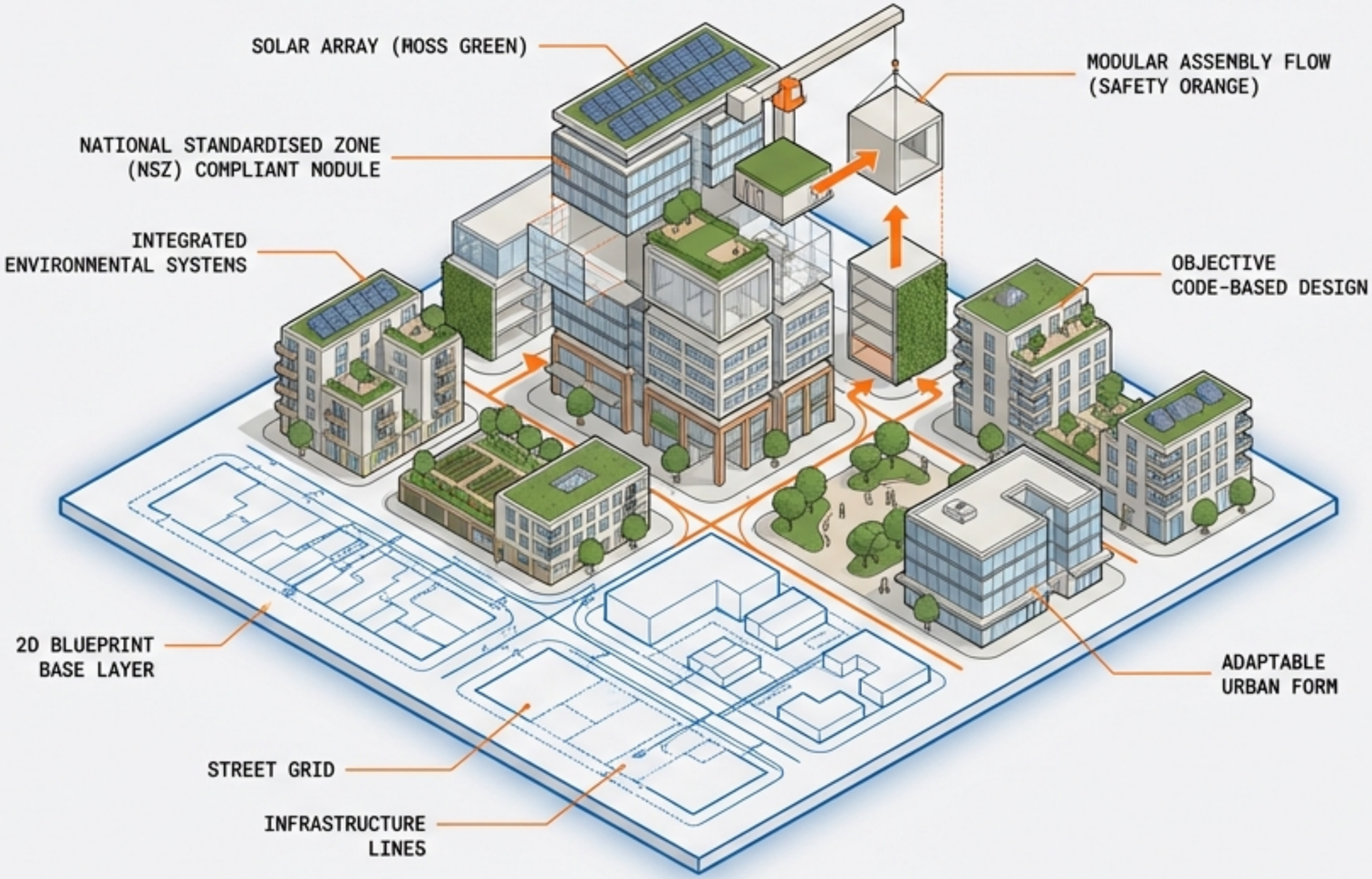
The Aotearoa Urban Operating System

A Decision Maker's Guide to the **National Standardised Zones (NSZs)**



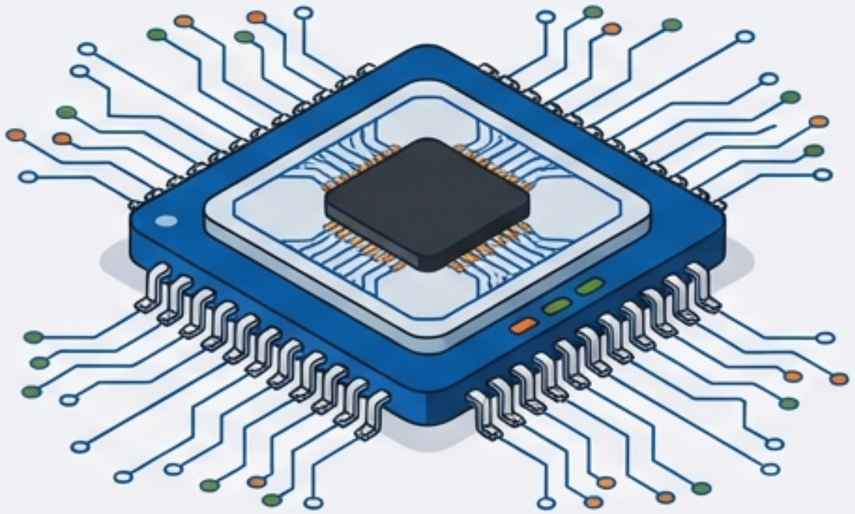
This manual outlines the architectural transition from the Resource Management Act (RMA) legacy framework to the Aotearoa Planning Bill 2025. It details the shift from subjective negotiation to objective coding.

