
Project title: Sense of Place: Physical Dimensions
Strategy area: Cultural Wellbeing

1. Executive Summary

This project will build on the 2004 citywide Sense of Place work to gain a more detailed understanding of what Sense of Place means **physically** for the Council, from both a geographical and issue-based perspective.

This project only includes social and cultural elements of sense of place (including art and recreation) if they relate to physical projects that vary across the city. Non-physical projects and citywide projects are dealt with by other projects and programmes. Moreover, physical projects are a logical place to start the detailed, sub-city assessment of sense of place because they are visible and more easily identified.

The project will begin with an analysis of Council's own physical activities that affect sense of place. The actual sequencing of topics will depend on a scoping and prioritisation exercise in the first half of 2006. A preliminary estimate is that lighting, roading/footpath design, and street furniture will be the first topics examined at the sub-city level. These topics will be examined in the second half of 2006. Further topics such as public art, planting/street trees, and parks/open space will be examined in the first half of 2007.

Each phase will conclude with a summary report including recommendations. Implementation of any recommendations will follow and may include the revision of Council documents like urban design standards and guidelines, asset management plans, organisational changes, partnership approaches, advocacy and education, or specific physical enhancement projects.

In addition to looking at Council's activities, selected case studies of issues related to private developments (e.g. signage, buildings and earthworks) will provide information relevant to the Council's regulatory divisions.

2. Strategic Fit

This proposal relates directly to Strategic Priority 5: *"The Council will take a more proactive role in protecting local sense of place."* It also relates to the ten-year outcome "Stronger Sense of Place," which is referenced in the draft Urban Development, Economic Development, Environmental and Cultural Wellbeing Strategies. The Urban Development Strategy, for example, provides the following full outcome statement: *"Wellington will be a memorable, beautiful city, building on its sense of place, capital-city status, distinctive landform and landmarks, defining features, heritage and high quality buildings and spaces."*

3. Relationship to Existing Activities

Sense of place is a dimension of the city, rather than a discrete physical project that can be delivered. It is the cumulative effect of many decisions shaping the city over the long term. Many of the Council's activities impact on sense of place, by shaping the built, natural, cultural and social environment that defines Wellington. Road design, public parks, and the characteristics of private development all contribute to sense of place. Some Council activities more directly acknowledge sense of place and put it in the foreground; for example, built heritage work, central city open space design, suburban centre upgrades, public art, and cultural activities

In 2004, following extensive discussions with internal and external stakeholders, Council produced an eight-page brochure called "Wellington -- our sense of place: building a future on what we treasure." This publication colourfully captured the various elements of Wellington's sense of place and represented the first detailed examination of this concept for Wellington City. It also listed ten key characteristics that Council will ensure all new growth preserves and enhances.

This project will build on 2004's citywide overview by examining physical dimensions of sense of place at a more geographically disaggregated and issue-specific level. With an initial focus on Council's own impacts on sense of place, it will guide Council business units in preserving and enhancing physical sense of place. Because many of these impacts may be best understood at the sub-city level, Council will learn more about what sense of place means in different parts of the city.

It is important to point out that Sense of Place is not about stopping change. Change may preserve or enhance Sense of Place if it is done in a manner that is sensitive to an area's **context** and **character** -- two of the seven 'C's of the New Zealand Urban Design Protocol.

While this project will consider all elements of Sense of Place listed in 2004, such as bicultural representation and Wellington's capital city status, it will focus on their physical manifestations at the sub-city level. Some existing projects deal with non-physical dimensions of sense of place (for example, the funding of arts and cultural organisations). Other projects address physical sense of place at a citywide or central city level (for example, the Maori heritage trail, the proposed Northern Gateway sculpture, the proposed wharewaka, and the Capital Precinct project).

Moreover, physical projects are a logical place to start the detailed, sub-city assessment of sense of place because they are visible and more easily identified.

4. Proposal Costs

<i>Outline project costs per year</i>											
Project Component	Operating expenses (\$000)										
	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16
<i>Project plan</i>	*										
<i>Assessment of key Council documents</i>	*										
<i>Targeted research, issue scoping and prioritisation</i>	*										
<i>Analysis and recommendations for each issue</i>		*	*								
<i>Implementation of previous recommendations</i>		NYK	NYK	NYK							
<i>Concluding report/publication</i>				*							
<i>Total</i>											

Project Component	Capital expenses: NYK
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* Existing Council resources will be relied upon for these project components.

NYK: Costs of implementing any recommendations are not yet known.

As indicated above, the project will rely upon existing resources. The project manager (Jim Ebenhoh) will be devoting at least half his time to this work. A project Working Group representing a variety of Council business units will provide additional assistance throughout the project.

Implementation may require additional funding through future Annual Plan processes. Where documents need to be revised, consultant expertise may be required. Where a higher or more appropriate standard of urban design is required, this may require more expensive materials and treatment.

5. Project Outline

Introduction

The key to this project is a clear pathway that takes bite-sized realistic steps towards an understanding of what Sense of Place means physically for Wellington. As described in Section 3, this project will begin by focusing on the Council's own impact on sense of place, by considering physical dimensions that the Council influences directly. Key physical activities will be roading and footpath design, street furniture, street lighting, Council signage, public art, planting, and public open space. The analysis will be supplemented by case studies on the effect of private development, including the impacts of buildings, signage, and earthworks on sense of place.

