

Social Wellbeing Framework Submission To Wellington City Council

May 2021

We would like to appear in person to support our submission

Contact person:

Laura Jackson, Chair
Wellington City Youth Council

c/o Wellington City Council
PO Box 2199, Wellington 6140

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 Wellington City Council's Social Wellbeing Framework.
2. The submission by Youth Council on the Social Wellbeing Framework will address the following topics:
 - a. Housing and physical safety need to be prioritised as focus areas in order to increase overall social wellbeing.
 - b. Although Council has many recreational and cultural opportunities on offer to Wellingtonians, these opportunities are inadequately advertised and therefore not utilised.
 - c. Wellington is an extremely diverse city - there is no one-size-fits-all approach to improving wellbeing.
 - d. Integration of te ao Māori is going to be a crucial element of improving the social wellbeing across our city as a whole.
3. We believe that housing and physical safety need to be prioritised by the Council, with urgent action being needed.
4. By first addressing fundamental aspects of wellbeing such as housing and city safety, cultural and community events will be able to be experienced to their full potential with the greatest benefit.
5. Wellington needs a down-to-earth, realistic plan on how we are going to improve these issues. Once these issues have been addressed, then the Council will be able to focus on more community-based events in order to improve social wellbeing on a broader scale.

Housing and safety as crucial to social wellbeing

6. Youth Council strongly believe that having an inclusive and resilient city plays an integral role in social wellbeing.
7. We particularly believe that in such a city, affordable housing and a sense of security is very important for the development of young people.
8. Young people who are safe and can keep a roof above their heads are more secure in their ability to participate and feel like they are a welcome member

of the community and have the time and energy to focus into Wellington's social fabric.

9. Safety in Wellington also plays a very important role in social wellbeing. Young people need to feel safe in Wellington, and we believe that this is a fundamental aspect of allowing young people to thrive and have positive social wellbeing.
10. As such, affordable housing and city safety are crucial considerations through any analysis of social wellbeing in the city. Although attempts to improve social wellbeing through cultural and community events are well-intended, without the basics of housing and physical safety being improved, these efforts are futile.

Practical changes to allow growth in social wellbeing

11. Youth Council acknowledges that an increasing number of people, particularly young people, are facing challenges in finding affordable housing. This struggle to find housing is a fundamental issue which needs to be at the forefront of any wellbeing strategy, with an urgent response required.
12. Affordable housing will give young people a better opportunity in engaging with the city and act as an enabling factor to attract and retain young people in Wellington rather than having them leave the region for more affordable cities elsewhere.
13. Housing is consistently listed as one of the biggest challenges facing young people in Wellington, and therefore needs an urgent response if we wish to continue to encouraging young people to call Wellington home.
14. Addressing housing issues in Wellington is a complex problem, but improvements could be made by increasing the quantity of housing which Wellington City Council provides as a landlord, as well as working with developers to increase housing city-wide which is accessible, both physically and financially.
15. Youth Council also emphasises that both physical and mental health are critical parts of both social wellbeing and resilience. Thus, both need to be addressed throughout a wellbeing strategy.
16. Better education for young people about mental health and where to seek help when young people are in need will play an important role in promoting social wellbeing in the city.

17. Youth Council believes strongly that personal safety is very important to young people, and that it is critical to having a strong sense of wellbeing in our city.
18. If young people don't feel safe, they aren't going to want to contribute to the city.
19. This ability to interact and contribute to Wellington is why it is extremely important that personal safety is looked after as best as possible.

Improved advertising of wellbeing-targeted experiences in the city

20. Youth Council would like to acknowledge the work the Council currently does around providing recreational, cultural, creative, social, and learning opportunities.
21. We believe that having these opportunities in Wellington help to support young people in making positive and strong social connections.
22. However, the opportunities that do exist aren't well understood and awareness of these opportunities is low.
23. Youth Council would like to see better advertising of the different programmes, experiences, and facilities to ensure that even more young Wellingtonians are aware of what they can get involved in.
24. We believe that with a vast array of different advertising methods, more young people will get involved with the city.
25. Youth Council agree that the diverse population of the city needs to be addressed, but it's critically important to seek feedback from as many of these diverse groups of people as possible. Doing so will ensure we craft a sociable city for not only young people, but all people to live in.

We are Wellington - but what does this mean in practice?