NotebookLM

From ‘Postcode Lottery’ to Universal Codebase

Legacy System: 1,175+ Fragmented Local Zones

National Codebase: ~13–20 Standardised Zones



Legacy State

- Reactive Planning
- Subjective ‘Character’ Reviews
- Regulatory Debt

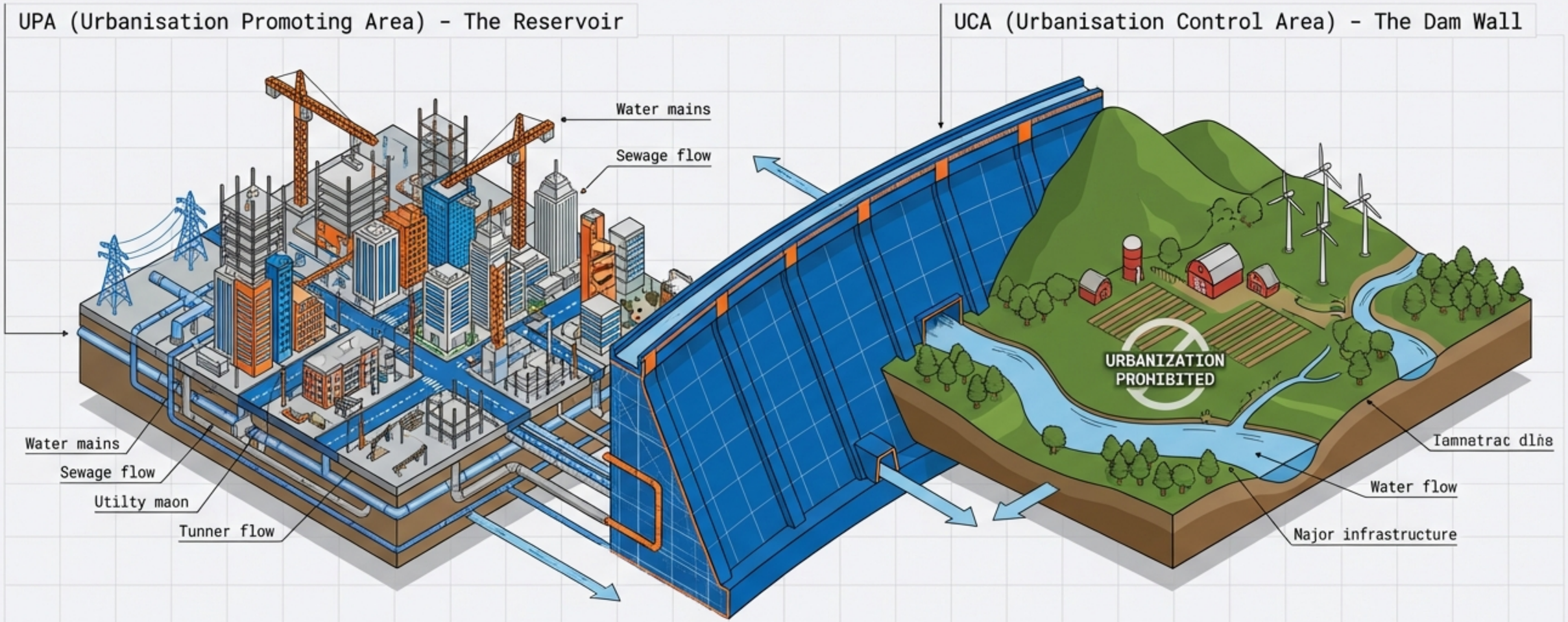
New State

- Initiative-taking
- Objective Mathematical Adherence
- Liquidated Overhead

Insight: A developer in Auckland now uses the exact same rulebook as a developer in Christchurch. This standardisation creates a ‘Plug-and-Play’ scale for the construction industry.

NotebookLM

The Macro Framework: The Urban Dam



Mandate: Infrastructure First. The state installs pipes and power before the factories/homes are built.

Goal: Systematically urbanized within 10-year horizons.

Mandate: Urbanization prohibited in principle.

Mechanism: Infrastructure explicitly deprioritized to stop speculative land-banking.

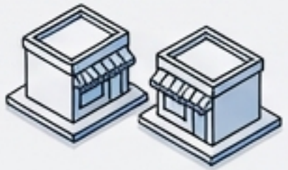
NotebookLM

The Matrix: A Finite Kit of Parts

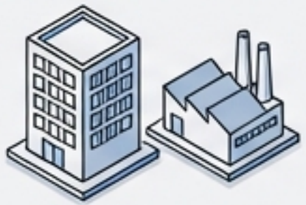
Low-rise Cat I
Permits residential & small local amenities

Low-rise Cat II
Permits residential & small local amenities

Mid/High-rise Cat I
Permits residential & small local amenities

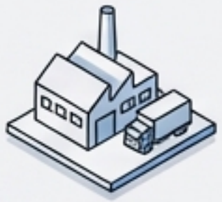


Neighborhood Commercial
Permits small factories & residential units

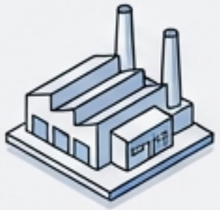


Commercial
Permits small factories & residential units

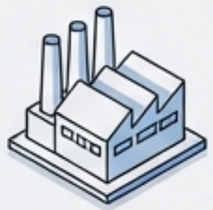
Quasi-residential
Permits small factories & residential units



