

## Ahuriri Development & Change of Use [14 June 2011 for HBT]

**HBT Q:** *Do you think the increasing popularity of Ahuriri as a commercial centre is harming Napier's CBD?*

Napier City (formerly known as Ahuriri) notified the Ahuriri Section of the District Plan in 1997. Seventy submissions were received and eleven referenced the Environment Court. The Ahuriri Subdistrict Plan was made operative in 2001.

The Subdistrict including Westshore has 14 land use zones. These include three residential zones and a Mixed Use Zone that dominates a formerly warehouses and residential district. It is today represented by restaurants, apartments, retirement villages, accommodation, shops and offices alongside a working fishing port and other traditional industries that makes Ahuriri unique in New Zealand.

The zoning based permissibility of commercial uses at Ahuriri has been well-matched since the mid-1990s by growing demand for hospitality and commercial premises, and increasingly high-density residential housing. In the absence of a Mixed Use Zone, resource consents would have enabled some buildings reuse and new developments without a Council planning strategy that includes buildings character preservation.

The Ministry of Education and professional services firms have preferred offices near the fishing docks and alongside if not inside former woolstores and other recycled buildings. These include buildings formerly occupied by British American Tobacco that left Hawke's Bay in 2005, leaving in its wake considerable buildings vacancy.

Many local occupiers relocated creating Napier CBD office vacancies not fully adsorbed by replacement tenants. These offices are mostly secondary or tertiary quality on upper floors serviced by dated lifts. Over time premises occupiers migrate to better accommodation freeing-up existing property for redevelopment or change of use. This kind of change is witnessed elsewhere in Napier, Hastings and Havelock North.

Without the Mixed Use Zone at Ahuriri some occupiers might have opted for refurbished or new CBD offices making the inner city more populated and vital in 2011.

In the absence of Napier City leadership of Ahuriri revitalisation, the inner harbour district would be less well-planned and much poorer. Consequently buildings recycling to date would be less and character may have been lost by buildings demolition. In the absence of hospitality and retail influences less successful apartment developments could have been expected.

The success of Ahuriri has arguably cost the inner city of Napier in the short-term. The success of the inner harbour district makes Napier a much richer urban environment and Hawke's Bay better off. The offering to visitors is improved and the overall effect is a gain for Napier and Hawke's Bay. What has happened at Ahuriri in quite short time was led by Napier City Council but underpinned by local and visitor support for Ahuriri.

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