Stronger integration of te ao Māori

26. We believe that it is important to understand how people belong to communities based on their whakapapa, interests, challenges, and cultural affiliations.
27. We also value the diversity of Wellington's people, and believe that it plays a key role in making Wellington a sociable city.
28. Youth Council also strongly believes in the Long Term Plan committing to building strong partnerships with mana whenua.
29. We are really wanting to ensure that te reo Māori and te ao Māori are woven into and are at the forefront of any development of Wellington.
30. Doing so will enable young people to learn more about Māori culture, Te Whanganui-a-Tara (Wellington), and Aotearoa as well.
31. As such, we believe strong te ao Māori integration will play a critical role in the social wellbeing of young people in our city.
32. Youth Council also strongly acknowledges Māori as first people of Aotearoa, and we want to ensure that Te Tiriti o Waitangi is at the fore of any and all decisions made.

Council to take ownership of community wellbeing

33. The integration of Professor Mason Durie's model of wellbeing, Te Whare Tapa Wha, is an excellent move by Council and one that Youth Council feels serves as a more appropriate blueprint for thinking about the nuances and interconnected nature of wellbeing in Wellington.
34. Youth Council agrees with the community outcomes framework and the strategic goals as a solid vision for Wellington, and a city that we would like to live in.
35. The framework outlines what Council currently contributes towards achieving these goals in the city.
36. This framework includes an impressive list that helps move Wellington towards our shared vision.
37. But Youth Council strongly believes that Council must significantly increase its efforts in a multitude of areas such as infrastructure, support for the arts, better urban planning, transport plans to have a chance of realizing this vision for the city.

38. Youth Council supports Council's position to continue increasing its supports for organisations outside of Council working in the wellbeing space.
39. We note the acknowledgment that some pre-existing community organisations can often fulfil a role without Council needing to create a duplicate role.
40. However, the strength of these organisations is not an excuse for Council to ignore community issues and pass off problems to other organisations.
41. The proposed wet house plans which haven't come to fruition are an example of a lack of delivery by Council in the wellbeing space.

Creating an inclusive and diverse city through partnerships

42. We believe that the strategies and policies in place will effectively help improve the wellbeing of the people in Wellington.
43. We agree with the principle of honouring Te Tiriti and Council's partnership with mana whenua.
44. Youth Council believes it is important for Wellingtonians to be able to realise their aspirations and therefore we agree with the principle to ensure the foundations are in place to do so.
45. This principle seems well rounded as it incorporates both hard and soft infrastructure, a focus we are sure will help improve wellbeing in Wellington.
46. We believe working creatively and collaboratively with others for our diverse communities is very important. This principle will help our city become more inclusive and diverse, making sure all different types of people are able to feel comfortable. It is truly a step in the right direction for social wellbeing in Wellington.

Key Issues

Addressing the increasing inequity and social disparity

47. Youth Council agrees that COVID-19 will have an ongoing impact on the lives of Wellingtonians, with specific groups like women, young people, and Māori disproportionately affected.

48. We recognise that there is an income inequality problem facing Wellington. We are frustrated at the rising inequality in Wellington with increases to average income for Wellington's bottom decile not keeping pace with growth in incomes for the top decile.
49. Unequal distribution of income and wealth is a core barrier between social wellbeing outcomes for Wellingtonians as it both creates a divide between high- and low-income groups and causes hardship for our citizens who struggle to get by.
50. The number of children facing material hardship detrimentally affects the social wellbeing of our young people as well as their families. No one wants their families to face hardship.
51. It is positive to note the significant increase in Wellington household income between 2013 and 2018.
52. However, we highlight the disparity noted in the draft Social Wellbeing Framework that shows the massive gap between Māori household net worth and European net worth: \$23,000 and \$114,000 respectively.
53. Council recognises that this results in less ability to absorb financial shocks and unplanned expenses, with the wealth gap both causing, and being a consequence of, far lower rates of home ownership.
54. However, there is little mention in the Framework as to what steps have been taken to rectify this wealth gap. It brings on the question - has the wellbeing of our Māori Wellingtonians been greatly neglected?

Growing cities and social cohesion

55. We agree with the action to support people to live in communities that are compact, resilient, vibrant and prosperous, inclusive and connected, and greener. These are all very important values to have in our ever growing and expanding city.
56. We highlight that with such a considerable estimated growth in the next 10 years, Wellington's diversity will grow.
57. It is important to make sure our citizens feel safe, included, and able to interact with other members of their community without facing discrimination or bullying.