Quasi-industrial
Permits residential except Exclusively Industrial

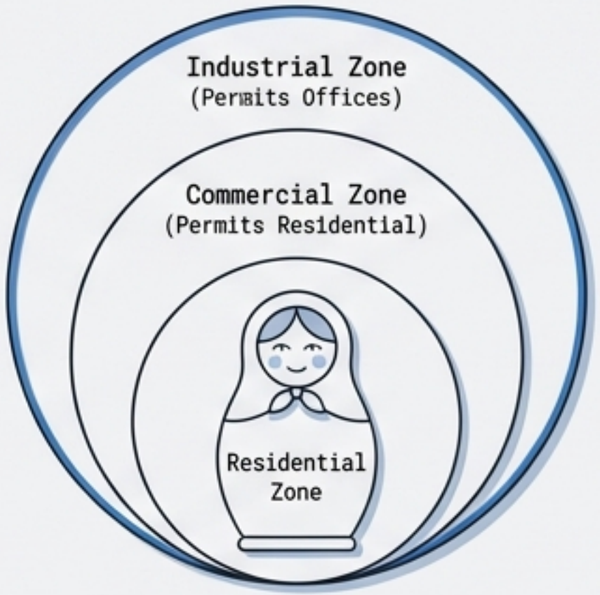


Industrial
Permits residential except Exclusively Industrial



Exclusively Industrial
Permits residential except Exclusively Industrial

Core Concept: Inclusive Zoning



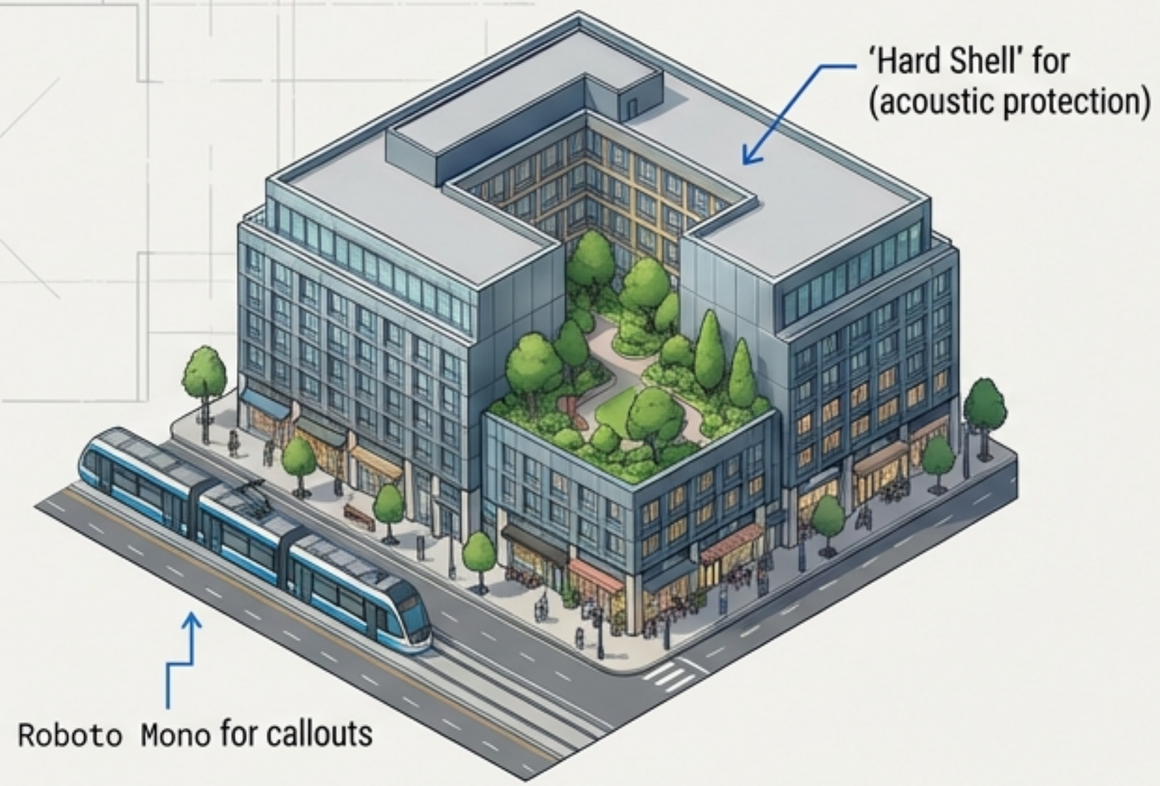
We move from "Exclusive Zoning" (segregation) to "Inclusive Zoning" (compatibility).

Higher Intensity Zones automatically permit activities allowed in Lower Intensity Zones.

