Tinakori Hill
Landscape plan
Tinakori Hill and the Wellington Town Belt

Wellington is fortunate to retain a large portion of the space set aside as Town Belt in 1839 under the instruction of the New Zealand Company. The city's early developers recognised that there were recreational, emotional and spiritual benefits to be gained by having the green space of the Town Belt close and visible to a large part of Wellington's community.

The Town Belt is administered as a Council reserve but is managed in accordance with the principal intention of the original Deed of 1873, which was to set aside land as a public recreation ground for the inhabitants of the City of Wellington. Tinakori Hill forms the northern-most portion of the Wellington Town Belt.

Why we need a landscape plan for Tinakori Hill

A landscape plan for Tinakori Hill is important because it will guide long-term improvements in this prominent part of the Town Belt. The plan is based on the Wellington Town Belt Management Plan that was produced in 1995 to provide guidance for the management and future development of the Town Belt.

The proposed plan was developed to a brief provided by the Friends of the Wellington Town Belt, developed with the assistance of Drakeford Williams Ltd Landscape Architects and then modified following public feedback. It comprises a series of plans covering a range of things including tracks, proposed new lookouts, entrance upgrade possibilities and mountain bike access.

Tinakori Hill and what’s planned

Tinakori Hill is an important feature of Wellington’s landscape. Surrounded by Northland, Wadestown and Thorndon, it includes an open ridge top and steep forested city (east) facing slopes. It also includes Western Slopes Reserve and Stellin Memorial Park. It offers expansive views and is used by locals, sightseers, walkers, runners, mountain bikers, people with dogs and those seeking a wilderness experience close to town. It forms a prominent, forested backdrop to the central city and can be seen from the harbour and many parts of the inner city.

In recent years, storms have caused extensive damage to the ageing pines on Tinakori Hill. The removal of fallen trees, and others on the steep lower slopes that posed a risk to roads and property, has helped provide an opportunity to develop a comprehensive landscape plan for the future of Tinakori Hill.

The plan aims to:

- recognise the high profile of Tinakori Hill in the Wellington landscape
- improve access for a range of users and needs
- rationalize the track network to create a logical hierarchy of tracks, resolve conflict between users and reduce long-term maintenance issues
- improve connections between Tinakori Hill and other walking routes
- identify and improve entry points to Tinakori Hill
- identify and develop key viewing spots
- integrate the former Telecom land
- develop coherent and consistent signs
- explore opportunities to tell the story of the geology, ecology, Maori and European history of Tinakori Hill and describe the views out over the city
- identify a range of planting themes and an indicative plant list
- establish long-term vegetation management goals.
Tinakori Hill in the Wellington landscape

Tinakori Hill is a significant Wellington landmark due to its distinctive landform and visual prominence from all parts of the central city and waterfront. Its steep eastern face provides a green backdrop and defines the western boundary of the inner city. The hill creates a visual link between the Town Belt and the Outer Green Belt.

Tinakori Hill is a circulation node. It contains one end of the Northern Walkway, close links to the City to Sea Walkway and city walks and visual links to the Southern Walkway and the Skyline Walkway. It is located between Wellington Botanic Garden, Otari-Wilton’s Bush and Karori Wildlife Sanctuary.

Tinakori Hill has a unique landscape character. It has a wild, rough, untamed and mysterious quality that is in strong contrast with the more managed and modified Mount Victoria at the other end of the Town Belt. The landscape character is accentuated by the steep, deeply incised eastern slopes that form part of the Wellington Fault escarpment.

Tinakori Hill has important heritage values. Maori knew this hill as Ahu-Mairangi and the ridgeline as Paehuia. The main track from the Pipitea Pa to Owhariu crossed the saddle at the northern end of the hill. There is also a history of telecommunications, quarrying and gold mining, pine tree plantations and World War II anti-aircraft structures on the site.

Tinakori Hill has magnificent views of Wellington city, over the harbour and out to the wider Wellington landscape.

