

Newlands Centre lies at the heart of the local Newlands community. It is an important district centre servicing the suburb of Newlands, and to a lesser extent, the surrounding suburbs of Johnsonville East, Paparangi and Woodridge. It is close to Johnsonville town centre and central Wellington, and has a good connecting bus service. Newlands has good schools, parks and reserves, and is well-served in terms of community and recreational facilities, including the new community centre, Newlands Park and the skate park.

While the Newlands shopping area could become a thriving place with a range of shops and services, a safer and more attractive pedestrian environment and more housing choice, there are obstacles that need to be overcome. Improving the centre will be a long-term process, and much will depend on what private investment can be attracted to assist with development. The Council will look to work with developers, investors, other agencies and where appropriate, use Council-owned assets to kick-start and support revitalisation of the centre.

This plan sets out a vision for the Newlands Centre's future development. It includes a series of key principles aimed at guiding the centre's revitalisation and redevelopment.

The plan also identifies a mix of potential private and public development opportunities to help achieve change – some to be achieved within the next five years, and some to be achieved over a much longer timeframe, up to 20 years.

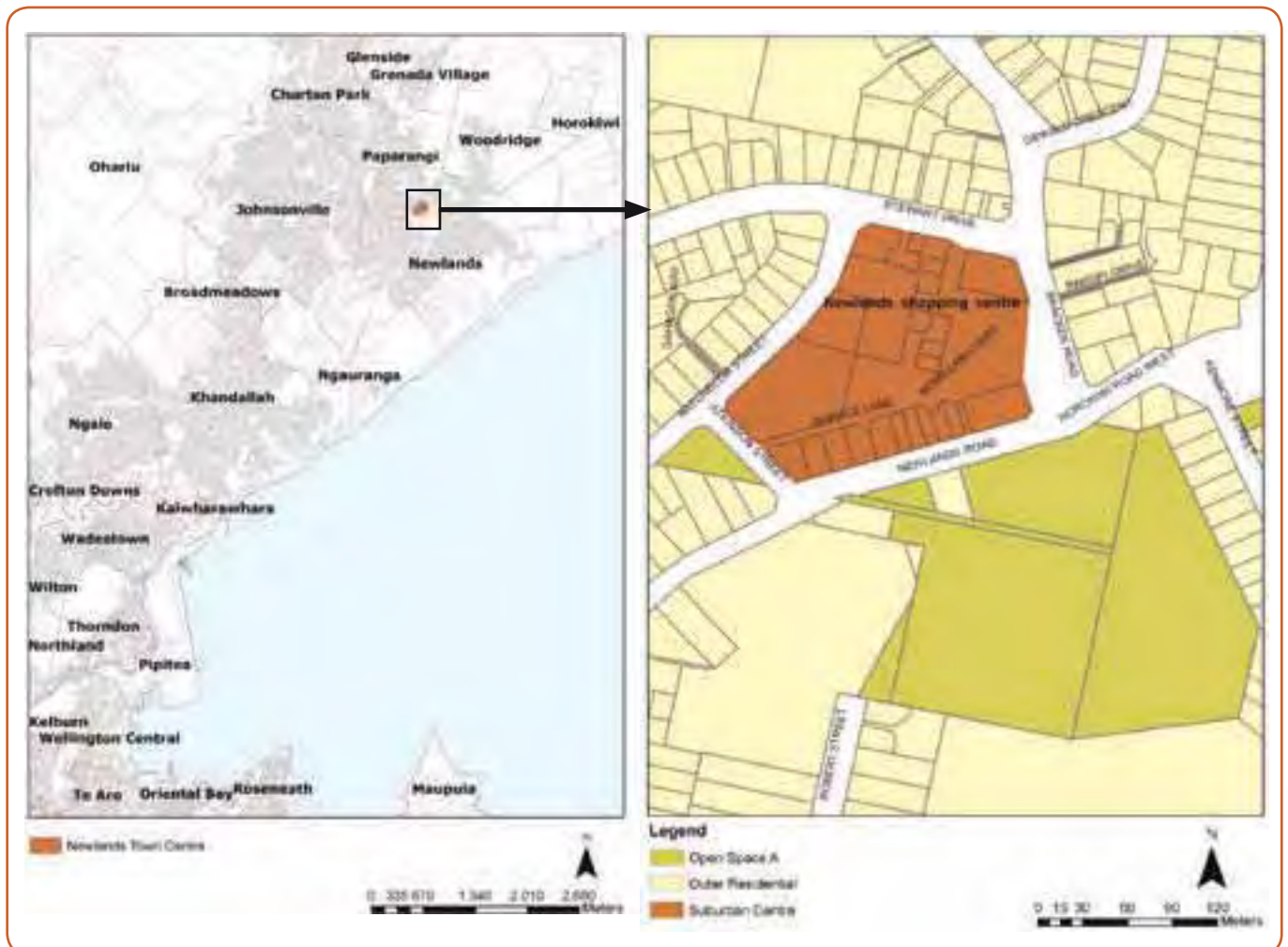
The plan's goal is to ensure future developments take place in a planned and integrated way and help contribute to a more attractive and vibrant centre. It aims to enable and guide private investment and recognises that in order to achieve a better centre, private and public investment and actions need to be better aligned.