NotebookLM

The Transit Spines: Density Follows Frequency

Zone A: Category 1 (Spine) Transit Corridor

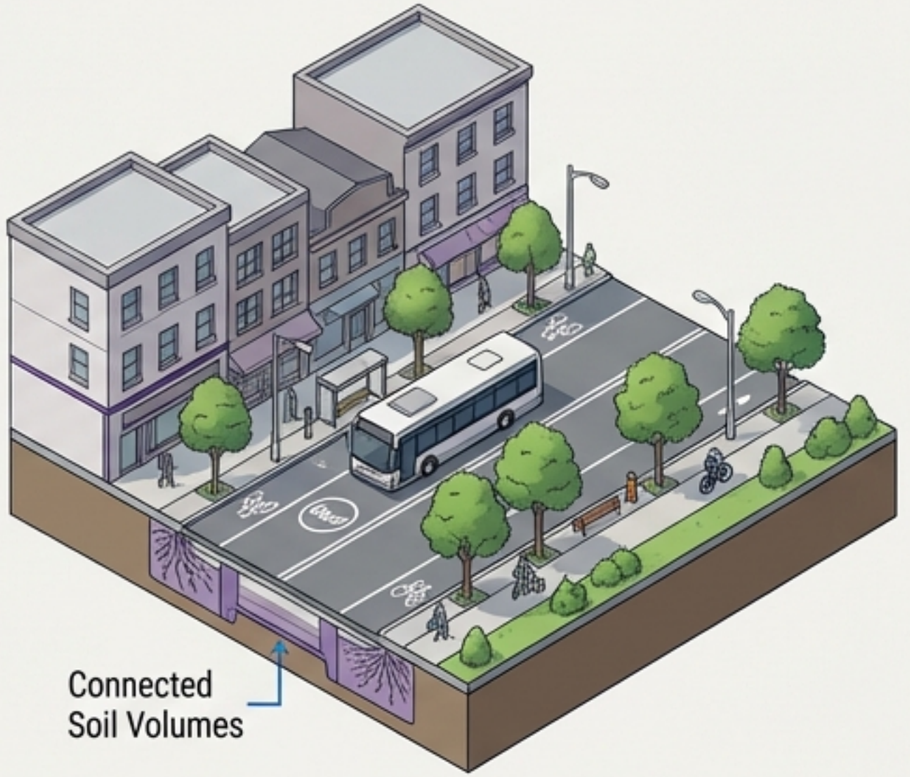


Trigger:
800m–1,200m of Rapid Transit.

Mandate:
Minimum 6 Storeys.

Typology:
Hard Shell / Soft Core (Acoustic protection).

Zone B: Category 2 (Primary) Transit Corridor



Trigger:
400m–600m of Frequent Bus.

Mandate:
Minimum 3 Storeys.

Street Design:
Mandatory 30km/h limits & Connected Soil Volumes.

NotebookLM

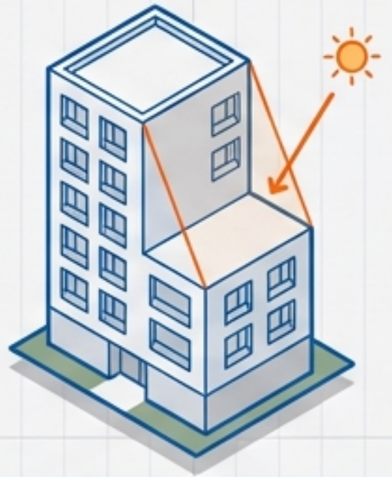
Residential Zones: The Inclusive Hierarchy

Low-Rise Residential (Cat I)

Primary Use: Quiet Living.
Allowed: Home occupations only.

Low-Rise Residential (Cat II)

Primary Use: Complete Neighbourhoods.
Allowed: Housing + Shops < 150m². Dairies, cafes, and salons permitted 'As-of-Right'.



Mid/High-Rise Residential

Control Mechanism: Diagonal Line Limitations (Sunlight Angles).

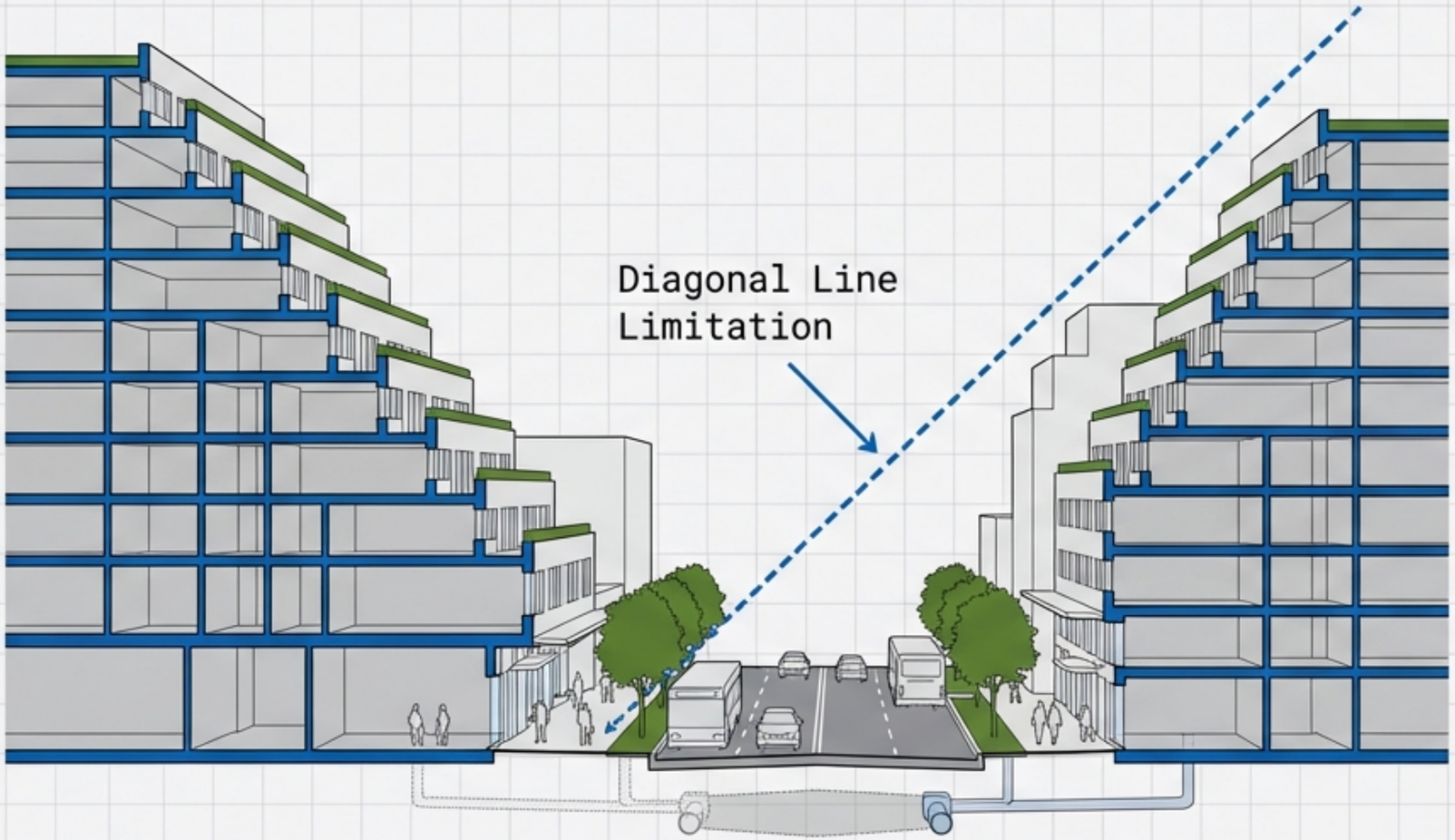
Allowed: Shops, hospitals, universities up to 1,500m².