Vegetation management on Tinakori Hill

The variety of vegetation on the Town Belt offers a range of recreational and visual experiences that is valued by Wellingtonians. Some residents would prefer a complete indigenous bush cover and some enjoy the more open understorey of a pine and macrocarpa forest.

The Wellington Town Belt Management Plan (1995) considered that there was scope within the entire Town Belt to accommodate a range of preferences so that the desires of as many people as practicable could be accommodated. It identified Tinakori Hill as the area within the Town Belt with the most potential for revegetation, due to its aspect and orientation. It identified three distinct character areas and outlined a management regime for these. The east or city-facing slopes were to be revegetated in native forest cover with the existing non-native woodland areas adjacent to the lower end of Wadestown Road retained. The summit ridge was to have areas of grass to maintain openness and views and the Western Slopes were to be left to regenerate.

Landscape objectives that have been developed as part of this project adhere to the intent of the management plan. They are also designed to:

- manage the removal of remaining plantations of macrocarpa and pine over a period of at least 35 years
- establish a native vegetative cover on exposed, erosion-prone slopes as soon as possible
- add a wider variety of native species over a longer time-frame.

On east or city-facing slopes, it is proposed to:

- revegetate on land scars adjacent to tracks, especially on the highly visible Northern Walkway
- leave areas on the less exposed and moister lower slopes to regenerate naturally with assistance only as required
- supplement existing exotic trees and shrubs on lowest south-eastern slopes to create a visual connection to the Botanic Garden and Thorndon residential areas
- leave non-pest exotic plants that reflect the historic background of Tinakori Hill such as the remnant escallonia and euonymous hedges on the Telecom site (these plants will be monitored and managed over time rather than being removed immediately)
- eliminate pest plants such as old man’s beard and banana passionfruit vine from established bush areas.

On the Summit Ridge, it is proposed to:

- remove pines at the northern end of the ridgeline to provide more viewing points, and reinstate native vegetation along the skyline. Revegetation will assist in the creation of a long-term visual buffer to logged areas on the slopes below
• remove a small number of self-sown individual trees (pine and macrocarpa) towards the southern end of the ridgeline to maintain views
• retain the open ridgeline and the small, grassed areas running from the ridgeline down slopes on the eastern side of the hill. Most of these areas form useful picnic or resting areas.
• retain small areas of planting and trees within the grass to create some shelter and shade at the south end of the ridgeline.

On the western slopes, it is proposed to:
• allow on-going regeneration
• control revegetation to preserve views from ridgeline lookout areas.

Managed grass areas
Open areas on Tinakori Hill, including the grassy slopes and lookout off the Wadestown end of the Northern Walkway, the small sloping lawn north of the waterworks building, the reservoir site (which is also a dog exercise area), Thorndon Green and the grassed areas around the Stellin Memorial Park car park will all be retained.

Bringing back the bush
The primary revegetation objective on Tinakori Hill is to establish a native vegetative cover on exposed, erosion-prone slopes as soon as possible. On-site observation of existing site vegetation, natural regeneration and assisted revegetation shows that:
• the eastern, city-facing slopes have good natural regeneration of native species including mahoe, poroporo, hangehange and a variety of coprosma species on the lower, more sheltered slopes, and ngaio, karamu and kohuhu on the upper, more exposed slopes
• a number of weed species are competing with native plants. Early weed control is essential for both natural and assisted revegetation.
• there has been some experimental enrichment or augmentation planting of rimu into mahoe cover in sheltered gullies. This is being monitored annually.
• the Project Crimson rata plants are slow to establish. Self-seeded karamu and ngaio have now established on the site. As they mature they will provide shelter, suppress weed growth and create a micro-climate that should assist rata growth.
• in general, revegetation planting will concentrate on the use of ‘tried and true’ pioneer species such as karamu, taupata, ngaio, kohuhu and five-finger. Species such as totara, miro, matai, rimu, tawa and kohekohe will be planted only once a self-sustaining canopy has established.

