
CAPITAL PRECINCT

1. Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to seek Committee approval of the draft Capital Precinct Framework – attached as Appendix 1.

2. Executive Summary

Wellington's role as the capital of New Zealand needs to be celebrated. This is one of Wellington's main points of difference compared with other New Zealand cities. At present the capital function is not well portrayed in Wellington, in New Zealand or to the wider world. The draft Capital Precinct Framework proposes that the area around Parliament be enhanced in recognition of this important function.

This part of the city is not very cohesive and, with the exception of the Parliamentary buildings, there is little to suggest the importance of this area. The precinct suffers from poor physical and visual connections with the rest of the city and has a less attractive environment than many other parts of the central city. Its fringe location, general vehicle domination and distinct physical structure (the width of streets, the bus terminal) all limit pedestrian amenity and reduce vitality.

The need to strengthen the city's role as the capital has long been identified. The Ministry for the Environment's recently published Urban Design Protocol supports the increased role of Central Government in urban design and highlights this initiative as a demonstration project. This is one of four key initiatives in the Council's Action Plan to implement the Urban Design Protocol.

The Capital Precinct Framework has been developed to outline the issues, the objectives and detail of four initiatives to manage the future of this area. This framework will be published (as the Waterfront Framework was) so the importance of this initiative is recognised. It will be used as an advocacy tool with various government entities and be widely accessible to stakeholders and users.

3. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee:

- 1. Receive the information.*
- 2. Agree to the objectives as outlined in the Capital Precinct Framework.*

3. *Agree to the proposed set of initiatives as a basis for further discussion with key stakeholders, including Central Government.*
4. *Note that funding for future planning and feasibility work is being considered as part of the 2006/07 Annual Plan round.*

4. Background

Council can increase recognition of the City's role as the national capital by promoting the enhancement of the area around Parliament. This unique precinct also includes a range of national institutions, such as the National Library, the Court of Appeal, the proposed Supreme Court, the National Archives, and a range of other government agencies. There are also a number of high commissions, embassies and the nationally significant Anglican and Catholic Cathedrals.

The idea of defining and enhancing an area that is the 'heart' of the capital function of Wellington is not new, with ideas for this area going back to 1865 when Wellington was made the capital and Parliament was housed in the Wellington Provincial Chambers.

Government had developed a series of grandiose plans from 1937 through to a very modernist proposal in 1973 that have never eventuated.

A further Government initiative in 1994 saw the introduction of the Parliament Centre Bill, which was initiated:

“to establish a Parliament Centre Commission and to confer certain authority and powers on that Commission for the purpose of ensuring that land within the Parliament Centre is maintained and developed in an appropriate way”.

This bill did not go past the first reading, partly because of the inconsistencies between the change in direction of the then recently deregulated government sector and the perceived level of intervention that the bill was proposing.

None of these initiatives came to fruition. The heart of the capital is a set of parliamentary buildings and appendages that have developed through a disparate series of planning and development exercises. Council is now taking the initiative to partner with government to deliver a result in this precinct.

Developing this project can demonstrate the Council's role as a leader in implementing the Ministry for the Environment's Urban Design Protocol. The Government is explicit in its support for this project proposing the *“development of a framework plan and implementation programme for a 'Government Precinct' in Thorndon, Wellington. This will be developed in conjunction with the Wellington City Council, as an urban design demonstration project under the Urban Design Protocol”*¹.

¹ New Zealand Urban Design Protocol

This project will enable the Council to have greater influence over the way this critical part of the city evolves and will assist Government to “walk the talk” in respect of the Protocol.

This initiative was launched by the Mayor and the then Minister for the Environment, Marian Hobbs last year. The concept of a framework has been developed with the support of a steering group that was selected with the Ministry for the Environment’s input. A number of key government agencies were represented on the steering group as well as representatives from the Anglican and Catholic churches, Victoria University, Capital Properties and the Civic Trust. Council officers were supported by urban designers Chris Macdonald and Graeme McIndoe. The steering group agreed on a vision, objectives, and a set of initiatives to give direction for the management of this area. A community survey was undertaken of users in the area to further understand issues. A design workshop with key designers involved in projects in the area also helped define issues and feed into the vision for the precinct.

5. Discussion

5.1 Why a Framework

There are two interconnecting issues that this Framework is looking to address:

- A need to promote national identity to reinforce Wellington as the Capital
- A need to improve the poor physical manifestation of the precinct in the capital city

5.2 Framework Structure

The overarching objective is to **celebrate Wellington’s role as capital city.**

This will be done by giving prominence to the legislative, judicial and administrative functions of the capital city, integrating the Capital Precinct more fully with the rest of the central city and promoting high quality design outcomes.

