



ORA

Housing-Led Regeneration

# Regenerative Villages

A Living Systems Approach to Development

An aerial photograph of a regenerative village. The scene shows a mix of modern, multi-story houses with light-colored facades and dark roofs. In the foreground, there's a bustling outdoor market with various stalls displaying fresh produce. A church with a prominent bell tower is visible in the background. People are seen walking, shopping, and interacting in the community spaces. The overall atmosphere is one of a vibrant, integrated community.

## INTRODUCTION:

# Why Regenerative Villages?

Across Aotearoa and much of the world, housing has drifted away from its primary purpose: to support human life, wellbeing, and community. Instead, it is increasingly shaped by extractive forces — financialisation, short-term yield optimisation, and fragmented ownership — that weaken long-term outcomes.

**Regenerative villages** are a response to this pattern.

They are not a single architectural style or masterplan template. They are **place-based living systems**, designed to meet human needs while strengthening — rather than depleting — the social, ecological, and economic foundations they depend on.

At ORA, regenerative villages are informed by regenerative economics, systems thinking, and real-world delivery constraints. In particular, we draw on *John Fullerton's 8 Principles of Regenerative Economics* as a lens for how land, capital, housing, and governance can be re-aligned around long-term wellbeing.

What follows is how those principles translate into actual villages, homes, and neighbourhoods.





# Right Relationship

## Aligning housing with people, land, and place

In a regenerative system, relationships matter as much as assets.

Regenerative villages are designed to restore right relationship between:

- people and their homes,
- homes and the land they sit on,
- individuals and the wider community,
- present needs and future generations.

This shows up in practice through:

- long-term land stewardship (e.g. land held in trust rather than traded),
- housing models that prioritise use-value over speculative exchange,
- design that reflects local climate, culture, and context rather than generic typologies.

Housing is no longer treated as a commodity disconnected from place, but as part of a living relationship with it.



# Views Wealth Holistically

## Beyond financial return

Conventional development defines success narrowly: margin, yield, exit.

Regenerative villages take a broader view of wealth, recognising multiple forms of capital:

- **social capital** (connection, trust, mutual support),
- **human capital** (health, dignity, security),
- **natural capital** (soil, water, biodiversity),
- **cultural capital** (identity, belonging, tikanga),
- alongside **financial sustainability**.

This does not mean ignoring financial discipline — it means **placing money in service to life**, rather than the reverse.

A village that is financially viable but socially isolating or ecologically damaging is not considered successful.





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## Innovative, Adaptive, Responsive

Designed to learn and evolve

Regenerative villages are not frozen masterplans. They are adaptive systems.

Rather than over-specifying everything upfront, regenerative design:

- allows for incremental growth,
- supports learning from use and occupation,
- evolves governance and shared spaces over time,
- responds to demographic change, climate realities, and community feedback.

This contrasts sharply with many developments that lock in rigid layouts and ownership structures that become liabilities over time.

Adaptability is treated as a feature, not a risk.



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## Empowered Participation

From residents as consumers to co-stewards

Regenerative villages actively enable participation — not just consultation.

Depending on context, this may include:

- resident involvement in governance or stewardship roles,
- shared decision-making around common assets,
- transparent rules around land, housing, and resale,
- clear pathways for people to contribute skills, care, and leadership.

This does not mean everyone must participate in everything. It means **people are not structurally excluded** from shaping the places they live.

Participation builds resilience — and reduces the sense of powerlessness that often accompanies modern housing.





## Honours Community & Place

Belonging is designed, not accidental

Loneliness and disconnection are now recognised as structural outcomes of how housing is delivered.

Regenerative villages intentionally design for:

- human-scale density (often low- to mid-rise),
- shared green spaces and courtyards,
- walkability and everyday encounters,
- proximity to town centres, schools, transport, and services.

Crucially, these villages **belong to their place**. They reflect local identity rather than importing a generic “eco-development” aesthetic.

In Aotearoa New Zealand, this also means acknowledging whenua, whakapapa, and mātauranga Māori as part of place-based regeneration.



## Edge Effect Abundance

Value emerges at intersections

In ecology, the most productive zones are edges — where systems overlap.

Regenerative villages create positive edge effects by sitting at the intersection of:

- housing and community development,
- public and private space,
- ecological restoration and urban living,
- affordability and quality design,
- social housing, affordable ownership, and long-term rental.

Rather than separating uses into silos, regenerative villages allow diversity to coexist — increasing resilience, creativity, and social mixing.



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# Robust Circulatory Flow

Keeping value circulating locally

Extractive systems drain value out of communities. Regenerative villages are designed so:

- land value uplift is captured for long-term community benefit,
- financial surpluses are recycled into maintenance, new homes, or social outcomes,
- local employment and suppliers are prioritised where possible,
- housing remains affordable across generations rather than resetting to market.

The goal is not maximum velocity of capital, but **healthy circulation** — enough flow to sustain the system without depletion.



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# Balance

Between efficiency and resilience

Highly optimised systems are often fragile. Regenerative villages deliberately balance:

- efficiency with redundancy,
- density with access to nature,
- privacy with connection,
- individual autonomy with collective care.

This balance makes villages more resilient to:

- economic shocks,
- climate stress,
- demographic change,
- policy shifts.

They are designed not just to perform well in ideal conditions, but to hold together under pressure.



# What Regenerative Villages Are – and Are Not

## They are:

- grounded in real land, real people, and real constraints,
- financially disciplined but purpose-led,
- designed for permanence, not exit.

## They are not:

- communes or utopian experiments,
- architectural showpieces divorced from affordability,
- one-size-fits-all solutions,
- anti-market — but firmly anti-extractive.

# Why This Matters Now

Property development sits at the intersection of almost every major challenge we face: inequality, environmental and ecological decline, health, loneliness, and intergenerational fairness — whether today's decisions leave future generations better off or worse.

Regenerative villages offer a practical pathway forward — not by rejecting development, but by reshaping it around life, place, and long-term stewardship.

They are not the only answer, but they are a credible, deliverable, and necessary part of the future housing landscape.





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