Inclusive Logic: Intensity increases, permitted uses stack.

NotebookLM

Commercial & Mixed Use: Shaping the Public Canyon

Neighbourhood Commercial & Centre Commercial Zones



The Public Realm Mandate:
Council shifts from policing private aesthetics to designing the public streetscape.

Mathematical Controls:

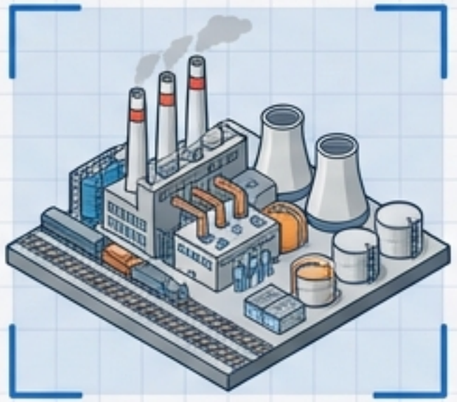
1. **Floor-Space Ratio (FSR):** Regulates bulk relative to road width.
2. **Diagonal Line Limitation:** Solar access is guaranteed by geometry, not committee. Creates the ‘Japanese Wedding Cake’ typology.

NotebookLM

Industrial Zones: Protecting the Right to Operate

Quasi-industrial
Roboto Mono

Industrial
Roboto Mono



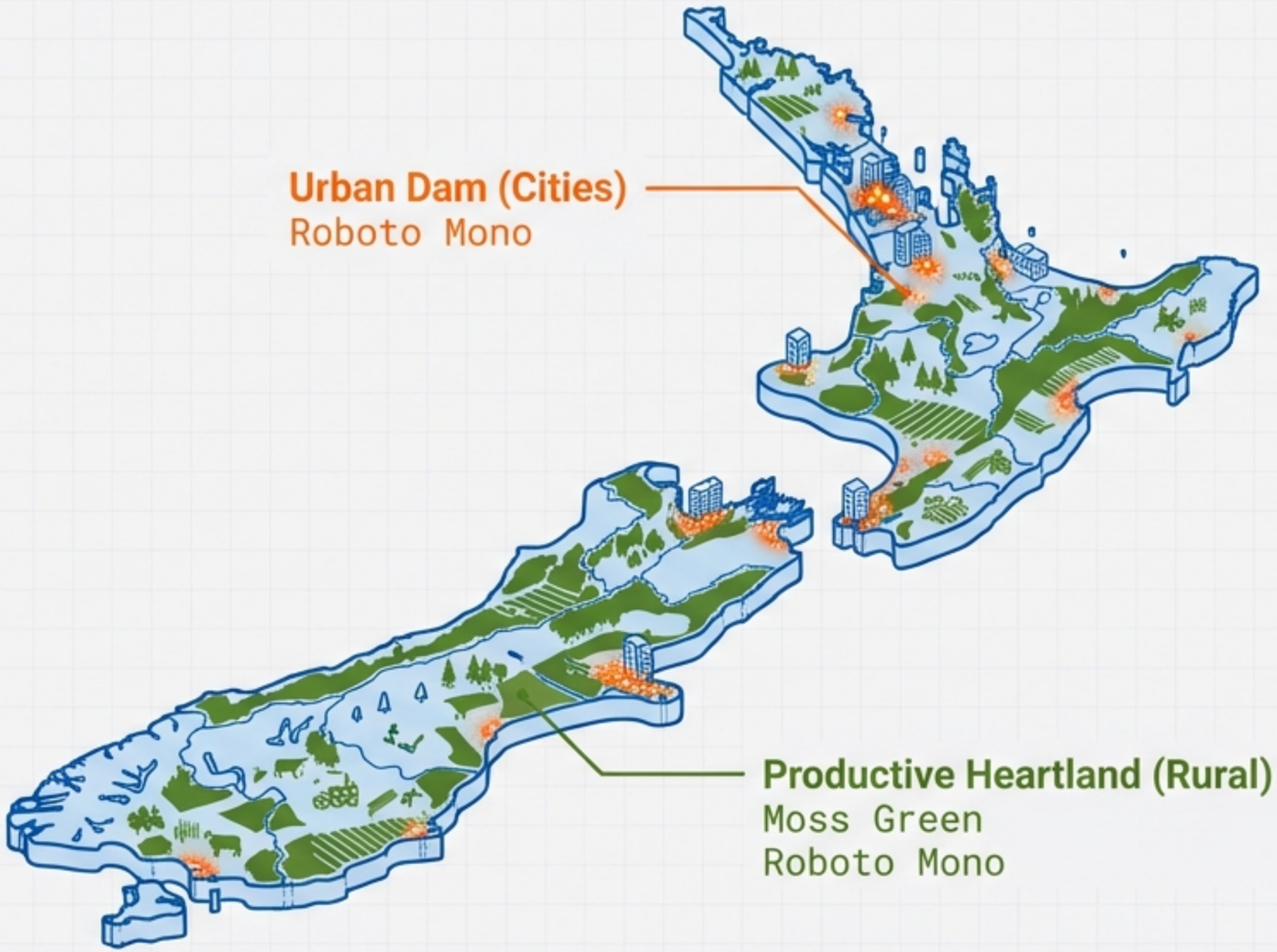
Exclusively Industrial
Roboto Mono

Zone: Exclusively Industrial

- **The Hard Rule:** STRICT PROHIBITION of residential, schools, and hospitals.
