



Universal Design: Everyone, Everywhere, Every time

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Disasters and Universal Design

- Today I want to talk about disasters
 - The apparent opportunities they present
 - Why those opportunities are missed
 - The way disasters confront us with aspects of the universal design challenge previously missed
- My comments reflect:
 - Observation around the redevelopment of Christchurch post-earthquake
 - Three years research into older people, resilient communities, and adverse weather events
- My focus is mainly but not entirely on homes



Disasters and the Phoenix

- Is there anything good about disasters?
 - Pronounced phoenix effect in the post-event, pre-recovery planning
 - A belief that anything is possible in destroyed city.
 - A view that all the technical innovations not adopted in the past will find a new space.
 - Private distress will be staunch by a public commitment and action to develop a better built environment.
 - Our built environments will be cleansed of the mistakes of the past.

But will we be cleansed?

- Despite the Canterbury Earthquakes, in 2050, 68% of the NZ stock will still have been built prior to 2006.
- Even in Christchurch there are the old barriers to renovating and building homes with universal design are two-fold:
 - Vicious circle of blame
 - Innovation chasm

Imprisoned to the Past

- Insurance:
 - Key financiers of post-disaster rebuild on an individual level or where there is a large scale disaster
 - Fundamentally conservative
 - Replace like with like
 - Reactive rather than proactive

Imprisoned to the Past

- Planning and Building Regulations and Standards:
 - Even on an emergency footing planning has been typically changed to extend traditional suburban footprints
 - No appetite for the introduction of new standards for new builds
- Limited procurement muscle from Government
- Some innovation by private developers around pre-fab and LifeMark and in the retirement village sector

Imprisoned in the Past – The Building Industry

- Largely duplicating past designs.
- Significant issues around building cost and affordability.
 - Economies of scale? Actually no.
 - Significant number of building company collapses.
 - Commerce Commission has released warnings of anti-competitive behavior including cover-bidding.
- Householders typically have little capacity to impact on build design, build quality or cost.
- Increased margins through bigger rather than better.
- Continuing to target the upper quartile of house prices.

The Affordability Conundrum

- The size fraud in a new guise
- Build, design and amenity - cost cutting focus
- But affordability problems arise from:
 - Free floating liquidity feeds house prices
 - Land prices reflect current house prices
 - Upper quartile dwellings are not what people need
 - House need is not expressed as house demand
 - Productivity and regulatory barriers
 - Lack of incentive to integrate affordability

So if a Disaster Won't Do it What Will?

- Banish the oxymoron
- Universal Design is for the disabled
 - Focus becomes - Specialist housing and public buildings
 - The logic is - Environments are always functional
 - If environments don't work the problem is the individual
 - Disability is caused by individuals not environments
 - Disability is a minority, 'other' set of conditions
 - For everyone else:
 - (children) environments will become functional when they grow up
 - (older people) not the future anyhow

So if a Disaster Won't Do it What Will?

- Branding:
 - Is UD really compelling to your average punter?
 - Can the builder/developer/regulator/planner really get it?
 - Does it resonate with the minister, councillor, investor?
- Building Synergies

Three Critical & Synergistic Platforms

- Affordability:
 - Entry cost
 - Operating cost
 - Maintenance
 - Adaptation
- Liveability:
 - Homes for life
 - Homes for living
- Resilience:
 - Protection
 - Fast recovery
 - Low cost recovery

If we want:

- Homes and spaces, buildings and places
 - For everyone
 - Everywhere
 - In good times and bad.
- We need:
 - Solutions
 - To demonstrate
 - Raise expectations
 - Demand leadership and action
 - Provide the business cases.