Location of Newlands Centre

For the purposes of this centre plan, "Newlands Centre" is defined as the retail/commercial area that is bounded by Newlands Road, Bracken Road, Stewart Drive, Batchelor Street and Atkinson Street (refer Figure 1).

The immediate surrounding residential areas, parks, reserves, open spaces and community facilities and their relationships to the shopping centre have been considered in the preparation of the plan as they provide important context and considerations when planning for the long-term development of the area.

FIGURE 1: NEWLANDS CENTRE LOCATION MAP



1.2 A key part of the northern suburbs growth vision

Newlands is located between the identified urban growth areas of Lincolnshire Farm, Woodridge and Johnsonville town centre. The Council's Northern Growth Management Framework (NGMF) adopted in 2003, identified the need to redevelop and improve the Newlands shopping centre as part of managing the future growth and development of the northern suburbs. It recognised that Newlands Centre is one of the less successful centres in the city, but its revitalisation is an important component of the future vision for the northern suburbs.

The NGMF also outlines a number of principles that are relevant to the future development of Newlands Centre including:

- building on existing communities
- strengthening town centres
- developing attractive, diverse and liveable neighbourhoods that offer housing choice, promote walkability and allow for intensification over time
- promoting a strong sense of identity
- providing attractive public open spaces within neighbourhoods
- using innovative and creative approaches to economic growth and working in partnership with stakeholders.

Detailed information gathering and planning work to support the development of a long-term plan for Newlands Centre began in early 2006 and was linked to the proposal to build a new community centre in Newlands. Public consultation on an initial draft plan took place in November 2006 (refer section 1.6). The construction of the Newlands Community Centre was completed in late 2008.

1.3 Newlands – an important district centre

The Council's Urban Development Strategy sets the overall framework for managing growth and change in Wellington City and aims to ensure that growth takes place where the benefits are greatest.

Newlands Centre was developed in the 1960's following the start of large-scale subdivision of the suburb during the late

1950's. It is now an established and important suburban centre, with good links to the central city and to Johnsonville. Population figures from the 2006 Census indicate that there are approximately 9300 people living in Newlands. Statistics New Zealand's latest population growth figures estimate that there will be approximately 2000 more people living in Newlands by 2031. It is anticipated that much of this growth will be accommodated by more medium-density housing, with some of this located in and around Newlands Centre.

The Council's Centres Policy (adopted in August 2008) sets the framework to guide the development and management of Wellington City's diverse range of centres. The key objective of the policy is to maintain and strengthen Wellington City's existing suburban centres. It promotes the development of centre plans to help strengthen key centres and to ensure their integrated and sustainable development.

Newlands Centre is identified in the Centres Policy as one of the city's district centres. As a district centre, its key roles and functions include:

- servicing the surrounding suburb(s)
- providing moderate retail opportunities (that is, 10,000m² total floorspace) including convenience-based retail servicing for day-to-day needs and a small/medium supermarket
- residential accommodation above the ground floor commercial and retail uses
- community facilities and services
- recreational and entertainment activities
- small-scale professional office use
- very good accessibility by public transport
- on-street and off-street parking.

Although Johnsonville town centre – one of the city's key regional centres – is located only a few kilometres from Newlands, Newlands Centre is still considered important and has the potential to function as a stronger local centre for its surrounding community. It has significant existing investment, a growing local community, and provides important services and facilities to support the community.

1.4 The existing context

The plan below explains the existing context of Newlands Centre. It identifies the key components of the Centre and key issues and concerns reflected in public feedback and information gathering processes.