- **The Logic:** Prevents “Reverse Sensitivity.” Factories need to operate 24/7 without noise complaints from new neighbors.
- **Function:** Logistics, heavy manufacturing, and “noisy” economic engines.

NotebookLM

The Aotearoa Adaptation: The Productive Shield



Why we differ from the Japanese Model:

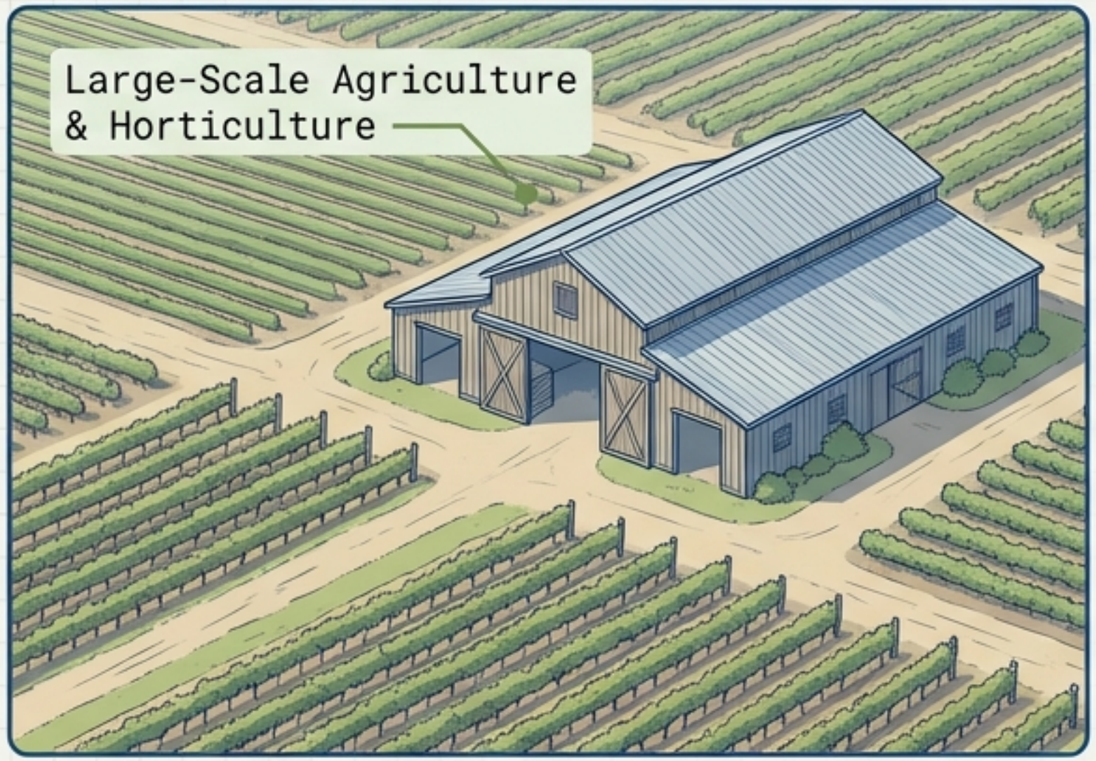
- **Japan:** Imports food. Land law focuses on urban efficiency.
- **Aotearoa:** Grows food. We added a bespoke ‘Rural Suite’ to protect our Economic Engine.

“The soil is a factory floor. We do not build subdivisions on the assembly line.”

NotebookLM

Rural-Production & Rural-Mixed Zones

Zone A: Rural-Production (The Engine)



Purpose: Large-scale agriculture, horticulture.

⚠ **Constraint:** Lifestyle Blocks are **PROHIBITED**.

Mining excluded to protect soil.

Zone B: Rural-Mixed (The Transition)

Purpose: Small-scale farming, tourism, services.

