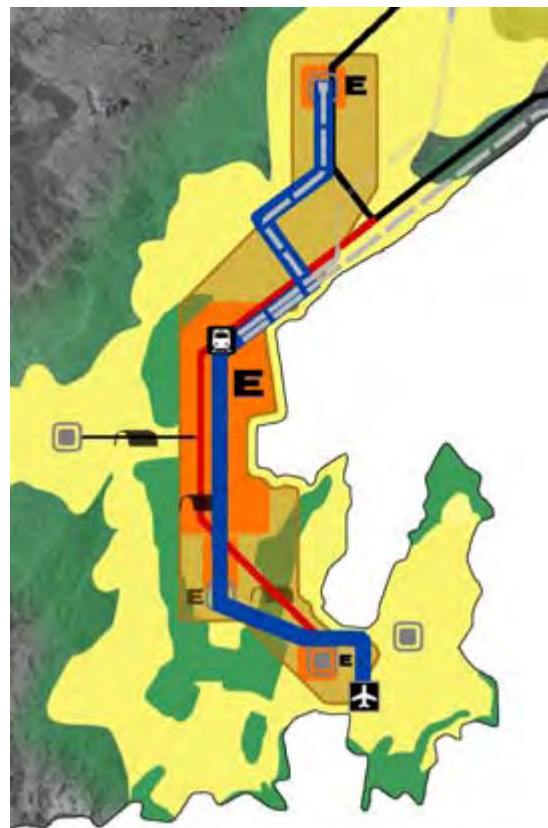


# Urban Development Strategy

*Directing growth and delivering quality*

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Wellington City Council

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# 1. Introduction

Wellington is a dynamic and growing city. By 2026 33,000 more people are expected to live here than in 2001. While population growth is expected to peak around 2038, the growth scenario for long term planning purposes is 50,000 more people by 2055. The exact rate and type of growth experienced will result from a mix of local, national and international factors. These will include the state of the national and regional economy, immigration policies and changes in lifestyles and housing expectations. Many of these factors will be driven by global changes, some unexpected and unpredictable.

To ensure that future growth and change reinforces the physical and spatial characteristics that make Wellington so distinctive, and contribute to the stimulating and intense urban experience it offers, the Council has prepared this draft Urban Development Strategy.

To make a real difference the Strategy must work on a timeframe that addresses, but also looks beyond, our normal planning and funding cycles and considers possible, as well as probable urban development scenarios. It's about defining what we want our city to be like in 30-50 years, even if we can only plan for implementation up to 10 years ahead.

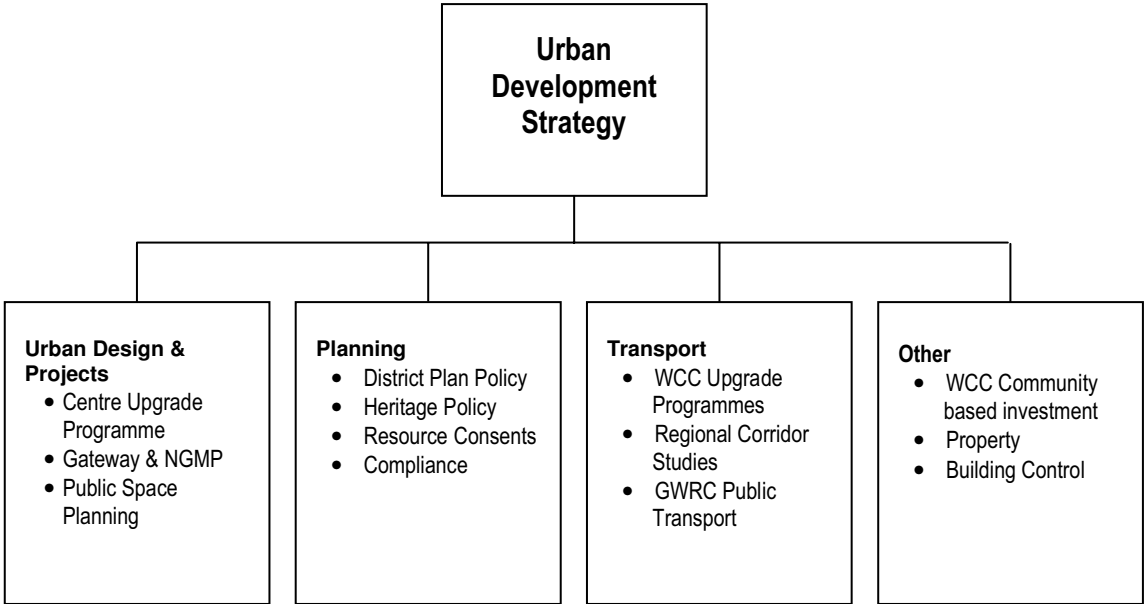
By building on the city's excellent urban form and ensuring we focus on quality urban development, Wellington will become more *liveable, compact, sustainable and prosperous*, have a stronger *sense of place*, be better *connected* and *safer*.

