

YIMFY!

Yes, In My Front Yard!

Proposal for a Centre for Appropriate Building Technology

Our vision is to develop a centre that supports and promotes the use of environmentally restorative building materials and systems.

The YIMFY Centre will have two main areas of focus:

- a centre for coordination of research, advice, and advocacy;
- a destination site, built using successful natural building methods employing appropriate technology, for demonstration, display, and education of groups and individuals.

Background

The impact of human activities is stressing the Earth's environment beyond its ability to cope. The construction industry is a major contributor to these stresses, and it is vital that we learn to build and repair buildings in ways that not only minimise damage, but actively contribute to the ecological health of the whole ecosystem.

Appropriate technology means technology that is suited to time, place, culture and environment, using local materials to do useful work in ways that do the least possible harm. We need to be willing to live with the consequences of our technological choices, and share our learnings with others.

Hence YIMFY – Yes In My Front Yard! It is the opposite of NIMBY – Not In My Back Yard, where any negative consequences of technology choices are inflicted on others, somewhere else. As a species we no longer have that luxury.

The development of sustainable, healthy, and culturally appropriate building technologies is already happening at sites throughout New Zealand. The YIMFY Centre will be a hub to connect, support and grow this work, filling a crucial missing link in the NZ built environment research programme, and helping to bring the technologies into widespread use in New Zealand and potentially overseas.

Areas of Work

- Design and build a display centre using appropriate building technologies.
- Run the YIMFY Centre as a demonstration centre where individuals and groups can experience and learn about appropriate localised natural materials and resources.
- Host talks, workshops, and hands-on training programmes in appropriate building technology.
- Link, coordinate and generate research in appropriate building methods throughout New Zealand, and make that information available.
- Support the development of affordable, effective and culturally appropriate methods to improve existing buildings.
- Provide expertise to support both owner-builders and construction professionals.
- Work to get appropriate systems accepted for NZ Building Code compliance.
- Coordinate and cooperate with overseas centers doing similar work.

Location

Early discussions indicate a promising fit with other future eco-businesses on the Walk to Work site, adjacent to and supported by Earthsong Eco-Neighbourhood in Ranui, West Auckland. This would locate the YIMFY Centre within reach by train of over 1.5 million Auckland residents and its numerous visitors per year.

Who are we?

The steering group has substantial theoretical and practical expertise in sustainable architecture and building, community involvement, and successful project development.

Graeme North is a registered architect, recognised both nationally and internationally as a leading expert in the use of earthen and other natural building materials. He is co-founder of the Earth Building Assoc of NZ, and chaired the SNZ Committee for NZ Earth Building Standards. In 2010 he received a Winston Churchill Fellowship to investigate appropriate building technology centres.

Robin Allison ran her own sustainable architecture practise before founding Earthsong Eco-Neighbourhood, now an internationally recognised eco-housing neighbourhood. As the Development Coordinator, she drove the development process from inception to completion of construction. She travelled in 2008 on a Winston Churchill Fellowship to study sustainable community and town centre regeneration projects.

Min Hall is a registered architect, researcher and teacher with a long standing interest in earth and straw bale technologies. She has won a number of NZ Institute of Architecture awards for her projects and is the NZIA representative on the SNZ Earth Building Standards committee.

Alan Drayton is Managing Director of natural house builders BioBuild. He has been building earth and natural houses for 19 years, including unstabilised earth, stone, and rammed earth construction, and with solar and wind power sources. He has an abiding interest in exploring and learning from the use of innovative methods and materials which enhance the health and wellbeing of those who come into contact with them.

Amanda Garland has a lifelong interest in the interface between art, community and building. In her work as a sculptor and art psychotherapist she considers the relationships between living environments and our psychological as well as physical health, and the importance of both the practical and the aesthetic to our collective wellbeing.

Contacts

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