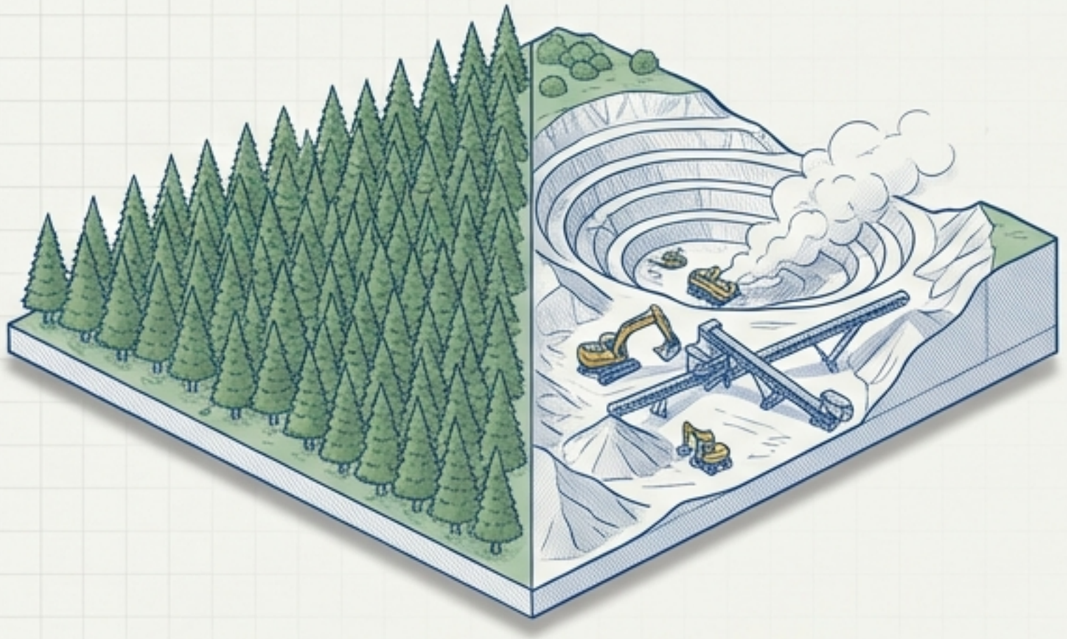
⚠ **Constraint:** Lifestyle blocks "Explicitly Discouraged."

Building Cap: 500m² max.

NotebookLM

Extractive Industries & Rural Residential

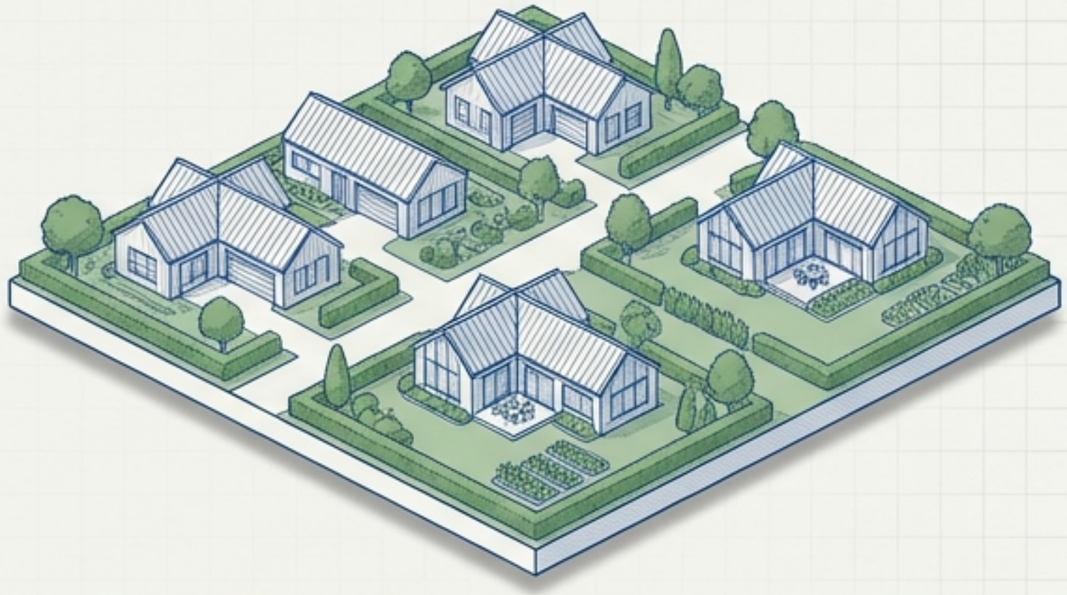
Zone C: Rural-Extractive



Purpose: Mining, Quarrying, Forestry.

Mechanism: Uses ‘Overlays’ (SimCity logic) to segregate noise/dust from food zones.

Zone D: Rural Residential
(The Lifestyle Container)



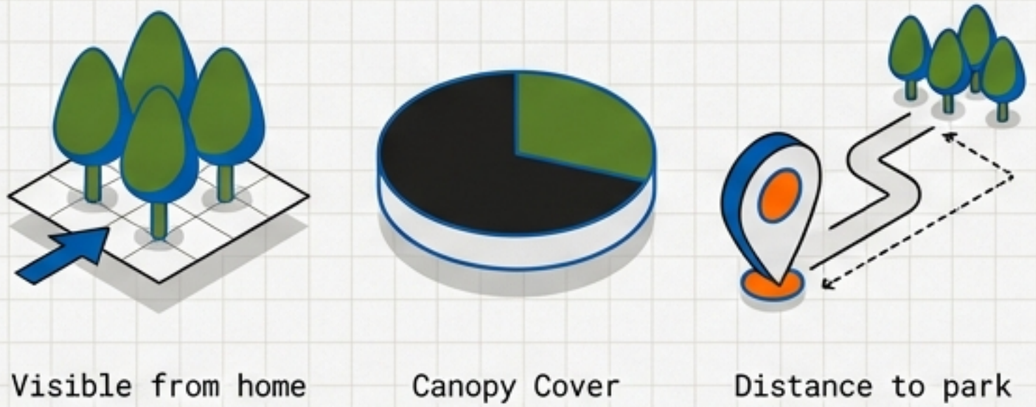
Purpose: The only designated zone for ‘Countryside Living’ (The Kiwi Dream).
Strategic Goal: A ‘Quarantine Zone' to save productive soil elsewhere.
Constraint: Buildings max 500m²; must relate to agricultural promotion.

