were more similar to the traditional New Zealand home, and if urban amenities were integrated in to their neighbourhoods in line with the increasing numbers of residents (2015, p. 97).

Syme, McGregor and Mead (2005) undertook a review of community surveys on intensification in New Zealand, predominantly in the Auckland region. The surveys were conducted for a wide range of reasons, the majority comprising open ended questions about favourable and unfavourable features of medium to high density housing. Overall, there was a relatively equal divide in positive and negative responses. In order of popularity, the most common positive responses people gave in regards to the development they lived in were location (access to services), safety and security, community identity and cohesion, and lifestyle (low maintenance). The most common negative responses ranked in order were noise, parking (particularly for visitors), then design and amenity.

More recently, Carroll, Witten and Kearns (2011) investigated the implications of Auckland housing intensification for children and families through in-depth interviews with parents living in Auckland inner-city apartments. This study offered understanding of families' experiences of living in high-rise central city apartments through exposing the trade-offs made in adjusting to life in dwellings and neighbourhoods which whilst affordable, were planned with a focus on childless adults. Key reasons for selecting this dwelling choice

were affordability, convenience of the central location and reduced reliance on cars. Drawbacks from this high density housing typology included safety concerns, poor quality apartment design and insufficient space for children to play (inside and outside complexes).

4.5   Māori and Pacific housing preferences

Housing not only provides a site for individuals, families and other household groups to meet, eat, and sleep, but it also plays a central role in the on-going expression of social structures and culture through providing a place for meetings, traditions, rituals, and other cultural expressions (Hall, 2008). Māori and Pacific households often have culturally specific requirements and preferences in relation to dwelling design, which can influence their housing preferences, choices and trade-offs.

In her 2008 survey of literature specific to the needs and choices of Māori and Pacific households, Hall (2008) found that research into the design features preferred by these groups had been carried out, and that design guidelines had been produced for the Housing New Zealand Corporation (Faumuina & Associates, 2002; Hoskins, Te Nana, Rhodes, Guy, and Sage, 2002).

Hoskins et al. (2002) proposed two modes of urban residential development which respond to Māori cultural needs: urban or suburban whānau houses, and urban or suburban papakainga (a housing development which occurs on land collectively owned by Māori).

Some have argued that Pacific peoples often prefer to live in an extended family living situation (Faumuina & Associates, 2002; Rankine, 2005). Alternatively, other research suggests that this is a strategy to cope with the high costs of accommodation, rather than a cultural preference (Cheer, Kearns, and Murphy, 2002; Milne and Kearns, 1999). Whatever the primary driver of this trend, the tendency for extended family living arrangements has practical ramifications: there is a requirement for dwelling types that house a larger than average number of people and, furthermore, houses need to be designed and constructed for extra durability as a large number of occupants cause additional wear and tear (Hall, 2008). There is some evidence that Māori and Pacific peoples prefer lower-density residential environments, but this area as well as the barriers private developers face in meeting the accommodation needs of these communities, require further research (Hall, 2008).

5.0 Conclusion

Housing choice is a concept which has been used, studied and perceived in various ways both nationally and internationally. Preference dominates the literature, but as discussed, choice and preferences are interlinked; most commonly it is asserted that choice reflects preference. The common recognition in the literature is that choice does not exist in a vacuum and that there are numerous factors and constraints involved in the selection of housing. Overwhelmingly, location has been found to be a key factor in housing choice (Allen, 2015; Maré et al., 2011; Saville-Smith and James, 2010).

While studies highlight a strong bias towards stand-alone houses and lower density suburban living (Haarhoff et al., 2012; Saville-Smith and James, 2010), there is evidence that higher-density living appeals to some, and is often a trade-off that people make in order to be situated in a preferred location close to amenities and facilities (Allen, 2015; Carroll et al., 2011; Preval et al., 2010; UMR, 2009).

The research to date however has explored people's unconstrained preferences, and has been based on responses to the existing housing stock in Auckland. There has been no research undertaken that has tested the actual housing choices and trade-offs that people would make, within a price and income constrained context, if a broader variety of housing options were available across Auckland. Taking real world budget constraints and locational options into consideration, the Auckland based *The Housing We'd Choose* research works to address this gap.

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