LEGEND

Existing situation

-  existing buildings
-  canopy
-  active frontages
-  parking
-  service area
-  bus stop

- ① Community House building. Lease has expired and building to be removed end 2009.
- ② Tavern building - non-active frontages facing Batchelor Street and the Community Centre create poorly defined spaces and unwelcoming streetscape.
- ③ Steep bank separates Newlands Road and its commercial units from the rest of the town centre.
- ④ Community Centre landmark building and focus of community uses in the town centre.
- ⑤ Council housing in need of refurbishment. Opportunity for residential intensification.
- ⑥ Poorly defined car parking areas and pedestrian movement space with low level of amenity.
- ⑦ Medical Centre is in need of larger premises. Building makes inefficient use of space, i.e. has small footprint relative to lot size.
- ⑧ Old bakery building. Features blank facades towards Stewart Drive and Bracken Road. The buildings footprint is wide and thus may not be easily reused, and may be best suited to one or two large tenants.
- ⑨ Poor quality pedestrian space which lacks the level of activity and overlooking required to create a successful space; poor quality pedestrian link to servicing / parking areas.
- ⑩ Public toilet block in very poor state of repair.
- ⑪ Currently vacant site in highly visible location next to roundabout and at the heart of the town centre.
- ⑫ Commercial units in poor state of repair / or have untidy cluttered appearance which creates a negative gateway into the town centre.
- ⑬ Untidy parking arrangement along Newlands Road - conflicts between buses and parking.
- ⑭ Atkinson Street closed off and space is used by builder's yard operation. This use visually obstructs pedestrian movement through to Atkinson Street, the Community Centre and Newlands Centre.
- ⑮ Visual and pedestrian links to the skateboard park and open space area are poor due to its location behind the fire station and bowling club.
- ⑯ Fire Station building - poor state of repair and too small for fire services needs.
- ⑰ Newlands Park is separated from Newlands Road by a steep bank which visually segregates the park from the town centre.
- ⑱ Main car parking area. Many car parks taken up by commuters. Exposed, unfriendly space for pedestrians.
- ⑲ Walkway to Newlands Road - poor conditions and lack of connection to Newlands Park.



1.5 Key issues, challenges and opportunities

The aim of this plan is to set a future vision for revitalising and redeveloping Newlands Centre. The vision includes introducing a wider range of services and shops, better quality public spaces and amenities, more people using the area's shops and community facilities, and more people living and working in the area.

Development would provide opportunities to improve the look and feel of Newlands Centre, and create a more interesting and vibrant place to visit, shop, live and work in. However, development also presents challenges that need to be carefully managed. These challenges include the impact of development on traffic, car parking and pedestrian movements to and through the centre, and on maintaining the character of Newlands and enhancing its sense of place.

Some of the key issues and opportunities for Newlands Centre include:

- strengthening and enhancing the centre, providing more of a focal point for the Newlands suburb, and a more vibrant and well-designed local shopping destination
- using new buildings to improve the overall design quality and attractiveness of Newlands Centre
- creating a much more 'people-friendly' environment with new and improved public spaces and good pedestrian provisions
- improving vehicle and pedestrian access to and through Newlands Centre, encouraging good public transport facilities and ensuring adequate parking for shoppers and short-stay visitors
- increasing peoples' safety and security in and around the centre at all times through better design of buildings and spaces
- creating stronger connections between Newlands Centre, the community centre, and other community and recreation facilities such as the community hall, Newlands Park, the skate park, local schools and childcare facilities
- improving or redeveloping Council-owned assets (eg Council housing, road reserve and car parking areas etc) to help assist the revitalisation of the centre
- recognising the contribution private sector investment can make to the revitalisation of the centre and the achievement of the vision.

1.6 Strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats

Information gathering and community consultation indicates that there are a number of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats relevant to Newlands Centre and its revitalisation. The analysis indicates that:

- Newlands has the potential to strengthen its role as a district centre serving the day-to-day needs of the surrounding suburbs.
- Newlands has many positive attributes that contribute to its long-term development, for example:
 - close proximity to the central city via road and public transport
 - a range of good community, education and recreational facilities
 - a large area of flat and accessible land within the suburban centre area
 - interesting topography and visual connections to surrounding hills and ridgelines
 - ample car parking
 - a growing population base
 - opportunities for living within close walking distance of shops, services and public transport.
- However, there are a number of challenges to overcome including:
 - lack of investment
 - poor quality built environment
 - poor pedestrian access through and around the town centre
 - poor quality public spaces
 - poor connections and integration between the different 'sub-areas' of the town centre, for example, the McMillan Court shopping mall area, Batchelor Street area (to the rear of the mall, including the community centre and tavern areas), and the Newlands Road commercial area.
- The successful revitalisation and redevelopment of Newlands Centre will hinge on private investment opportunities coupled with Council investment in good quality public open space, streetscape and pedestrian provisions.