The way Wellington responds to change depends on many factors (including the role Central Government) but is partly determined by the policies and priorities of the City Council. Through regulatory, advocacy, investment and partnership activities, the Council will play a key role in managing, directing and shaping Wellington's future urban development. These are summarised in the Urban Development Strategy Tree.

Finally, our planning for the future must be set within the regional context. The long term direction and priorities for urban development set out in this Strategy are consistent with the strategic directions adopted in the Wellington Regional Strategy.

## 2. Context

### Existing framework



### The context

Wellington is a dynamic and growing city:

- There will be around 33,000 more people in 2026 (compared to 2001)
- Households are getting smaller, the population is ageing, and we are becoming more ethnically diverse
- The demand for higher density dwellings is projected to steadily increase.

While the exact rate and type of growth experienced will depend on a mix of local, national and international factors, there will be growth. If it is not managed well, it can destroy aspects of the city’s sense of place that are valued highly.

Wellington’s success as a city relates closely to the quality of its built environment. As a signatory to the Urban Design Protocol, Council has an obligation to improve urban development outcomes in both the public and private domain.

Some more relevant urban development concerns for the City include:

- threats to heritage
- poor quality interface between public space and private buildings
- poor urban design in town centres
- better recognition of national capital significance
- improving the quality and design of individual buildings

We are currently experiencing infill across the city. To be successful, infill development must be carried out in a way that takes account of local sense of place values and the potential effects on neighbouring property owners. There is evidence in some areas that development is impacting on valued suburban character and amenity through poor design quality. This issue needs to be addressed as a matter of priority as infill is an important component of our compact city approach.

## The challenge

To ensure that future growth and change reinforces the physical and spatial characteristics that make Wellington so distinctive; focuses on high quality urban design and development; and contributes to the stimulating and intense urban experience Wellington offers.

## The solution

**A growth management strategy that directs growth to where the benefits are greatest, where adverse effects are minimised, and delivers on quality**

For Wellington, benefits are greatest when most new growth is directed to areas that are already well-connected, offer high levels of amenity, and have some (or all) of the supporting infrastructure.

These conditions exist around the central city, some suburban centres, key transport routes, and in specific parts of the City's northern suburbs as shown on the following page.

Directing growth in this manner and improving the quality of development will contribute to making the city:

- more liveable and safer - it will increase lifestyle choices and, if done right, the quality of places
- more memorable and distinctive – by enhancing urban amenity and sense of place
- better connected - road and public transport linkages will be strengthened
- more efficient and productive – it will cost less by directing growth to areas where the marginal costs are lower, and it generates more economic opportunities
- more sustainable - by using less energy, generating less pollution and being more resilient.