NotebookLM

Universal Protocol: Health & Safety

Non-negotiable laws regardless of zone.

Law 1: Public Health (3-30-300)



Visible from home | Canopy Cover | Distance to park

3 visible trees. 30% canopy cover. 300m to park.

Law 2: The Red Line Policy

Mandate: Avoidance of "Very High Risk" zones.
Horizon: 100-year climate horizon (up to 2126).
Investment prohibited where risk is catastrophic.

NotebookLM

Universal Protocol: The Newcomer Principle

Resolving the 'Who Pays?' Question

The Principle: The party introducing the change bears the cost of mitigation.

Scenario A: Urban Port vs. Housing

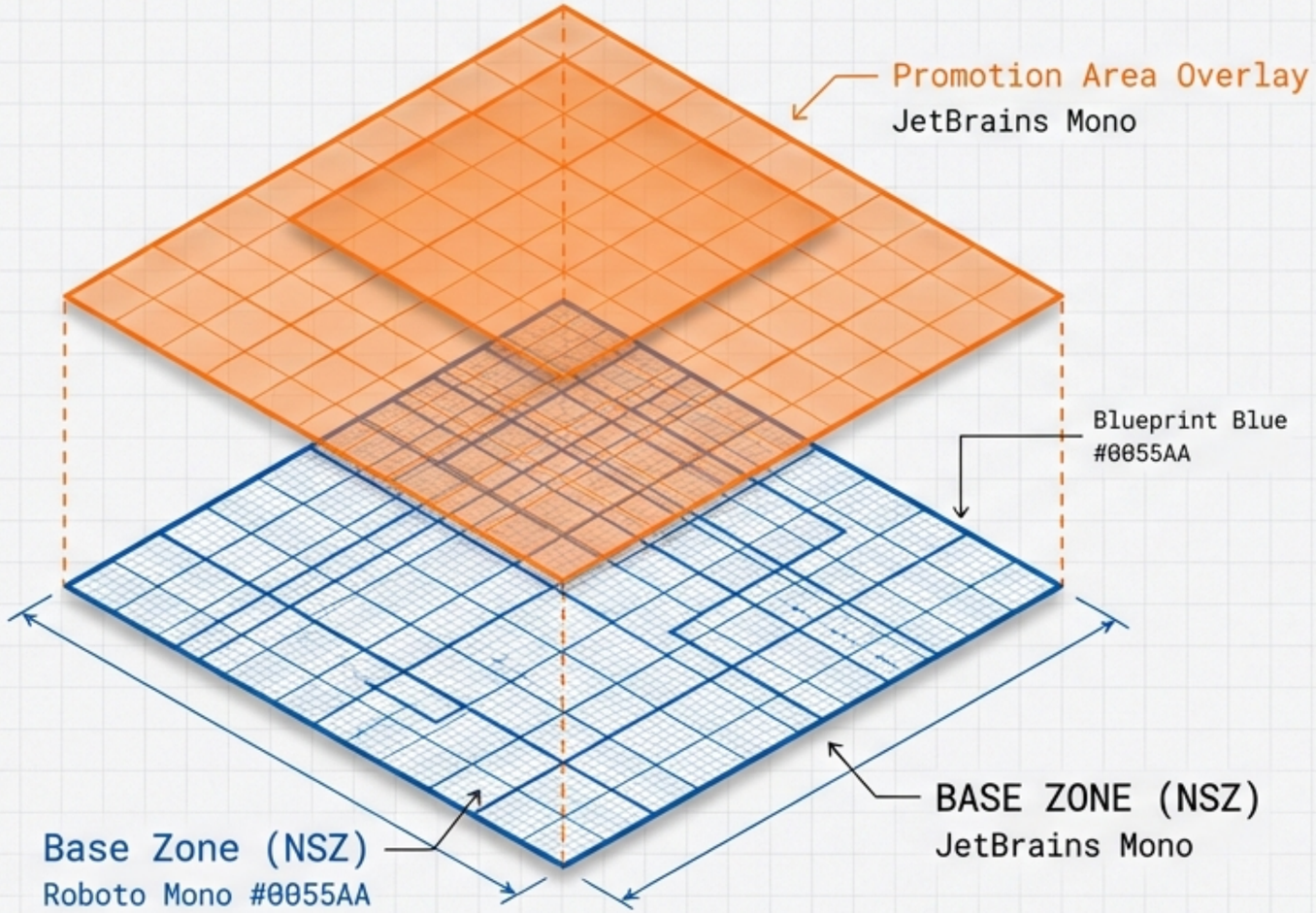
Result: Developer pays for acoustic glazing. The Port's 'Right to Operate' is shielded.

Scenario B: Rural Orchard vs. Subdivision

Result: Developer installs buffers. The Orchard is protected from 'Reverse Sensitivity' complaints.

NotebookLM

Surgical Renewal: Promotion Area Zones



- **Function:** Bespoke Regulatory Overlays sitting on top of NSZs.
- **Target:** Stagnant or strategic sites (e.g., Transform Manukau).
- **Mechanism:** Allows ‘Custom-made plans’ and Council-led placemaking in the public realm.
- **Goal:** To trigger development where market forces alone are failing.

NotebookLM

From Permission to Adherence

Old Way: Subjective Design Committees

Argument: ‘Character’

Outcome: Litigation & Delay

The Shift

New Way: Objective Math

Argument: Compliance with Matrix

Outcome: Permitted Activity (Yes)

The State designs the **Skeleton** (Infrastructure). The **Market** fills the **Flesh (Private Realm)**. The **Matrix** provides the **Code**.

NotebookLM