

3.6 THE VALUED ENVIRONMENT: THE CITY'S LANDSCAPES

In emphasising the importance of protecting the City's outstanding landscapes, the Resource Management Act recognises yet another layer of the environment. A landscape is generally a broad area which has a unique combination of natural and physical elements and other characteristics that combine together in a coherent way that is understood as a whole. Landforms, waterways such as lakes, streams and wetlands, and the vegetation that grows on the land's surface, ranging from naturally occurring bush to cultivated pasture - combine to form a variety of landscapes. These are further defined by the way buildings, roads and other structures are set amongst them. The combination of natural and built features, the dominance of one over another, or alternatively the merging of the two, and, of course, the sheer number of people, will add layers of complexity, bustle and variety, that further define the City's landscapes.

The following part discusses the broad landscape areas that can be found in the City and goes on to identify those that can be considered as truly outstanding. It then identifies the key landscape elements and landscape characteristics that define each unique landscape.

3.6.1 General Landscape Areas and Outstanding Landscapes

Waitakere City has some of the Auckland Region's most dramatic, varied and momentous landscapes, both natural and modified. Views of the Waitakere Ranges are an important feature of many areas in the wider metropolitan area. Landscapes viewed from Waitakere City contribute to residents' feelings about the City. Some key views are the cliffs surrounding the Upper Waitemata Harbour in North Shore City, the view down the Waitemata Harbour to the Harbour Bridge and Rangitoto; the rural landscape of Awhitu Peninsula in Franklin District, the volcanic cones of central Auckland and the wide expanse of the Manukau Harbour.

Within Waitakere City there are many varied

features - ranging from the coastal dunes and beach areas, through to the west coast and Manukau Harbour cliffs, the west coast freshwater lakes and lagoons, the dams, the quiet estuaries along the Manukau shoreline and, of course, the magnificent landform and vegetation features of the Waitakere Ranges. Below the Ranges, the predominant features are the dissected hill country and green rural areas, the pockets of natural vegetation within the rural and urban areas of the City, the orchards, the vineyards, the streams and their margins, the coastal vegetation, urban trees, suburban housing and the prominent landforms/land features within the rolling landscape.

These features naturally resolve themselves into seven broad landscape areas. These general landscape areas are shown on Map 3.6(a) and are listed below.

- the coastal landscape between Bethells/Te Henga and Manukau Heads;
- the coastal and estuarine areas between Whatipu and Green Bay;
- the coastal edge and estuarine areas between the Whau Creek and Brighams Creek;
- the bush landscape including the Waitakere Ranges and the fingers of bush in the upper areas of the eastern foothills catchments;
- the lower eastern foothills with the mixture of pasture and bush;
- the rural pastoral landscape of the northern city and the Redhills/Birdwood area;
- the urban landscape of houses, work areas, urban parks and bush remnants which can be divided into the following distinctive areas:
 - Working (industrial),
 - Community (town centres),
 - Open space (parks),
 - Living (residential).

Of these seven general landscape types, three landscapes have been identified as outstanding. These are:

- the coastal landscapes between Bethells/Te Henga and Whatipu;
- the coastal estuarine areas between Whatipu and Green Bay;
- the Waitakere Ranges including the fingers of bush in the upper areas of the foothills catchments.

These were identified using a methodology which assessed