In short, the proposed project outline is:

- Assess key Council documents like asset management plans
- Scope and prioritise the issues
- Analyse selected issues
- Implement recommendations

The timeline in the Appendix is an indicative example of how the issues could be analysed over time. It will be discussed and revised by the Working Group, and will depend on the results of the initial scoping and prioritisation exercise described below

Overview assessment of key Council documents

Council's asset management plans, Code of Practice for Land Development, District Plan, and other key plans and policies that impact the physical environment of Wellington will be reviewed to understand the extent to which they contain sense of place considerations. This phase will not change any of these documents but will provide important understanding of how current Council policies and plans do, or do not, recognise and promote sense of place at the citywide and sub-city level. This will assist in identifying barriers and opportunities with regard to the issues that the rest of the study will analyse.

Milestone: stocktake and assessment report completed by 31 March 2006

Targeted research, scoping and prioritisation

A detailed analysis of every issue in every suburb will not be possible. Priorities have to be set, so that those aspects of sense of place that are most valued and most at risk are analysed first.

From a geographic perspective, the analysis will need to focus on whatever level of disaggregation is most relevant to the issue at hand. The scoping exercise that identifies the most pressing sense of place issues will also identify the geographic level at which the analysis should occur (see Appendix):

- Some issues (for example, street lighting) may be most relevant at the level of suburban groupings (for example, all coastal suburbs).
- Other issues (for example, local park design) may require consideration at the level of the individual suburb.
- Still other issues (for example, public art) may demand a site-specific approach.

If an issue is most relevant at the suburb-by-suburb or site-specific level, a sampling approach will need to be taken for further analysis—that is, there will not be time to examine the issues in detail in all suburbs or the numerous sites around the city. Case studies will be more appropriate.

Another geographic consideration is that sense of place issues may be most prevalent in new areas of development and in suburbs along the growth spine, given the nature of change that will occur through greenfield and infill development. The scoping and prioritisation exercise will test this assumption, and concurrent projects in these areas arising from the Urban Development Strategy may provide further information.

Milestone: Internal report by 30 June 2006 providing:

- **Preliminary description of the issues**
- **Identification of most relevant geographic area for each issue**
- **Detailed issue prioritisation**
- **Timeline for analysis of each issue**
- **Selection and scheduling of private development case studies**

Analysis

For each issue at its level(s) of geographic relevance, the following questions need to be answered:

- What are the aspects of local sense of place that need to be preserved or enhanced?
- How is Council faring in terms of preserving or enhancing sense of place?
- What should be done differently?
- What are the opportunities for improvement, and the barriers to change?

Case studies of private development, as selected in the scoping/prioritisation phase, will be analysed to answer the same questions for various issues.

Milestone: Summary report (including recommendations) for first set of issues by December 2006; for second set of issues by June 2007

Recommendations and implementation

Various solutions and action items will be proposed and prioritised for each issue. These may involve changes to guiding documents like urban design standards and guidelines, asset management plans, and other relevant plans and policies. The development or revision of urban design standards and guidelines will be led by the Urban Design Unit, as a key component of the linked initiative on Delivering High Quality Urban Design.

Recommendations may also inform the currently scheduled reviews of Council's regulatory documents like the District Plan and the Code of Practice for Land Development.

Beyond documents, the solutions may lie in organisational changes, partnership approaches, advocacy and education, and specific physical enhancement projects.

Recommendations may not be required for some issues if the analysis shows that sense of place is being adequately protected and enhanced.

The recommendations for each issue will take varying amounts of time and resources. The timing of changes to key documents may depend on when they are scheduled for review. The timing of physical or organisational projects will depend on any prior commitment of resources and the availability of any additional required resources.

Milestones: Recommendations with proposed priority schedules included in Summary Reports (see above); implementation of those recommendations to follow from 2007 onwards.

6. Conclusion

A project dealing with physical dimensions of sense of place, at a geographically disaggregated and issue-specific level, is recommended. The initial focus would be on the Council's own physical impacts on sense of place, as outlined in the Appendix.

A step-by-step approach aiming for a mixture of quick wins and longer-term fixes is proposed. Ultimately, the goal is not to cover every issue in every part of the city, but to embed an understanding of physical sense of place within the Council. This understanding will ensure that the Council's activities exhibit a sympathetic approach to local context and character.

This project only includes social and cultural elements of sense of place (including art and recreation) if they relate to physical projects that vary across the city. Non-physical projects and citywide projects are dealt with by other projects and programmes. Together, those projects and this project are significant steps towards an integrated, holistic approach to Wellington's Sense of Place.

APPENDIX

Indicative Timeline: Sense of Place: Physical Dimensions

(will be revised by project team as part of issue scoping)

	Physical Activities								
Geography	Lighting	Roading and Footpath Design/ Street Furniture	Public Art	Council Signage	Planting/ Street Trees	Parks/Open Space	Development (mostly private)		
							Signage	Buildings	Earthworks
Citywide	The 2003/04 work defined Wellington's sense of place at the citywide level. Many existing plans and policies take a citywide approach and should reflect that citywide sense of place. For every new project, plan and policy, it is also appropriate to ask: what is the effect on Wellington's overall sense of place (e.g. centre of the nation, natural character, good accessibility)? But that citywide analysis is not the focus of this project.								
Suburb Groupings (eg: hillside, coastal, growth spine)	√	√		√	√ (review suburban greening plan)			√ (effects of infill and other development along growth spine)	
Individual Suburb (case studies)		√ (to inform Safer Roads and public space programme implementation)	√		√	√			
Site (case studies)			√			√	√	√	√
Timeframe	S	S	M	M	M	M	O	O	O
For All: Consider sensitivity to context and character , which may include: effects on view, noise, heritage, cultural diversity and representation, natural landforms and biodiversity, pedestrian friendliness, etc.									

For timeframe:

S = short-term (analysis and recommendations by December 2006; implementation to follow)

M = medium-term (analysis and recommendations in 2007; implementation to follow)

O = Ongoing work through other policy/planning efforts, informed by occasional case studies from this project.