NEWLANDS CENTRE – STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>Good access to central city and Johnsonville town centre through road and bus connections</p> <p>Serves a growing population base, particularly with the development of nearby suburbs like Woodridge</p> <p>Good community, education and recreational facilities within close proximity eg new community centre, Newlands Park and skate park, sportsfields, schools</p> <p>Land capacity within the town centre; large area of flat and accessible land</p> <p>The Council owns land and assets in and around the centre and may be able to utilise these to contribute to the revitalisation of the area</p> <p>There is a flexible planning regime that does not overly restrict land uses</p> <p>Relatively strong sense of community; more family friendly and slower pace than central city</p> <p>Good level of community support for revitalisation of the centre</p> <p>Good amounts of off-street and on-street parking</p> <p>Contour differences offer potential for underground parking and for varied building heights with minimal impact.</p>	<p>Poorly designed, disjointed and not performing to its full potential</p> <p>No significant retail anchor</p> <p>Many areas of the centre are in a poor state of repair requiring private and/or Council investment to improve</p> <p>Fragmented land ownership and multiple land owners</p> <p>There are several areas where people feel unsafe and there is evidence of tagging and vandalism</p> <p>Pedestrian connections and public open spaces are limited and/or in poor condition</p> <p>Land improvement costs are high compared to land value making it difficult for the market to respond to redevelopment</p> <p>Vehicles and car parking areas dominate the area</p> <p>Newlands Road carries a relatively high level of traffic and is difficult to cross safely; there is no direct and safe pedestrian connection across Newlands Road to the bus stop, Newlands Park and Newlands Primary School</p> <p>Pedestrian routes through the centre are not well defined</p> <p>Lack of housing choice</p> <p>Relatively exposed in all weather conditions</p> <p>Very little after-hours activity</p> <p>The internally focused layout of the shops in the mall area reduces the ability to have active street edges fronting Bracken Road and Stewart Drive. The layout also creates an awkward, non-active area behind the shops.</p>
Opportunities	Threats
<p>There is a significant proposed private investment (a new supermarket) – this would contribute significantly to the revitalisation of the centre, in combination with car parking and public open space improvements</p> <p>Introducing residential development in the centre and increasing the density of residential areas immediately around it would help support the centre and increase its vibrancy</p> <p>Long-term redevelopment opportunity within the retail/commercial area, including residential living above ground floor activities</p> <p>Opportunity to build off the investment made in the new community centre and create a stronger link with the rest of the centre, particularly the main retail area</p> <p>Significant opportunity to make the centre a lot more pedestrian friendly and to create a new pedestrian-focused area within the main shopping area</p> <p>There is significant opportunity to improve the overall design of the centre, and to make Newlands into a more distinctive place with a positive identity</p> <p>Long-term there is an opportunity to create a more active street frontage along Newlands Road with a mix of commercial, business and retail activities at ground level, and residential living above</p> <p>Renovation/redevelopment of the Council housing stock in Batchelor Street</p> <p>With an upgrade of the central car parking areas, there is an opportunity to improve parking to support local businesses and services; and to formalise other car parking areas.</p>	<p>Ad-hoc development within the Centre has the potential to significantly constrain redevelopment and revitalisation efforts</p> <p>The level of improvement to the Centre will largely depend on what private investment can be attracted</p> <p>General lack of investment – other areas of the city are more attractive for private investors; other areas rate as higher priority in terms of Council investment</p> <p>Economic downturn delays private/commercial investment</p> <p>Lack of buy-in to the future development potential of Newlands Centre by landowners, investors and developers</p> <p>Disparate land ownership constrains future redevelopment by making it difficult to amalgamate sufficient land to enable development schemes to proceed or to gain consensus on development proposals</p> <p>Growth in vehicle traffic will increase congestion and make conditions for pedestrians unsafe and unpleasant</p> <p>Lack of implementation mechanisms and limited Council funding for new projects</p> <p>Lack of long-term political will and community consensus to achieve the vision.</p>