The future of the pines
The extensive damage caused by the two 2004 storms, the subsequent logging and the on-going tree fall on the hill indicate that the long-term staged approach originally outlined in the Town Belt Management Plan is not practical. On-site observation shows that:
• it is difficult to selectively thin existing stands or log small areas of trees within a larger stand without destabilising the stand. Once the canopy has been opened, the trees are more prone to come down or be damaged. Given the proximity and form of the trees, one falling tree may overturn/ dislodge/ unbalance another two or three trees.
• allowing trees to fall ‘naturally’ creates new problems. On the upper more exposed slopes particularly, trees regularly fall, leaving huge holes in the erosion-prone ground and an unstable mass on the steep hillside.
• access to some of the steeper slopes below the Northern Walkway is extremely difficult. Existing tracks are too steep and narrow for logging purposes. Forestry access tracks can be formed but the potential effect on both close and distant views would be significant.

As a Council we are taking a proactive rather than reactive approach to managing the city’s ageing pine plantations. Which trees are removed and when, will be determined primarily by a tree hazard assessment process rather than landscape decisions based on visual effects. In areas where access is extremely difficult, it is economically unviable to log areas less than five hectares at a time.

There are 35 loggable hectares of forest remaining on the site. If 5 ha are logged every five years, the transition from a mature pine and macrocarpa to a scrub/bush/native forest cover would be achieved over a minimum of 35 years with varying rates of natural regeneration across the eastern face of the hillside.
**Weed control**

Following the large scale pine removal in 2005, a weed management plan was put in place for the site's recovery. It centres on managing the weed issues and allowing natural regeneration of native species to occur. The rapid re-emergence of natives such as rangiora and mahoe, the nature of the terrain and the size of the site make this approach the only practical option. Small-scale revegetation plantings have been done along track sides.

The primary weed targets include old man's beard, banana passionfruit and eleagnus, and young sycamores and Darwin’s barberry in logged areas. Sites are monitored yearly. We are now in the final year of a three-year programme (2008). The site will then be monitored with low-level weed control as required.

**City view**
Access

The notion of public access is integral to the intent of the original Town Belt Deed. The emphasis has always been on pedestrian access, although vehicle access has been acknowledged as necessary for maintenance and service access to buildings. Therefore, all forms of motorised vehicles are excluded from Town Belt land except in designated parking areas. However, the present day emphasis on equity of access is applicable and it is fundamental to the objectives of the Town Belt Management Plan that less able users can access the Town Belt where possible.

The current vehicle entry to Tinakori Hill and the northern end of the ridge via Weld Street is steep and narrow. Even the streets are difficult to negotiate. The 1995 management plan proposed investigation of an alternative vehicle access at the northern end of the hill using an existing track from Wadestown Road to follow the contour around the east side of the grassed lookout spur up to the lookout on the Northern Walkway. The route has been assessed. Although it will be used by maintenance vehicles, it is not considered appropriate as a major vehicular entry to Tinakori Hill due to a number of factors including new residential development on Wadestown Road at the bottom of the track, the narrowness and steepness of the track, the potential visibility of the track and earthworks and the lack of manoeuvring room at the top of the track. The acquisition of Telecom land has enabled the Council to investigate an alternative vehicular access point to Tinakori Hill utilizing the existing Telecom access road. This has the potential, with minor upgrading, to become the major vehicular access point onto Tinakori Hill and to simultaneously relieve reliance on the more inaccessible Weld Street entry.

It is proposed to:

- locate major access/entry points at Orangi Kaupapa Road, Weld Street, the intersection of Grant Road and Wadestown Road, the scout hall in Grant Road and St Mary Street
- create a new major vehicular entry at Orangi Kaupapa Road with development of a car park, lookout and information area at top of the Telecom driveway
- upgrade the Orangi Kaupapa/Telecom driveway where possible to facilitate two-way traffic
- upgrade access to both the Ridgeline Track and the Northern Walkway from Stellin Memorial Park
- leave Stellin Memorial Park, with its unique history and landscape character, as an access point in its own right rather than letting it be subsumed into the larger Tinakori Hill landscape
- upgrade the Weld Street entry road and car park to facilitate two-way traffic
- retain current vehicle access down the Northern Walkway to the grassy slopes and the lookout. Public vehicle access will be reviewed once logging operations are completed.
One of the design objectives is to increase the public profile of Tinakori Hill and to improve access/entry points. Five main access/entry points to Tinakori Hill have been identified.
Orangi Kaupapa Road access