## The pre-conditions

The successful realisation of this strategy will require:

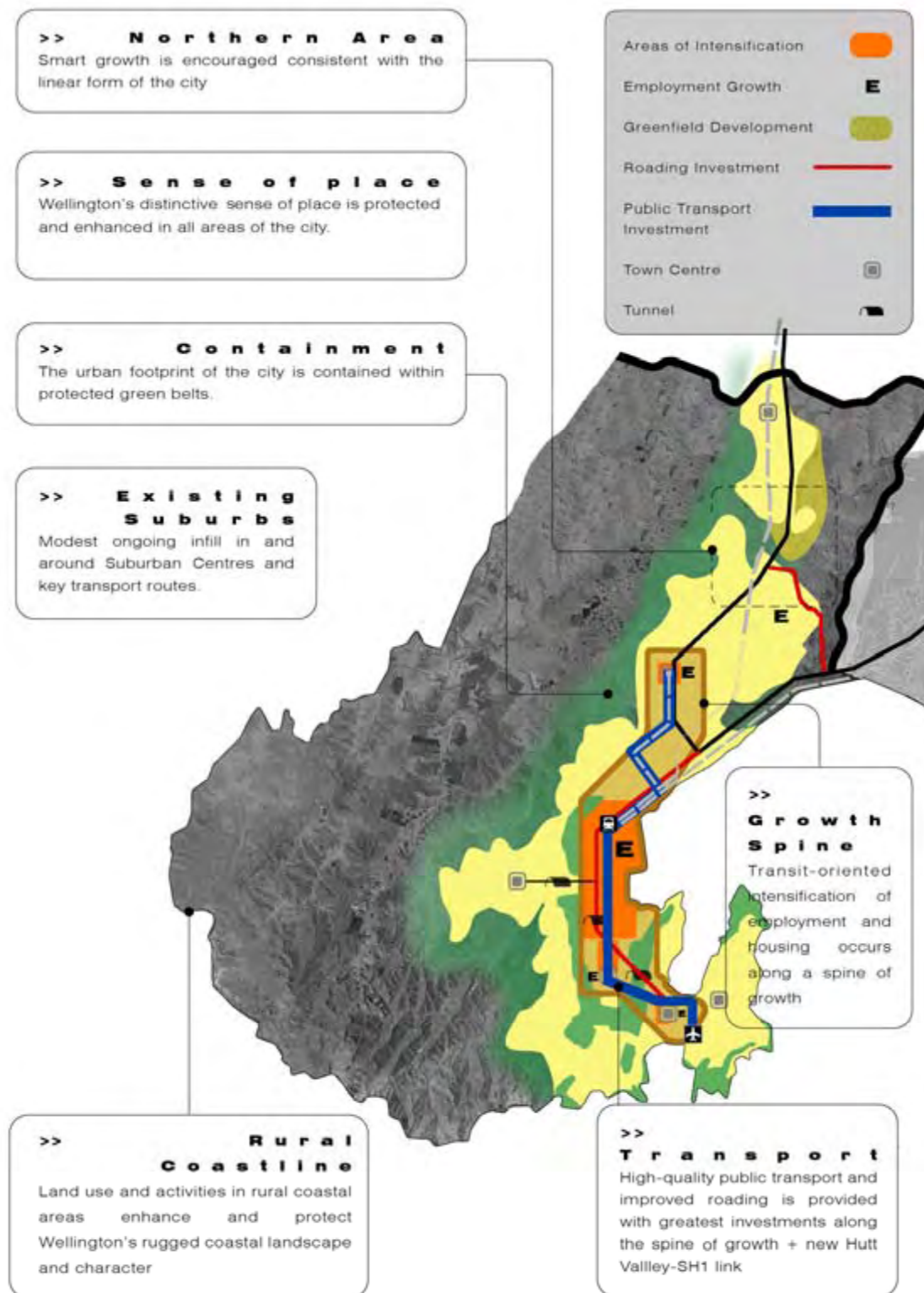
- a thorough understanding of the social and environmental impact of urban intensification, and appropriate mitigation of any negative impacts
- influence over the location and design of new infill development, where required
- targeted investment in supporting road and public transport infrastructure<sup>1</sup>, public and green open space, amenity and community facilities, where required.

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<sup>1</sup> This will take into account the findings of the Northern Corridor Passenger Transport Study and the Ngauranga to Airport Strategic Study.

