

Future of the Central Library Submission

To Wellington City Council

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We would like to appear in person to support our submission

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Te Rūnanga Taiohi o te Kaunihera o Pōneke

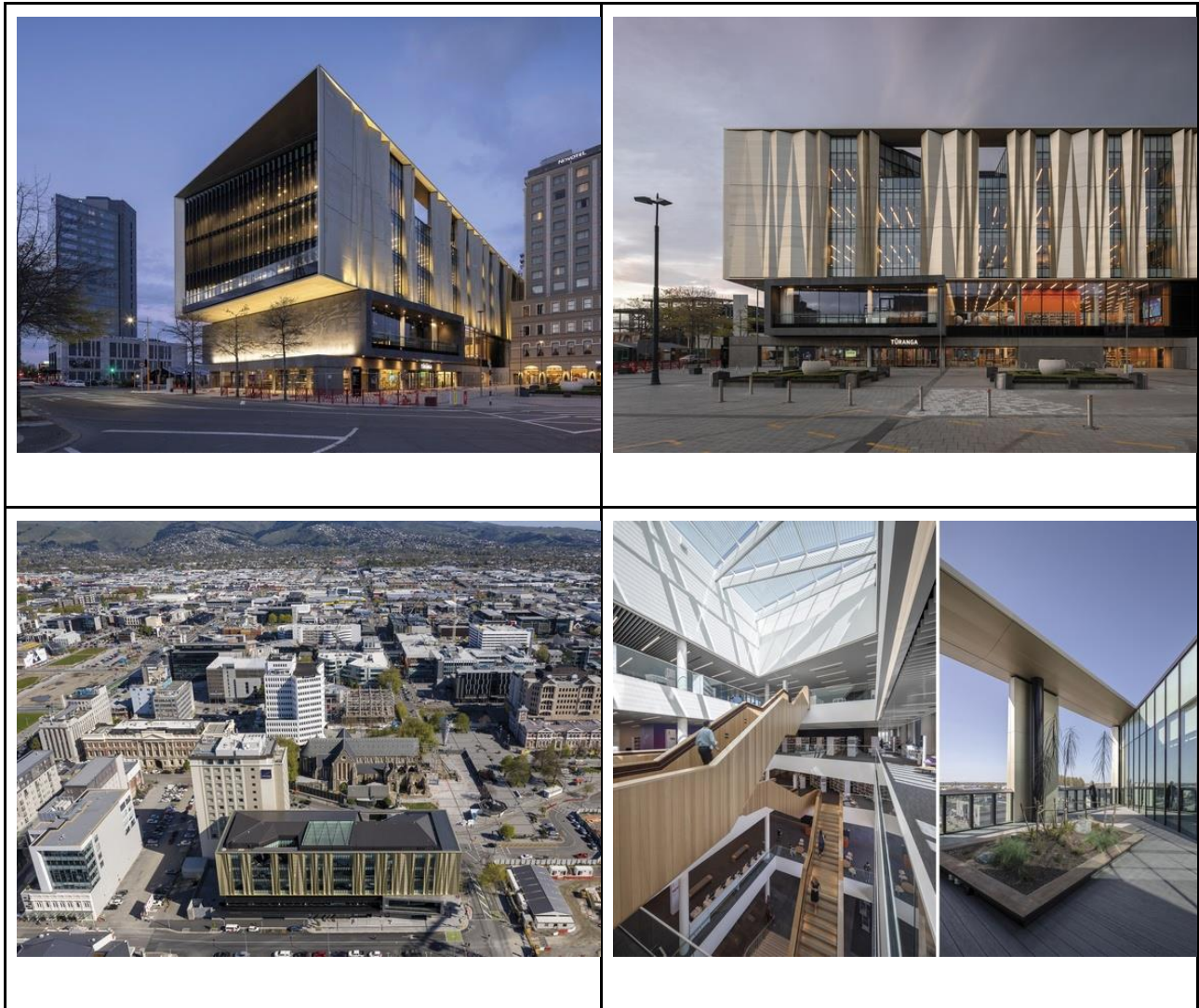
Introduction

1. The Wellington City Youth Council (Youth Council) welcomes the opportunity to submit on Wellington City Council's Future of the Central Library consultation.
2. Having considered the five proposed options, Youth Council wishes to support Option D - a new build on the same site.
3. Youth Council believes that Option D is the best proposal for the following reasons:
 - a. A rebuild allows greater opportunities, whereas Option C is limited to the existing infrastructure of the building.
 - b. Ability to create a 21st century, youth-focused space.
 - c. A new building is able to be purpose built, rather than retrofitted
 - d. Long-term resilience of the building as it can be built to meet the current earthquake-proof regulations, instead of attempting to strengthen a building designed for out-dated regulations.
 - e. A new, creative space will improve civic engagement in the area, drawing people back into Civic Square.
4. A new build provides strong civic impact, is economically viable, and creates better opportunities for a youth focused space in the central city.
5. For these reasons, Youth Council believes that Option D provides the most desirable outcome for young Wellingtonians and future generations to come.

