

Mayor's Welcome

Wellington is the Coolest Little Capital in the World and your council is here to serve the city. The past 12 months have been exciting, tough and heartening in equal measure.

My highlights:

The Rugby World Cup – a festival of carnivals: This was an outstanding success. Extensive planning, coordination, and dedication from staff and volunteers turned the event into a five week celebration. The event also exceeded expectations injecting \$94 million into the local economy. Visitors were made to feel really welcome by Wellingtonians.

The 2012 International Arts Festival, New Zealand's premier arts festival: We appreciate the magic of the performing arts and the technical expertise that brings them to life. This year's International Arts Festival offered something for all tastes and we embraced it – securing the largest audiences and returns in years. Free events and stunning visual displays made it accessible for everyone.

CBD Free: To be a city that holds appeal internationally you have to do the basics well. You need good transport choices, a clean water supply and many other amenities. We need to be able to connect with ease. In September we added to the city's infrastructure a free-to-use high speed wi-fi network across the central city.

Economic Development Strategy: We're New Zealand's best educated, most high-tech city. With significant tertiary institutions, we're an important centre for science and research. We're home to many emerging, growing and diverse business enterprises as well as the public service. In December we set in place an economic strategy that aims to grow jobs. A key platform in this is the \$20 million commitment we're making over the next ten years to Destination Wellington, to tell the Wellington story to businesses, investors and students. Wellington is a city where talent wants to live and work.

Building a resilient city: We've got a uniquely beautiful city and it's literally on the move, so we need to be prepared to respond to natural hazards. Our work in this area has been underway for years but we continue to refine it. Much of it – like the introduction of seismic valves to ensure secure water supplies – is unseen, while other steps such as promoting neighbourhood communities is focussed on raising awareness. We've assessed over 3,300 buildings and found 470 buildings are earthquake prone, and Council plans to invest \$80 million strengthening more of the city's buildings, roads, seawalls, bridges and water network over the next decade.

Finance and grants: In our long-term plan agreed this year, we responded to community concerns and the tough global financial climate by keeping the rates rise low while maintaining funding for many of the organisations and attractions we hold dear in Wellington. Throughout the year we also delivered many financial grants to inspirational organisations, from arts and culture to the many community groups that strive daily to make a positive difference for all Wellingtonians.

Wellington Towards 2040: Smart Capital: We unanimously adopted the strategy Wellington Towards 2040: Smart Capital, a long-term vision for Wellington that maps our transition towards a weightless economy, builds on our sense of place and emphasises our connectivity across virtual, physical, global and social sectors.

The vision builds on our city's strengths

At the close of the financial year we committed to a long-term plan – an implementation programme for the first ten years towards the vision. Both the vision and the plan were subject to extensive research and consultation and I would like to thank all those who took part in those exercises.

These highlights and the many others noted in this report are of course the result of the collective efforts of councillors, community boards, staff and our residents, local businesses and many other organisations.

Achieving these for the city is the result of coordination, partnerships, people's innovation and ideas, specialist skills, and the commitment of volunteers. Throughout this report you will see a series of graphics that bring to the fore these often hidden steps that make the city so special.

Celia Wade-Brown

Mayor