

PRESENTATION TO RMA Hearing  
Nelson City Council  
July 2022

Submission # 326 [Linley Taylor]

**POINTS I WANT TO MAKE:**

- Benefit of free access to natural areas near urban areas.
- Ideally Nelson / the community should own this land .
- Imagine what this area would look like if this plan is allowed through.
- We should not consider this a thirty year plan, or a fifty year plan – we should try to think of 100 years hence and how it would be experienced, what its lived reality would be.
- We must put a stake in the ground now. Because if we allow this plan to go through the opportunity to preserve this natural treasure is lost forever.
- Frederick Law Olmsted [the instigator and designer of Central Park in NYC ] understood the promise of a park as a social force .

**INTRODUCTION**

Good afternoon everyone.

My name is Linley Taylor. I am a New Zealander who has lived much of my adult life abroad with my husband, also a Kiwi. He spent his teenage years in Nelson. I have lived in the Nelson region for the past 24 years and now I live on the banks of the Maitai River, near the centre of the city, with steps leading down to the river from our garden.

The future of this whole region and the welfare of its citizens matter greatly to me.

When I heard about the proposal to build 750 houses in Kaka Valley I was stunned. I immediately thought of all the recent years of effort to improve the quality of the Maitai Valley environment, and then I thought of the immense negative impact the proposed plan would have on that environment.

I personally know the incalculable value of freely accessible natural spaces to the citizens of urban areas. I want to tell the commissioners how this proposal threatens the very existence of the Maitai Valley as a large natural public recreation area. My husband and I have long dubbed it 'the lungs of the city'.

## CONNECTION WITH THE MAITAI

On our property we are always aware of the river. It is forever changing. At various times there are whitebait moving upstream, eels under the bottom steps, shoals of red mullet being pursued by shags, mallard ducks and paradise ducks and their families, seagulls galore, and even, on one occasion, a seal who flopped its way up several of our steps. Twice a day the whole ambience changes when the tide comes in, and, when the tide is high enough, kayakers, canoers, and paddle boarders may arrive.

Further up the valley is where I walk, where I bike, picnic and swim, always marvelling at how restorative it is to leave even my own peaceful backyard by the river to enjoy the natural expanses where no human lives, marvelling at the fact that this environment is available to all so close to town.

## QUALITIES OF THE MAITAI THAT I VALUE

I do not swim in the Maitai River at the bottom of my garden. The water quality has deteriorated because of, among other things, urban runoff. Every time it rains hard, runoff from urban surfaces [roads, roofs, footpaths ] gushes out of a large pipe on the opposite bank. This is only the one pipe that we can see – there are many more.

But just up the road at the end of Nile Street begins the “other” Maitai,  
The one that offers relief from urbanization - space to restore calm physically and emotionally.  
The “other” Maitai with water that has not yet been compromised by urbanisation.  
It is natural, not built, not man made.  
It is not “organised” and is free for all to use.  
It is inherently priceless and inherently fragile.

I have lived in some large urban environments: London, New York City, Paris. I have used Hyde Park, Central Park, the Luxembourg Gardens, for recreation and to restore myself. At times of personal stress I have instinctively retreated to those natural surroundings to be healed just by being there, sometimes just by sitting in the sun, watching the world go by, and even taking a nap – a powerful antidote to the stresses, strains, and pressures of an urban life.

Over 150 years ago Frederik Law Olmsted, who designed Central Park, understood the power of natural spaces as a social force that would become an amenity in city life over the decades, with an exquisite kind of healing power.

Of course Nelson is not London, NYC, or Paris. But we must pay attention to Olmsted’s vision because Nelson is a growing urban area that is expected to intensify and expand dramatically, increasing the need for easily accessible natural restorative and recreational spaces.

## **EFFECT OF PROPOSED PLAN**

The proposed development would have enormous negative impact on all of the qualities we value in the Maitai Valley.

Try to imagine how the Maitai Valley would be experienced if the proposed plan goes ahead.

Imagine, if you will, the size of, and the effect of, the runoff from the hard surfaces that the proposed plan would create. Imagine the runoff from 750 roofs, from paved roads servicing those 750 houses. Imagine that runoff flowing through Kaka Creek and the wetland to Dennes Hole, and thence into the Maitai River. Imagine the effect of the traffic produced by people making their way from those 750 houses to jobs, schools, and shopping in Nelson.

And imagine, if we allow this plan to proceed, how many more plan proposals will follow suit in the years to come, once we have “opened” the doors.

The decision you make about this proposal now will affect the Maitai Valley not just 30 years from now, not just 50 or 100 years. If this proposal goes ahead we will have lost the chance to protect this priceless natural gem forever.

## **WHAT I AM ASKING FOR:**

I am asking that this natural gem **NOT** be forfeited to the effects of the urban development requested in this proposal and I am asking the commissioners to reject the plan change request.