

# Draft Spatial Plan To Wellington City Council

*October 2020*

We would like to appear in person to support our submission

*Contact person:*

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**Wellington City Youth Council**  
Te Rūnanga Taiohi o te Kaunihera o Pōneke

## Introduction

1. The Wellington City Youth Council (Youth Council) welcomes the opportunity to submit on the Draft Spatial Plan for Wellington City.
2. Youth Council supports the Draft Spatial Plan's five core goals, and how these have been used to create a direction for the future of the city.
3. Overall, Youth Council wishes to identify some priorities which need to be maintained across the city through the Draft Spatial Plan and its subsequent implementation.
  - a. The central city has high importance for younger generations – this area is the space where we learn, socialise, and relax. Although development in the outer suburbs is important, a thriving central city needs continue being the focus of development.
  - b. Working towards a zero-carbon future is of particular importance to Youth Council. To achieve this future, we support the Draft Spatial Plan's focus on public transport hubs, ensuring that these hub are accessible and well developed to reflect the population growth of the city.
  - c. Designing a future city which reflects the diverse communities which call Wellington home. These designs include having a variety of housing options, such as a mix of townhouses and apartments, and a range of sizes and bedroom configurations. The Plan must accommodate groups which may not reflect the typical family to reflect the range of groups seeking accommodation in Wellington City.
4. Younger generations such as students and young professionals often experience the bottom-end of the housing market through lower-quality flats and rentals.
5. We expect that the quality of housing in Wellington will improve over time for future generations by removing blanket demolition protection clauses and encouraging increased density of housing through new builds which meet sustainable and resilient housing requirements,.
6. It is the people that make Wellington the special and desirable city that it is. Although it's important to maintain aspects of the physical character of Wellington, this character needs to be balanced with the needs of our people present today and into the future.
7. By planning for our future with people at the core of the process, we are able to ensure that the community Wellingtonians have come to know and love is maintained, and future generations are not blocked out of our city due to inaccessibility of housing.

## Central City

8. Young people in Wellington often spend most of our time in or near the central city. Central city growth needs to be a key focus as our city grows to enhance this experience. and Youth Council sees the Draft Spatial Plan capturing this focus.
9. The changes proposed ensure a resilient, vibrant, and connected future for Wellington. Although there are minimum heights in some areas, a maximum height doesn't mean all buildings **will** be this tall, and the changes that could occur won't happen overnight, allowing for continued community input as the changes occur.
10. Youth Council sees that the proposed increased maximum building height to 10 storeys in some parts of Te Aro fits with the current people-focused atmosphere and would keep the area consistent with its current usage. Increasing building heights to 6 to 8 storeys around the edges of the city, specifically in Aro Valley and Mt Victoria, allows a smooth transition from town to inner suburbs. These areas would become key areas for those interested in living near central Wellington but who don't want to live completely in town.
11. Shifting part of Thorndon from low and medium density to medium and high density allows the suburb to become more cohesive to the central city. The area highlighted on the online map tool includes several schools and embassies, rather than purely being a residential space. Youth Council see the proposed changes in this area as an opportunity to better connect Thorndon to the central city.
12. Youth Council strongly supports the maintenance of current building heights along the waterfront, especially due to the reliability of reclaimed land and the threat of sea level rise. Keeping the waterfront as it is will protect and enhance the current waterfront atmosphere.
13. Youth Council would like to see an emphasis placed on good design of medium and high-density housing. This emphasis needs to include supporting and enhancing sustainable and pleasant architecture.
14. Integrating green and recreational spaces across Wellington, connected to new developments, is an important area of focus..
15. Incentivising private investors to incorporate green spaces into their new builds is something Council should include in their planning, due to the limited availability of green spaces and pocket parks in the central city,. This integration of green spaces would allow the benefits of intensification in the central city without losing access to green spaces as the city develops.

## Inner Suburbs

16. The inner suburbs are areas that allow for a balance between convenience, price, and lifestyle for those living there. Youth Council supports the encouragement of medium density development, and therefore the increase of the maximum building height of 4-6 storeys for areas that are not character sub-areas. We believe that this medium-density focus will ensure that housing is as accessible as possible while maintaining the light, space, and character of these areas.
17. It is important to Youth Council that this increase in affordable medium density housing doesn't come at the expense of housing quality and fostering a strong sense of community. We are glad to see that this balance between higher levels of housing, coupled with a focus on high-quality dwellings, has been taken into account.
18. Youth Council also supports the removal of mandatory on-site parking requirements, as this removal aligns with our vision for a zero-carbon future and allows for a more efficient use of space.
19. It is vital that a strong public transport system is in place to ensure that both current public transport users, such as youth, along with future public transport users living in areas further out, are able to get to the city for recreation and work.
20. Youth Council is very much in favour of the increased height limit for building development along transport routes, which will support the convenience of public transport in our future and encourage the use of public transport more generally.
21. Maintaining the vibe and feel of a suburb is important to Youth Council. Therefore, we generally support the designated character areas within the inner suburbs. We believe it is important to protect some aspects of Wellington's history, and the proposed sub areas are a more surgical approach to retaining character where it is most important to Wellingtonians, balanced against also allowing options for development in areas where character is not as important.
22. We also like the idea of the 'character overlay' areas, as these areas maintain character itself while also allowing for better options for affordability and modernity of our inner suburbs.
23. Safe and affordable housing is a high priority for Youth Council, as is discussed in more detail in our section on character,. However, we acknowledge that heritage and character add to the vibe and feeling of a suburb. Therefore, we support the proposed changes to character areas and sub areas as we believe that these changes achieve a desirable balance between maintaining the character of an area and allowing for development for the future.