A set of detailed objectives has been developed to guide change and enhancement in the precinct. They have been tabulated in to two categories of national and local relevance, emphasising the relationship the capital precinct has with both the nation and with Wellington as the capital city:

	nation	host city
Identity	Express the values, institutions and traditions which make up New Zealand’s system of government.	Integrate the Capital Precinct into the wider city: improve physical and visual connections with surrounding areas including the harbour.

Culture	Create a place which all New Zealanders identify with: reflect the diversity of cultures which make up New Zealand.	Acknowledge tangata whenua and their ongoing stake in the precinct.
Character	Recognise and enhance the distinctive character and heritage of major government buildings.	Respect the local identity of areas around Parliament: promote heritage buildings and spaces, and their appropriate uses.
Context	Improve physical and visual connections between important government institutions.	Co-ordinate Council public space initiatives to increase amenity and enhance the precinct's identity.
Vitality	Promote and enhance visitors' experience of the precinct, balancing the needs of accessibility, amenity and security.	Foster a mix of activities for those that live, work and study in the precinct, including appropriate non-government uses.
Partnership	Encourage public involvement in the development and management of the Capital Precinct.	Establish ongoing co-ordination between Government and Wellington City Council.

A set of initiatives to achieve the objectives is proposed. More information on these initiatives is contained in the Framework. The four initiatives are as follows:

- Government Advocacy – working with Government to raise the profile of capital status
- Ideas competition –to engage with New Zealanders as to their ideas of nationhood as relates to the capital function
- Visitor enhancement – improve interpretation, marketing and signage in the precinct
- Public space plan – improving the public spaces

5.3 Strategic Alignment

This project is integrated with other Council policies and initiatives, such as the *Urban Development Strategy*, the revision of the District Plan's *Central Area Design Guide* and the *Central City Framework*, which will be reported on to Council later in the year.

5.4 Where to from here?

Funding for this initiative has been included as part of the new initiative – *High Quality Urban Design* for Council’s consideration as part of 2006-07 Annual Plan. The table below illustrates the proposed longer term expenditure in this area as per the LTCCP.

\$000	06-07	07-08	08-09	09-10	10-11	11-12	12-13
Traffic study	20						
Ideas competition	10						
Open space plan	20						
Visitor/tourism enhancement	20	20	20				
Government liaison	10	10	10				
Public Art		20					
Molesworth St enhancement							1,800
Whitmore St enhancement							830

6. Conclusion

Wellington needs to be competitive and build on and emphasis its very point of difference. This project has fantastic potential to support a function of Wellington that has been in existence for 140 years but is not necessarily very visible. We need to celebrate Wellington’s capital status in a contemporary society which is continually changing. It is the City’s point of difference as the most southern capital in the world. A positive partnership with Central Government will be benefit Wellingtonians, visitors and the nation.

“Creative Wellington – Innovative Capital”.

Contact Officer: *Gerald Blunt, Manger Urban Design Policy*

Supporting Information

1) Strategic Fit / Strategic Outcome

This initiative supports Council's overall vision of Creative Wellington – Innovation Capital. It has a direct link to the Urban Development Strategy, has links with the Transport and the Culture Well-Being Strategies. It supports the Growth Spine concept.

This initiative delivers on the second highest strategic priority - high quality urban design. It also contributes to the delivery of other strategic priorities:

- *Growth Spine*
- *Protection of sense of place*

High quality urban design contributes to the following Council outcomes:

Outcome 1: More liveable – by developing and maintaining a high quality public environment

Outcome 2: Stronger sense of place – by integrating sense of place into asset management, by enhancing the role of the city as Capital, by ensuring high quality built design and by conserving the city's heritage.

Outcome 3: More Compact - by strengthening and enhancing the vitality of the central city, particularly those on the growth spine.

Outcome 7: Better connected – by developing and maintaining streets and routes that are pedestrian-friendly, accessible and safe.

Outcome 9: Safer – by influencing the design of buildings, public spaces and the connections between them to ensure that Wellington is a safe place.

2) LTCCP/Annual Plan reference and long term financial impact

An increase in operational expenditure has been proposed as part of the new initiative High Quality Urban Design that council will be considering as part of the 2006-07 Annual Plan round. It is also proposed to report back to Council prior to the 2007-08 Annual plan round with greater understanding of Central Government's role and any proposed Council expenditure scenarios.

3) Treaty of Waitangi considerations

This initiative is significant as it acknowledges the importance of this area to tangata whenua given that it is one of the major inhabitation sites pre European settlement. The area is also subject to a treaty claim.

4) Decision-Making

This is significant decision in that it shows Council's commitment to raising the profile of this very important initiative.

5) Consultation

a) General Consultation

As well as undertaking consultation with key stakeholders, a community survey and a design workshop has been undertaken. The major findings have been included in the Framework.

b) Consultation with Maori

A number of discussions have been held with Tenth's Trust and this will be ongoing as the initiatives are further developed.

6) Legal Implications

There are no legal implications at this high level.

7) Consistency with existing policy

This initiative is consistent with existing Council policy.

Appendix One