

## Shaping citizen-centric communities – James Goodhue joins the conversation



**James Goodhue is a regenerative leader committed to transforming urban communities, empowering them to flourish and thrive.**

His career spans all sectors and entire project life cycles, from strategic planning and feasibility analysis and master planning, to design, consenting, procurement and construction - and everything in between. In his current role as Associate Project Director for Kāinga Ora on the Eastern Porirua Regeneration Project, James is responsible for the redevelopment of Kāinga Ora's stock of 2,000 state houses.

We asked James to contribute to our discussions around shaping citizen-centric communities that will be explored at [Design Experience Series](#) in Queenstown, Christchurch, Wellington, and Auckland in April.

I. *How do we build citizen-centric communities?*

At the heart of citizen-centric communities is participation and self-determination. To achieve those two things from a land and housing perspective, the appropriate tools and vehicles need to be established and enabled. Some examples include:

- a) Limited Equity Cooperatives (LECs) – democratic, member-run cooperative organisations that limit the equity individual homeowners can accumulate, thus preserving long-term affordability.
- b) Cohousing – residents are responsible for managing the development and decision-making processes and relies on all members being included and engaging in participatory processes.
- c) Community Land Trusts (CLTs) – democratic, multi-stakeholder organisations that own land for the permanent benefit of the community and sell and rent homes with various resale restrictions in order to maintain long-term affordability.

To deliver these initiatives quickly from ground zero, small multi-stakeholder teams should be established with strong community representation. Available/appropriate land and funding/financing are the keys to unlocking these initiatives and building citizen-centric communities.



## II. How do these types of developments / communities empower their citizens?

In 1969, the first Community Land Trust (CLT) was established in Albany, Georgia by local civil rights leaders, to benefit African American farmers with economic empowerment gained by their having collective control over their housing and farmland. The same applies to these land and housing models today.

First and foremost, these developments provide security to individuals and families to remain in their homes and communities, no matter what is happening in the private market around them. Displacement becomes a non-issue, meaning residents can feel safe about putting down roots in a community without the risk of being evicted and priced-out of an area. Empowerment comes via participation in the development itself (e.g. design, functionality, governance) and the financial security/opportunity they offer.

III. *Does empowerment of a community also promote well-being and if so, how is this maintained on an on-going basis?*

It sure does. Think about living in a cold, damp house that's making you and your family sick, and the resulting healthcare expenses. Think about renting with ever-increasing rents and the chance that at any moment you could have notice to get out. Think about the stress these situations can cause.

Stress can have devastating long-term consequences for health. Too much of it contributes to the development of obesity, type two diabetes, high blood pressure, cardiovascular disease, strokes, and Alzheimer's disease. Stress is also a key player in insomnia, burn-out and auto-immune disease, as well as many mental disorders such as anxiety and depression.

Building citizen-centric communities through citizen-led and community-controlled land and housing models, not only reduces stress, but also creates generally healthier environments for residents and neighbourhoods, through healthy homes, more and better-quality green space and public amenity.

IV. *What does well-being mean to you in a community?*

A sense of connection to place and people. A sense of belonging. A sense of safety. Quality public spaces for the community to cherish and enjoy. Community gardens. Community markets. Accessible, affordable healthy lifestyles.

V. *What further steps can NZ architecture and construction sectors take toward supporting these types of citizen centric communities and housing models?*

Community control of land and housing strategies face a variety of impediments to growth, often based on different market conditions. For instance, CLTs are often constrained by their ability to purchase land. In parts of the country where land and real estate prices are high (often also places where displacement is in an advanced stage), CLTs can struggle to purchase enough land to make an impact. On the other hand, in places where land is currently cheap (often due to weak local economies and legacies of disinvestment), local funders and officials (upon which CLTs usually rely for support) often see raising property values as a positive and do not prioritise preserving long-term affordability.

NZ architecture and construction sectors can start by educating themselves more about citizen-led and community-controlled land and housing models. Most are simply not aware of these types of strategies, and how they could be implemented to address many of the underlying social, environmental, economic, and cultural issues this country is facing.

Asking more from policymakers and public officials is imperative, as the current operating environment is far from conducive.

Becoming aware of other proven possibilities that deliver long-term impact with communities, neighbourhoods and cities is the first step. Then it is about educating others and applying pressure to all sectors to act.