## Outer Suburbs

24. Youth Council is supportive of creating suburban hubs in outer suburbs such as Johnsonville and Tawa into secondary urban centres by developing more services and amenities in those areas. Currently, most young people who live in outer suburbs will commute into the central city to hang out with friends as there is a lack of facilities near where they live. Having secondary urban centres which are appealing to young people will improve access to services and facilities.
25. It is important that these centres have services catered to young people such as youth spaces and recreational facilities. The Waitohi library and Kilbirnie recreation centre are examples of facilities in outer suburbs which cater to young people and serve as community hubs.
26. We also support mixed-use development near transport hubs seen in the Type 3 and 4 zoning in Khandallah, Johnsonville, and Tawa. We believe that these changes are a great way to both develop housing near transport stops, as well as enabling more services and facilities in convenient locations. This focus on development near transport hubs helps create secondary urban hubs by concentrating more people near services and transport.
27. We want to ensure that public transport can facilitate rapid growth in the outer suburbs, particularly in the North and West. When developing in suburbs far out of the city centre such as Tawa, there's a risk that new residents will put more cars on the road. Because of this concern, any development in the outer suburbs must be designed and built with transport considerations at its core.. We support high density development concentrated around JVL and KPL stops.
28. We also believe that there should be further mass transit developments to keep pace with population growth, with rapid transit, and improvements to the bus and rail networks being a priority. Options such as park and ride should be available for those who choose to live in low-density zones on the outskirts of suburbs.
29. Youth Council values parks, green spaces, and community gardens in Wellington, particularly in the outer suburbs, as they help create an open and community feel. We would like to keep this feel in the outer suburbs. Retaining this vibe could be achieved by ensuring that people can continue to comfortably access green spaces, regardless of how the suburbs grow. By ensuring that these spaces are easy to access, the public is more likely to choose options like walking or catching public transport to these places. This access would be important to help make our city eco-friendly.
30. As young people in Wellington, we see these public spaces as a necessity for the future as citizens of Wellington are more likely to be living in homes with small or no backyards.

31. Youth Council recognizes the need to increase housing, particularly in the outer suburbs where there is often space available to construct additional buildings. We believe that when increasing the number of houses, the aesthetics of these homes will play a crucial role in drawing people to the suburb.
32. We urge a focus on the consistency of building design to be maintained across each suburb. Consistency in the design of these houses will allow the suburbs to retain their unique character.
33. Youth Council recognizes that some people won't be very open to the idea of change, but we believe that increasing housing options and retaining the unique character in each suburb is possible and the best option for Wellington.
34. Youth Council would also like to see affordable and accessible housing for young Wellingtonians. We recognize and support building of additional homes, but we would like this to be done by having more affordable housing. Currently, purchasing a home in many cities is becoming increasingly difficult for young people. Through the building of additional housing, we would like to ensure that housing is affordable for young people looking to purchase a home.
35. Youth Council would also like to see resilient and sustainable housing being built. We believe that this focus is essential in ensuring that people feel comfortable and secure in their homes. We want to ensure that the houses being built are resilient and fit for purpose. Living in Wellington, we believe that resilience looks like building homes that are earthquake safe. Youth Council emphasizes the need for sustainable and resilient housing, so young people can have greater confidence when purchasing a home.
36. We highlight and support the importance of keeping a family-friendly atmosphere for the suburbs. Many of the steps that the Draft Spatial Plan is taking will result in the urbanisation of our currently quiet suburbs. We would like to make sure that during this development, we make sure that these areas are still suitable and liveable to families and smaller children. Many families and prospective families will be looking to move into our city, and we want to make sure that we provide areas in which they can feel comfortable and at ease in.
37. Ideas on how to maintain and enhance this atmosphere is to focus on integrating green spaces like parks and playgrounds into development changes. This integration will ensure that families and kids still have lots of space to play and enjoy in our suburbs. We urge Council to consider families and children when urbanising our suburbs to ensure that they are still cared for in terms of sustaining the family vibe.