1. A new major entry and vehicle access via the existing Telecom driveway is planned.

Existing vehicle access to Tinakori Hill from the south and west is limited. Acquisition of the Telecom land has created an opportunity for a new major entry to Tinakori Hill that is accessible for a range of users. The new entry would be sited within the reserve but on the perimeter of the perceived ‘bush’ area. It exploits an existing circulation network that would provide direct access onto the Ridgeline Track.

There are a number of houses, flats, and garages at this southern end of Tinakori Hill. These properties were part of the purchase in 2000 of land from Telecom to be reinstated to Town Belt. While a number of the original properties have subsequently been removed from the site, further work on the future options for the remaining buildings is still being undertaken.

It is proposed to:

- upgrade the access road to allow two-way traffic where possible
- develop a car park at the top end of the driveway
- retain the existing vehicle barrier to the Ridgeline Track
- extend the pedestrian walkway from Stellin Memorial Park to the Telecom driveway up to the proposed car park
- install an automated vehicle barrier at the bottom of the driveway/road that can be locked at dusk to minimise vandalism
- create a picnic area next to the car park once the adjacent house has reached the end of its economic life and is removed
- construct an accessible walkway from the picnic area up to the lookout area
- locate a lookout on the existing flat site north of the car park with information/mapboards for Tinakori Hill.

2. Stellin Memorial Park access

Although managed as part of Tinakori Hill, Stellin Memorial Park has its own history and should retain its integrity as a park and a lookout in its own right. The car park is well used although the current tracks that link into Tinakori Hill are not suited for less able users.

It is proposed to:

- upgrade the track link back up the hill to the Telecom road
- upgrade existing access from the car park to the link track with the Northern Walkway and the proposed Southern Connector. The new track link will make the existing steps redundant
- improve the existing lookout site and access to the lookout
- install new signs and mapboards.
It is difficult at the moment to access Tinakori Hill from the south and west. This proposal improves the existing driveway where possible, allows for closer car parking to the ridgeline and main areas of Tinakori Hill than is now available, and proposes an accessible lookout and interpretation area.
Weld Street access

1. Existing vehicle access down the Northern Walkway to the grassy slopes and lookout points.
   The existing vehicle access down the Northern Walkway to the Wadestown Community Tennis Club court, the grassy slopes and lookout points is to be retained. This will be reviewed once pines along the ridgeline are logged with the expectation that there will be new viewshafts to the central city.

   **It is proposed to:**
   • retain the sealed access track in its current width and alignment
   • repair the existing driveway surface and address drainage problems
   • retain the vehicle barrier south of the grass slopes
   • retain the existing parking areas (no additional car parks to be provided)
   • leave the existing dog exercise area unchanged.

2. Existing vehicle access from upper Weld Street to the car park and northern end of the Ridgeline Track.
   This entry point is to be retained with minor upgrading of the Weld Street entry road and car park.

   **It is proposed to:**
   • upgrade the access road and create passing bays to allow two-way traffic
   • improve the signs and install mapboard
   • upgrade the existing car park surface and provide defined car park bays
   • relocate the existing vehicle barrier at the northern end of the Ridgeline Track closer to the car park
   • leave the existing dog exercise area unchanged.
Upgrade plans at Weld Street entrance

The existing vehicle access down the Northern Walkway to the Wadestown Community Tennis Club court, the grassy slopes and lookout points is to be retained. This will be reviewed once pines along the ridgeline are logged with the expectation that there will be new viewshafts to the central city.
Tinakori Hill has a strong physical presence at this Grant Road/Wadestown Road intersection so this high visibility site is a strategic location for signage and entry to the hillside. Although during the week there is not much parking, there is reasonable after work and weekend parking and strong pedestrian links to the CBD and local suburbs for lunchtime runners and local walkers. It is also close to the Wadestown bus stop outside 7 Park Street.