58. Ensuring that our citizens can feel safe in their own skin no matter where they go in our city is an important factor in the social wellbeing of Wellingtonians.
59. Youth Council agrees that social networks have become an integral part of how we communicate as a society.
60. We commend the recognition of a growing online bullying problem as this problem is increasingly harming the wellbeing of Wellingtonians.
61. It is disappointing that this discrimination or bullying is disproportionately felt by our citizens of colour, women, those in the rainbow community, and people with disabilities.
62. We highlight the need to ensure that these groups are provided with more support and this discrimination and bullying is targeted at the roots to ensure we are effectively cultivating an environment that supports the wellbeing of all citizens.

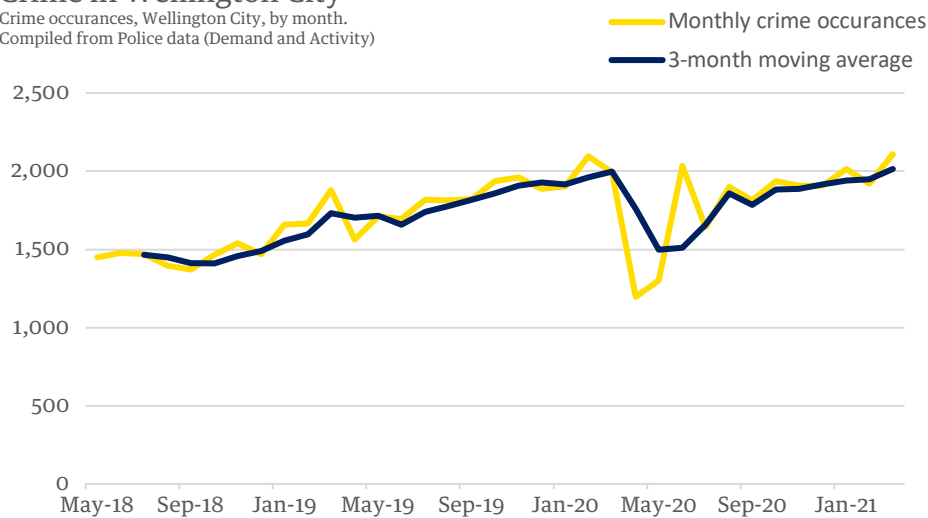
Safety in the central city

63. Youth Council disagree with the Framework's sentiments that Wellington is a safe city overall.
64. Although statistics are providing suggesting that Wellington is safe, particularly in comparison to cities internationally, this feeling of safety is not the experience in 2021 of Youth Councillors and those young people we have spoken to.
65. From our experiences, there has been a rapid decline in the feeling of safety within in the central city in the past few years, with a notable change existing in comparison to 2014-2019, when these statistics were gathered.
66. There is an increasing feeling of uneasiness around the central city, especially at night. This uneasiness is reported to be increased for minority groups. We believe this is a key issue to focus on as it is important for Council to recognise that there are many safety concerns as this directly affects the wellbeing of our citizens.
67. Furthermore, 'levels of safety' are difficult to measure solely through historical statistics. Our city has changed drastically in this post-pandemic time, therefore it feels inaccurate to base safety levels from a pre-pandemic time.

68. Furthermore, feelings of safety and dangerous encounters are largely anecdotal, rather than being able to be based solely on reported offences.
69. Therefore, we would be hesitant for Council to rely on these statistics when informing its judgment as to the levels of safety experienced by the community in the central city, as these figures may not be accurate in 2021.
70. Importantly, our brief analysis of publicly available Police data shows an upwards trend in crimes in Wellington City.

Crime in Wellington City

Crime occurrences, Wellington City, by month.
Compiled from Police data (Demand and Activity)



Conclusion

71. Overall, Youth Council is satisfied with plans for ongoing monitoring for the Social Wellbeing Framework.
72. An improvement in the social wellbeing among Wellingtonians is desperately needed - the unrest among the central city is evidence of this.
73. In order to achieve the goals set out in this Framework, Council needs to engage directly with the communities most severely affected in order to build our city's wellbeing back from the ground up.
74. Youth Council looks forward to the possibility of working with Council in supporting this Framework and is excited to see the positive outcomes which this framework will have.