

## *The History of Devonport Heritage*

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Devonport has long had a reputation for having vocal, stropky and motivated residents who're strongly committed to the area and to preserving it. If it wasn't for such people, Ngataringa Bay would be reclaimed and covered in houses and marinas, Stanley Bay and the waterfront would be full of high-rise apartment blocks, and the dump would still be in place behind Memorial Drive.

It was this fighting spirit which eleven years saw the birth of Devonport Heritage. In 1994 two simultaneous developments gave rise to the need for a local group committed to heritage protection.

The first was the drafting of the North Shore City Council's first District Plan, and the second was the growing numbers of old Devonport houses being demolished. Consultants, James Lunday, a town planning lecturer, and Diana Holman of the Historic Places Trust, were advising the Council to bring in a blanket heritage zone over old Devonport.

Community Board members, Jenny Thomas and Virginia Fisher, were keen to see such heritage protection in the District Plan, but knew that strong community support was vital to get it pushed through. At the same time Trish Joughin, former deputy mayor of the Devonport Borough Council, was becoming alarmed at the number of old buildings being demolished or removed. The final straw was the demolition of an old house in historic Torpedo Bay, and its replacement with a plaster, Mediterranean-style 'wave house', which enraged many locals. This house was the final catalyst that proved to a wide section of the community that old Devonport was at risk, and spurred Trish Joughin into forming a group that would fight to save Devonport's historic character.

On June 29<sup>th</sup> 1994, fifteen residents met at Trish and Mark Joughin's house, and the following month a public meeting got Devonport Heritage off to a rousing start. A small, energetic, hard-working group worked with Trish to rally local residents to support the heritage provisions of the district plan. They printed 5000 leaflets about the need for heritage protection and distributed them to every house in Devonport. 300 people immediately responded with their support. Looking back, Trish says she's amazed at how much they accomplished in such a short time. The group included Joyce Fairgray, Ann Andrews, Sue Yoffe, Trish Deans, Judy Cook, and Sharyn Carew, who worked tirelessly with Trish, organising submissions, holding public meetings, and talking with the Council and Community Board.

Their hard work paid off when strong heritage protection provisions for Devonport and the older parts of Birkenhead and Northcote, were included in the District Plan as the Residential 3 Zone.

But of course the work did not end there. Over the following ten years Devonport Heritage has continued to act as guardian, lobby group, and champion of the historic importance of the area.

Our focus these days is to make submissions on notified resource consents where heritage character is threatened, to lobby the Council and Community Board for better treatment of heritage, to consult with residents about good restoration practice and hold public meetings to promote heritage protection.

Despite a greater recognition for heritage among residents, Devonport is under pressure like never before – it has almost become a victim of its own success.

It's unique heritage environment and the low-key village atmosphere has made it such an attractive place to live that property values have sky-rocketed. This in turn has attracted people who're not content with modest-sized villas and cottages, and want to transform them to mini mansions.

We believe we're entering into a new era of development where Devonport Heritage will continue to have a vital role of raising awareness and affection for the heritage landscape that makes Devonport so special.

To do that successfully we need to know there is strong community support behind us. Show us you care! Get your friends to join our supporters' list, come to our meetings, spread the word that saving heritage is good for our community.

*Margot McRae*  
*Chairperson, Devonport Heritage*