Signs will be located so they are visible from the Grant Road/Park Street intersection and from Wadestown Road approaching the city. It is also planned to form a new track off Wadestown Road to ensure easy access and connect with the link track running up Wadestown Road and the wider track network.
Grant Road/Scout Hall access

This Grant Road entry provides access for a wider group of users to the Northern Walkway.

The mapboard will be made more visible from Grant Road to provide direction both for people going onto Tinakori Hill and those exiting the hill and going into the city.
**St Mary Street access**

A free-standing mapboard on St Mary Street to indicate access information to Tinakori Hill, the Northern Walkway and Te Araroa is planned. Te Araroa is a proposed national walkway from Cape Reinga to Bluff that will pass through this area.

At the moment the sign for Tinakori Hill and the Northern Walkway is not visible from Tinakori Road. It is planned to relocate it so it can be easily seen.

Prominent signs on Tinakori Road are planned to indicate the access to Tinakori Hill from St Mary Street.
Secondary entry points and tracks

There are a great number of tracks throughout Tinakori Hill. This plan rationalises tracks to establish an official track network with a track hierarchy. Some secondary tracks are also proposed.

Major tracks will be checked and maintained four times per year. Link tracks will be checked and maintained twice a year. Minor/secondary tracks will be checked and maintained once a year. All tracks will be cleared if required, for example after a tree has fallen on the track.
A design objective is to improve connections between Tinakori Hill and Otari-Wilton’s Bush. It is proposed that the route up from Monmouth Way to the Western Slopes track that connects Huntingdon Road to the Ridgeline Track, will be upgraded to create an accessible, reasonably direct link between Tinakori Hill and Otari-Wilton’s Bush.

There are also pedestrian links from Tinakori Hill down to Otari-Wilton’s Bush from access/entry points on Weld Street, Cecil Road, Huntingdon Street, Glamorgan Street and Orangi Kaupapa Road.
Proposed new tracks

The logging track above Elephant Rock replaced an older walking track. The plan is to realign and regrade the steep logging track to make it more accessible. The Council also plans to adjust the Northern Walkway at the point where it meets the West-East Connector to widen and regrade this steep, narrow section of track, and to create a new mid-slope track to link the Northern Walkway and the track system accessed from Stellin Memorial Park. This is the proposed Southern Connector.

A new access track is planned between the Stellin Memorial car park and the track that links into the Northern Walkway to replace the existing steep steps. In order to separate pedestrian and vehicular traffic, a new access track is proposed to extend the existing Stellin Memorial Park to the Telecom driveway route up to the car park and picnic area.

A potential new forestry access track at Wadestown Road maybe required, see page 20.
Existing and proposed mountain bike routes
Review of mountain bike use on the Northern Walkway

The Council’s Mountain Bike Policy is currently being reviewed. As part of this process a number of tracks that are now closed to mountain bikes are being assessed for possible mountain bike use including the Northern Walkway through Tinakori Hill.

Wellingtonians will get an opportunity to comment on the draft policy in mid-2008.

Council parks planners believe the Northern Walkway through Tinakori Hill is as suitable for mountain bikes as other existing Town Belt routes where bikes are permitted. Opening it to cyclists would have the added benefit of providing an alternative commuter route to the city – something the Council is keen to encourage.

Forty seven of the submissions received during consultation on the draft Tinakori Hill Landscape Proposals generally supported opening this section of the Northern Walkway to mountain bikes. Eighteen were opposed to the idea.

