

# INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 PURPOSE OF POLICY

This Policy provides a framework to guide the development and management of Wellington City's centres. Centres are the focus of economic and social life in our communities. They have multiple functions and activities, but their core is typically retail and local services. Wellington City has an established network of centres, from the central city which has a citywide and regional role, to the larger town centres serving several suburbs (such as Johnsonville and Kilbirnie) through to smaller centres serving their local areas and neighbourhoods.

The Centres Policy considers in an integrated way the varied roles of the centres, to provide guidance on how they should be managed and developed in the future, and to assist in coordinating the Council's activities and programmes in and around these centres. It will be supported and implemented through more detailed policies (including the District Plan and centre plans), the Council's infrastructure investment decisions and specific projects and initiatives.

## 1.2 OVERALL APPROACH

Centres are key locations for future urban growth and support the Council's Urban Development Strategy. The Growth Spine is built around these centres connected by a high quality transport corridor.

The overall intent of the Policy is to maintain and strengthen our existing and planned centres. For the larger centres this will mean retaining their role as primary places to shop and growing their multi-functional nature by facilitating residential development, employment growth and increasing the range of facilities and services available. For the smaller centres this will mean retaining and strengthening their role in providing accessible convenience shopping and local community services. For all centres it is also important to improve the quality of urban design and to maximise their potential to achieve more sustainable forms of development.

A hierarchy of centres has been introduced to provide guidance on their role and function, and will assist in assessing the appropriateness of proposed developments. This is supported by defining 'Planning Areas' based around each of the larger centres to provide a common spatial planning framework to assist the Council's investment programmes in areas such as infrastructure and community facilities and to ensure integrated planning (refer to Hierarchy of Centres map on page 9).

## 1.3 WELLINGTON'S CENTRES

Wellington has a well established network of centres across the city, each with different roles and functions, reflecting their location, population catchment, size and historical development pattern.

The central city has always played a dominant role as the primary centre of both Wellington City and indeed the region as a whole. It continues to be the primary shopping centre (especially for comparison and speciality goods), as well as the major employment centre for the region, a focus for civic and State functions and an entertainment and events hub.

The inner and outer suburbs are also well served by a network of centres, with a relatively even distribution of the six larger sub-regional

and town centres through the urban area supported by 30 district and neighbourhood centres. The only identified gaps are in the more recently developed northern suburbs, where some suburbs are growing without suitable access to local convenience shopping or a community focal point. The planned centres for Churton Park and Lincolnshire Farm will help complete the network.

In recent years a number of other retail destinations have been developed, often based on large-format retail activities (ie Rongotai retail park). These have a single-activity focus and do not have the same functions and roles as centres. There are also a number of areas across the city that are primarily used for industrial activities – again these have a single-activity focus and are not considered to be centres.

## 1.4 THE ROLE OF CENTRES

Centres are the focus for much of the economic and social life of their communities. They provide accessible shopping and local services to meet people's day-to-day needs. The larger the centre – the greater the range of activities and functions typically located there. It is the combination of activities and functions that makes centres particularly important places, as it enables them to deliver a range of environmental, social, economic and cultural benefits.

The role of larger centres should include:

- A nexus for community contact and exchange – social activity occurs as a consequence of people moving about in the same space, and centres are the most important places for such meetings, particularly as they are more than often the location for community and entertainment facilities. Centres also have a role in defining our identity and our local community.
- Shopping – household spending on retail is second only to spending on housing – this means that retail is a critical factor in the economic viability of centres. Retail (particularly supermarkets and large department stores) makes viable the co-location of specialist retailing and a range of services that are visited less often.
- Public transport nodes – all of the city's high-frequency public transport routes pass through or close to centres. People living in and around centres are able to walk to access these services. Even when the primary transport mode is a private vehicle, centres provide significant environmental benefits, by enabling people to combine one vehicle trip with multiple purposes (ie to shop, access services, visit community facilities, meet other people and go to work). Reducing vehicle emissions is a key element in reducing the city's carbon footprint. Maintaining and strengthening our centres is also important to ensure Wellington has an urban environment that is resilient to future changes such as climate change and peak oil.
- Employment nodes – the central city and larger town centres have significant concentrations of employment. Many of the businesses in these centres are within the service sector – one of the growth areas of the economy.
- A focus for intensive residential development – centres and their surrounds are also proposed to be the focus for more intensive housing growth over the next 50 years, with the review of infill housing anticipating that 60% of future growth will occur in and around centres.