## Opportunity Sites

38. Youth Council welcomes the potential of development at Upper Stebbings Valley, Lincolnshire Farm, and Glenside West. The development of these greenfield areas and their impact on the overall housing situation will make densification easier, by freeing up land in town centres.
39. Youth Council's primary concern with greenfield developments are their perception as the silver-bullet solution to our housing crisis. We agree with the views of Wellingtonians expressed in the *Our City Tomorrow* project - we need to focus on building up, not out. Additionally, a reliance on greenfield development to solve our housing crisis runs contrary to the spirit of the National Policy Statement on Urban Development.
40. Youth Council is additionally concerned by the potential here for history to repeat itself. Churton Park, being the most recent example of a greenfield development in Wellington's northern suburbs, shows many of the structural flaws such suburbs can have. The suburb lacks adequate provision for affordable housing and public transport and has failed to protect its biodiversity. Youth Council urges Councillors to consider the tools at their disposal, including zoning, to make the new greenfield developments affordable, accessible, and green.
41. To be clear, Youth Council is not opposed to greenfield developments in general, nor to those proposed developments in particular, but we stress the need for Council to avoid the mistakes of the past by using all the tools at its disposal.

## Balancing character with high-quality housing

42. Youth Council recognises that a key issue present in discussions around the Draft Spatial Plan is changes that might alter how "character" is considered in Wellington.
43. Youth Council absolutely supports the continuation of recognising character in Wellington and views the surgical approach to protection is based in evidence that supports and maintains character and also allows for better housing outcomes.
44. We note that there is a clear distinction to be made between heritage and just general character. Youth Council highly values the maintenance of heritage and sees the proposed approach to protecting heritage through a more surgical approach to character more broadly as striking the right balance between protection and progression.
45. Youth Council views the need for additional quality housing in Wellington to be one of the most critical issues facing the City. For Youth Council, the question is less about if we value character or not, but more that if we have to choose between

- a. an old house without a significant contribution to character, and
- b. a warm affordable house,

we choose the latter.

46. We support the comprehensive and detailed assessments undertaken by and on behalf of Council to assess character across Wellington make sure that we keep the character that add significantly to Wellington but also recognise that as the world around us changes, Wellington also has to change. We cannot afford to stand still.
47. Character should not be a blanket protection for Wellington in a previous time. Instead, a surgical approach to protecting character and heritage ensures a strong balance between protection and progress. The identified sub-areas in the Draft Spatial Plan make clear that those elements that make Wellington distinctly Wellington are preserved.
48. The quality of housing in Wellington remains of concern, with high rates of damp, mould, and no heating. Analysis of Census 2018 dwelling data shows that Wellington City has the 5th highest rate of houses with no heating in them, with nearly 3,400 houses (4.8% of the total, above the national average of 4.0%). Wellington also has high rates of damp and mouldy houses.
49. Key areas within the current areas defined as Pre-1930 Character Areas have some of the lowest housing quality measures in Wellington. Between 26% and 40% of houses in Mt Victoria, Mt Cook, Newtown, Berhampore, and Aro Valley were recorded as damp, with the 40% recorded in Aro Valley the highest reading in Wellington, and among the highest in New Zealand. The number of dwellings that are mouldy trend in line with dampness. Some areas also show high proportions of houses without heating, with over 20% of dwellings in Mt Cook without a heating source.
50. Youth Council submits that the high concentrations of housing quality issues aligned with some of the current Pre-1930 Character Areas require a more targeted approach to character to ensure that housing outcomes in Wellington support Wellingtonians to live in warm, safe, housing.
51. We highlight that the removal of blanket protections in the Pre-1930 Character Areas does not mean that bulldozers will roll in tomorrow to destroy dwellings in the current area. Instead, the changes proposed take away the arbitrary protection of large areas of Wellington from any changes simply on the basis of being old. Instead, a surgical approach to character, and opening up the potential to change, will ensure that Wellington's housing stock improves.



52. Wellington cannot allow itself to become a museum to yesterday where Wellingtonians remember times over 90 years when the current situation for many remains increasingly precarious.
53. In Youth Council's view, the surgical protections for character in the Draft Spatial Plan properly balance the need to maintain and protect character through an evidence-based approach with the need to allow Wellington to expand, progress, and prosper in the here-and-now.

## Conclusion

54. Overall, Youth Council supports the Draft Spatial Plan.
55. We believe that maintaining a focus on the people of Wellington, rather than the physical attributes of the current city, is key to ensuring that the vibrancy and appeal of our capital city is maintained.
56. Youth Council appreciates that there are major balancing acts in play throughout this plan – balancing the focus on the city centre and developing the outer suburbs; encouraging intensification and development and maintaining open and green spaces; retaining the character and heritage of the city and still improving the overall quality of housing.
57. However, we believe that the Draft Spatial Plan achieves this balance and will be able to implement the outlined goals and directions by maintaining a clear focus on people.
58. Without the diverse communities that call Wellington home, the city would lose much of the vibrancy which is core to its appeal. As the city grows, we need to ensure that the ability to join the Wellington community is retained through increased housing availability, which is warm, safe, and dry.
59. This Draft Spatial Plan is for the future generations of our city – the generations who will be living here in thirty years' time. If we wish to ensure that Wellington's appeal is maintained and experienced by future generations, we need to keep people and communities at the focus of planning, rather than maintaining the status quo.