Civic Impact

6. A new Central Library offers an unparalleled opportunity for our community to invest in a truly architecturally and socially significant building which reflects modern innovation and projects a self-confident aspiration for Wellington's future.

7. A new building gives us a new chance to meaningfully incorporate the narratives of the diverse communities and mana whenua of Te Ūpoko o te Ika Maui.
8. Unlike the trio of remediation options, Option D offers a high level of seismic safety and would be purpose-built and designed to incorporate best-practice sustainability standards and respond to long term climate change concerns.
9. With Option D, Wellington would respond to the immediate need to reconstruct the central node of our library system and invest in a valuable civic asset for the future. Rather than just repairing the current building, Wellington can build back better and be aspirational in designing a fit-for-purpose building to serve the community.
10. Christchurch City's experience in rebuilding its Central Library - *Tūranga* - is insightful and instructive. Situated in Cathedral Square - *Ōtautahi's equivalent of Te Ngakau* - the new Central library provided a high quality fit-for-purpose building for three reasons:
 - a. The design process was meaningfully participatory and involved serious, sustained engagement with librarians and the community as clients and local iwi designers as key stakeholders.
 - b. A partnership of designers who skilfully and responsively led and executed the design and;
 - c. A public that values libraries and has quickly embraced the new building.
11. Christchurch's new library offers a broad range of amenities, including public meeting spaces, a giant Lego collection and slide, 3D printers, an interactive wall, sewing machines and more. These 'new' additions are consistent with international trends in library design and Tūranga embraces these without ever losing sight of its role as a collector and provider of books and archives.



12. Similarly, Option D gives Wellington an opportunity to innovate an exciting future for our community. At a similar, if not cheaper level of investment, Option D would reinvigorate Te Ngakau by fostering a sense of destination that creates an array of different kinds of experiences: quiet seating, meetings with friends, reading books, accessing public services online, playing games, doing homework, senior citizens get-to-togethers and youth-centred engagements.
13. Our new Central library would not only inject stimulus into the heart of the city, but also a great civic building, a new work of culturally responsive, place-based architecture that represents the challenges we have been through and what we have lost, but manifests a bold, innovative and community-centred future.

Economic Impact

14. Based on the information provided publicly by Council, Youth Council believes that a brand-new Central Library makes the best economic sense. Of the two options Youth Council is focused on (Options C and D), Option D gives Wellingtonians everything we gain from Option C and the ability to build a modern building with amenities for a 21st Century capital city for between \$20m and \$40m less (Statement of Proposal, pp. 28-29). Option D is cheaper to build and open, more resilient to future seismic activity, and undoubtedly more sustainable as it will (presumably) be designed from the ground-up as a green building.
15. The timeframes surrounding the proposals for Options C and D are within six months of each other, indicating that Option D is cheaper to build and only marginally longer to complete.
16. The Statement of Proposal does not go into significant technical detail regarding the relative seismic resilience of an Option C library versus an Option D library. It is expected that a new build will provide a more comprehensive approach to resilience than a strengthened existing build. New builds like Option D are designed from the ground-up to meet and exceed not just today's building codes, but tomorrow's.
17. No matter how much you strengthen an existing building, you either keep the failing internal structure, or you lose the heritage by replacing it. The former couldn't, and shouldn't, be justifiable under Council's own standards, and the latter is essentially Option D bar the benefits. Youth Council believes that the city has a duty to current and future Wellingtonians to build the strongest Central Library we can - this means Option D.
18. Sustainability is also better supported by a new build than a retrofitted option. Youth Council believes that Option D achieves the best sustainability outcomes for Wellington. Instead of just tacking-on sustainable enhancements to an the original building, Wellingtonians would get a library that not just teaches but embodies sustainability and its latest architectural implementations.

19. In terms of resource efficiency, the increased efficiency of a library built to the absolute highest modern standards would greatly outweigh the waste caused by demolition, especially if Council takes the opportunity to become a leader in the field of building material recycling.
20. Although Youth Council acknowledges the potential for litigation as a result of Option D being chosen, we believe that the significant cost savings and improved amenity gained from an Option D library outweigh the potential litigation expenses, particularly when the lower building cost is considered.