### 3. Long-term direction for Urban Development

#### Our 50-year growth concept



## Our long-term outcomes

Over the next 10 years, we aspire to the following outcomes:

**1.1 (a) More liveable:** *Wellington will be a great place to be, offering a variety of places to live, work and play within a high quality public environment.*

Providing choices for an increasingly diverse community will be important if Wellington is to attract and retain a creative and dynamic population. It will be a city that offers residents' quality choices about where they live – in apartments, townhouses or traditional stand-alone dwellings. Affordability of housing plays an important role in this regard. Employment will continue to be predominantly located in the central area, but increasingly there will be opportunities to work in attractive and safe suburban centres and for people to work from home. The city's recreational resources will be protected and managed sustainably. This will include the green network, well designed public spaces in the central area and suburban centres, the coastline and rural areas. Making the city more liveable will mean:

- providing urban environments that are healthy, safe, attractive and meet our daily needs
- ensuring capacity for growth in the areas where it is most sustainable
- encouraging good quality development that provides for a range of lifestyle choices and a mix of household sizes in each part of the city
- continue to take a proactive approach to public housing and support initiatives to develop more affordable housing.

**1.1 (b) More sustainable:** *Wellington's urban form will support an efficient and sustainable use of our rural and natural resources and promote prosperity and social well-being over the long term.*

It is important that growth does not diminish the city's natural capital. The distinctive natural and semi-rural areas that surround the city are an important part of our sense of place. They offer natural amenity to urban dwellers by providing a range of recreational, environmental, economic and social benefits. In addition, the natural environment also has its own intrinsic value. These values and benefits will continue to be acknowledged and carefully managed as a bottom-line requirement for future urban development. Building a sustainable city means:

- protecting and maintaining a green network of parks and open spaces around and within the urban environment
- reducing our ecological footprint by applying sustainable design principles in all aspects of urban development and urban living
- Having a long-term vision for the rural areas of the city that is sustainable and reflects the natural values of the land.

**1.1 (c) Better connected:** *Wellington will be easy to get around, pedestrian-friendly and offer quality transport choices on a highly interconnected public transport and street system.*

Good access from homes to shops and services, places of work and recreational destinations is essential in any successful city economy. This will be reliant on recognising the roles of all types of transport (car, bus, train, cable car, ferries, commercial vehicles, walking and cycling). Ensuring the city is better connected will mean:

- an increasingly pedestrian- and cycle-friendly city, where more trips can be made safely using active modes
- ensuring that local, city-wide and regional road and passenger transport systems function effectively for people and freight.

**1.2 More prosperous:** *Wellington's urban form, and flexible approach to land use planning in the central city, centres and industrial areas, will contribute to economic growth and prosperity.*

Urban form is an important factor in unlocking economic potential and assisting economic flows. The compact layout of our urban areas combined with close proximity to major commercial centres and good transport linkages, is a real competitive advantage for Wellington city. Building on this good form and maintaining a flexible approach to land use planning in these areas will allow building owners and developers to respond readily to changing market needs and at the same time maximise compactness and travel choice. Making the city more prosperous will mean:

- continuing with compact city principle
- promoting the central area and main centres as ideal locations of commercial activity
- allowing commercial, office, residential and industrial uses to occur as of right in the central area and suburban centres adjacent to main transport routes and
- ensuring capacity for growth in the areas where it is most sustainable.

**1.3 More compact:** *Wellington will have a contained urban form, with intensification in appropriate areas and mixed land-use, structured around a vibrant central city, key suburban centres and major transport corridors.*

Wellington's residents value the city's intensive and vibrant central area and the stunning green spaces on the city's doorstep. The wrong kind of growth has the potential to damage both of these. To make sure this doesn't happen the Council will continue to contain development within the established edges of the city. The Outer Green Belt and rural areas will effectively establish clear edges to the city. The resulting compact urban form will minimise transport distances, make public transport more viable and result in better use of infrastructure. Building a compact city will mean:

- focusing and encouraging growth along a spine (in the central area, around key suburban centres and on key transport routes) where mixed land-use can provide the services, shops, jobs and most of the homes for a growing population
- increasing the density of development in these areas so that there are sufficient people and activities to support passenger transport
- encouraging infill development to occur in and around suburban centres and key transport nodes, in a careful and considered manner, taking account of local sense of place values and the potential effects on neighbouring property owners. (This may result in some areas, particularly areas with valued suburban character, having future infill capacity constrained).