Our Vision for the Central Library

21. The Wellington City Youth Council strongly advocates for the City Council to be bold in its design for the proposed Central Library. This building will be used over decades to come, so ensuring that it is flexible and sustainable is essential.
22. We would like to see an inclusive space that is open for any and all people to use to truly reflect the diversity of people in Te Whanganui-a-Tara. This could look like books in a diverse range of languages, catering to potential accessibility barriers in the building e.g. wheelchairs - and having spaces that reflect different cultures.
23. We also believe that there should be a dedicated floor or area for youth. Having a specific area for young people would not only draw them to the library, but would also encourage them to meet other young people. Having this space would make for an accessible place for young people to study, and also a place where youth could simply come to hang out. It would allow for the creation of a wellbeing hub for young people in the city, as community services and youth workers could be located within the youth space, to support and provide guidance for young people.
24. Youth Council believes that this would replace the old Reading Cinema area where young people often used to gather, for both studying and recreational purposes. We recognize that this dedicated youth space would need to be plentiful in charging stations and with access to free Wi-Fi - perhaps with resources available for students to study and access related resources.

25. Youth Council would also like to see a dedicated 'Quiet Zone' incorporated into the youth area. This zone would be a place in which youth could study individually if they so desire.
26. Having facilities and resources that reflect changing times is important to allowing access to opportunities for all. These facilities and resources could include having AV and recording equipment, 3D printers (like Waitohi and Tūranga), computers, power chargers, Wi-Fi, and access to software that may be difficult for people to access usually due to cost factors.
27. Examples of libraries which integrate youth and community spaces include the Tūranga library in Christchurch, and the Waitohi library in Johnsonville. The Waitohi makerspace, and Tūranga innovation space are examples of the integration of spaces within the library which go beyond just containing books.
28. Overseas examples such as the Finnish Civic Library in Helsinki which also integrates community services and spaces is another example of the type of mixed use spaces within a library building, that expands its functionality beyond the traditional silent spaces for reading and studying and allows it to adapt to a 21st century vision of libraries as community hubs rather than just book repository.
29. It is much more practical to integrate these spaces when a new building is built from scratch which is the primary reason the Youth Council advocates for Option D (the demolition of the current damaged building and rebuilding of the central library).
30. A rebuild from the ground up isn't limited to the same constraints as the previous space, including the layout, amenities, and expectations of the old library.

Option D provides the best opportunity for the future

31. Youth Council recognises that Option D is not Council's preferred option. However, we believe that Council should be bold and choose Option D. In our view, the opportunity for a new, modern, purpose-built new library is worth

taking the risk of litigation and procedural issues regarding the heritage status of the building in order to achieve the goals of this proposal.

32. Whilst maintaining heritage within our central city is an important consideration, this heritage needs to be mitigated when it is preventing the possibility of progress and innovation. Where possible, heritage needs to be considered, however this is an opportunity to look to the future, with the possible benefits of a new space being seen to outweigh the importance of maintaining heritage aspects.
33. Moreover, the current building is damaged, and will cost more to repair than to build anew. It seems impudent to prioritise the heritage aspect of the current library building when both price and greater purpose-build amenity are prioritised by a new build.
34. We acknowledge that a rebuild would likely mean a later opening date for the new library. However, this is a disadvantage that Youth Council is willing to accept where it allows a stronger and more desirable space into the future, particularly given the timeframes for Option C and D are similar (May 2025 vs November 2025).
35. Option D provides the best opportunity to expand this space from simply being a library to also become a multi-purpose community space. Option D is a chance to re-imagine the way that a library space operates and is used, with the possibility to incorporate aspects of a community centre in the middle of our central city.
36. Whilst high level remediation is restricted to the building as it currently exists, a new building will allow increased accessibility for all members of the Wellington community, with the opportunity for widespread consultation to ensure that the concerns of equity groups are included in the new design.
37. The re-imagining of the Central City Library is a once-in-a-generation opportunity. Due to the high level of cost associated with any proposal, Youth Council believes that this opportunity should be taken to redesign the space to the highest level possible to ensure it will continue to be a safe, appealing space for future generations to come.

Conclusion

38. Youth Council supports Option D – a new build on the same site – for the Future of the Central Library proposal.
39. We believe that this option is the most viable economically, and allows the opportunity for innovative design and thinking in this new space.
40. Due to earthquake damage in many other central-city public buildings, youth have lost areas where they are safe and welcome to gather within the central city. This proposal grants the opportunity to remedy this, allowing Council to have a direct connection to young people in our city spaces.
41. Option D is an opportunity to build a space for future generations of young Wellingtonians, drawing them into the central city to a welcoming environment where they are able to learn and thrive.
42. Regardless of which option is selected, we wish to implore that a youth-focused space as described above is included. This engagement is an exciting opportunity for young people to highlight to Council to show what is most important to them. Youth Council looks forward to collaborating with Council to create such a space.
43. By investing in the future of Wellington's central city in a bold way, Wellington has the opportunity to set a precedent for the way that Council's prioritise and engage with Youth in a meaningful way, creating a purpose-built space for them in the heart of our city.