**1.4 Safer:** *Wellington will be a safe place to be, with well designed buildings, spaces and connections between them.*

High-quality environments and quality design can enhance people's lives in many important ways. A perception of safety and security is critical to attracting public occupation of public spaces and places. Buildings, spaces and the connections between them, need to be well designed to make places lively and safe and facilitate contact among people. Active, occupied edges to buildings provide the opportunity for more people to be coming and going at all times of the day, thereby adding to the vitality and safety of the city. Making the city safer will mean:

- improving the design of private buildings, particularly where these interface with the public environment
- applying principles of crime prevention through environmental design when assessing development and in the design of public spaces
- promoting good building design to respond to building location and activities that take place within buildings.

**1.5 Stronger sense of place:** *Wellington will be a memorable, beautiful city, celebrating and building on its sense-of-place, capital city status, distinctive landform and landmarks, defining features, heritage and high quality buildings and spaces.*

Wellington's success as a city relates closely to its sense of place. Wellington has a dramatic setting, is compact, and has good public transport. It is at the centre of the nation and is the national capital. It will have distinctive and beautiful buildings connected by high-quality public spaces and recognise the legacy of the past through the protection and conservation of its natural and cultural heritage. Building on Wellington's distinctiveness will mean:

- protecting and enhancing the elements of the city's sense of place, including the compact walkable nature of the city, its series of urban villages, its heritage buildings and objects, notable trees, heritage areas, Maori heritage sites, national capital uses, landmark natural and built features

having more distinctive high quality buildings and increasing the focus on the quality of urban design, by integrating the planning of buildings and spaces, and the networks that connect them, at all scales across the city.

## How we will measure our progress towards these outcomes

To assess whether Wellington is becoming **more liveable**, we will survey residents to find out their perceptions of the city as a place to live, and their views on whether the city offers a range of places to live, work and play.

To assess whether Wellington is becoming **more sustainable**, we will monitor trends in population density in inner-city residential areas, suburban areas and along the 'growth spine'.

To assess whether Wellington is becoming **better connected**, we will survey residents to find out their views on whether the city is easy to get around and pedestrian-friendly, and whether it has a highly-interconnected street system.

To assess whether Wellington's urban design is helping to make the city **more prosperous**, we will monitor trends in the value of commercial building consents.

To assess whether the city is becoming **more compact**, we will monitor trends in building density in the central city, inner-city residential areas, and suburban residential areas, and the proportion of houses located within 100m of a public transport stop...

To assess whether the city's urban design is making it **safer**, we will survey residents to find out their perceptions of city safety and how urban design affects those perceptions.

To assess whether the city is developing a **stronger sense of place**, we will survey residents to find out whether they see heritage buildings and other features as contributing to the city's unique character and their local community's unique character, and to find out how proud they feel about how Wellington looks and feels. We will survey New Zealanders to find out their views on Wellington's attractiveness as a city.



## **4. Our three-year priorities**

For the period 2006/09, we've identified the following priorities for our urban development work. The priorities are important stepping stones towards our long-term goals:

- We will improve the way infill development is managed in residential areas.
- We will work to improve the quality of the city's urban design.
- We will set in place a 50-year plan for the 'growth spine' and develop concept plans for specific growth areas in the city.

### **How we plan to achieve these priorities**

We already work hard to enhance the city's built environment. Our work includes creating fantastic parks and other spaces on the waterfront and throughout the city, protecting heritage sites, regulating building and development, and working with building owners to bring buildings up to earthquake standards.

Over the next three years, we plan several additional projects to deliver on desired outcomes. We will complete our proposals for the city's 'growth spine' and develop concept plans for development of specific areas of the city. We will review our approach to infill housing. We will develop new plans for public spaces in the city centre and other areas of the city. We will carry out a review of we can enhance to the city's 'sense of place'. We plan provide incentives for the retention and enhancement of heritage assets. We also plan to support a major study on the likely timing and impact of a major earthquake in the city, and use this work to guide our transport and urban design decisions.

## 5. Strategy Tree – Urban Development