For these reasons, and provided it is in keeping with the provisions of the new Mountain Bike Policy, it is likely the Northern Walkway through Tinakori Hill will be opened to cyclists in the future. This would involve:

- a trial period to allow Council staff to monitor and assess bike use on this section of track
- installing mechanisms to reduce bikers speed including reverse gradients and if necessary, bollards
- encouraging cyclists to exit and enter via Grant Road in Thorndon rather than St Mary Street
- installing signs to remind bikers of the mountain bike code of conduct and encourage them to adhere to it.
Proposed maintenance/forestry access routes

Maintenance access routes are essential for on-going operational needs on Tinakori Hill. Apart from the re-graded logging track and the new Southern Connector, the routes shown are existing tracks. Some may still need developing to allow full use. Although these are the needs currently envisaged, there may be a need to widen existing tracks or create new tracks or forestry skid sites for future logging operations. The vegetation shown is existing.
Interpretation and views

Tinakori Hill has a number of stories to tell. The proposal allows for a potential interpretation centre at the top end of the Telecom driveway to provide general information on the history, geology and ecology of the hill. Interpretation for special interest sites such as Kohatu Quarry or the Project Crimson site will be provided on mapboards at adjacent entry points. Site-specific interpretation for major lookouts will be provided at those sites.

Wellington landscape

Lookout points on Tinakori Hill have panoramic views over Wellington including views of the inner city and harbour, Wellington Heads and Cook Strait, Otari–Wilton’s Bush, the Outer Green Belt from Te Kopahou Ridge to Bests Ridge including Wrights Hill, Makara Peak, Johnston Hill, Te Wharangi Ridge, Crows Nest and Mt Kaukau; British Peak and Quartz Hill, Karori Wildlife Sanctuary, western suburbs from Karori, Northland, Wilton, Wadestown, Ngaio to Khandallah; Brooklyn and the windmill; Eastbourne and the Rimutaka ranges and the Hutt Valley and the Akatarawa range.

Maori history

- Interpretation of earlier names of Tinakori
- Local Maori tracks

Geology

- Tinakori Hill as part of the Wellington Fault escarpment – a regionally significant landform
- Kohatu Quarry
- Gold mine site
- Thomas tunnel/quarry off Grant Road

Ecology

- Vegetation history including 2005 logging
- Project Crimson
- Proposed revegetation management
- Pest control
- Possible interpretation on forestry and logging at car park mapboards

European history

- Town Belt history
- Tinakori Hill history
- Military history
- Water systems including reservoir and pumping station
- Track systems including Northern Walkway
- Telecommunications history
- Buildings including the waterworks pumping station, scout hall etc

Heritage sites

- Kohatu Quarry off Huntingdon Street
  This site, including the tramway remnants, is located off the Huntingdon Street track. It requires upgraded access and signage coupled with low-key maintenance, as part of the quarry character is inherent in its overgrown landscape and the ‘otherworldly’ nature of the site.
- Anti-aircraft battery installation on the ridgeline
  All visible signs of the structure have been removed, however its former location on the ridgeline is a significant part of the Tinakori Hill story and requires signage.
- Thomas tunnel and quarry
  The Thomas quarry and its associated tunnel can be accessed from a track leading down from the Northern Walkway or from the link track leading up the side of the steep gully behind the scout hall in Grant Road. Both sites require signs and low-key maintenance to preserve the historic character.
- Gold mine workings off Glamorgan Way
  It is difficult to ascertain the exact location of the workings but the gold mine is part of the history of the site and should be noted in interpretation.
Existing and potential views from Tinakori Hill

There are a number of key viewpoints on Tinakori Hill with panoramic views over Wellington. There are also numerous viewshafts and opportunities for viewshafts along tracks, particularly where the steep hillsides and deep, incised gullies allow a clear line of sight over the vegetation. As logging progresses and the vegetation changes from exotic trees to native bush, many views will disappear. Decisions will need to be made in the next 20–30 years how vegetation is managed in order to retain views to the wider landscape.

Built structures are planned at two lookout points.
Number 22 – potential for a lookout structure with views out over the CBD
Number 4 – views to the Outer Green Belt, Karori Sanctuary, CBD, harbour and the Rimutaka ranges
This Tinakori Hill map has a grid overlay so that specific areas within the site can be accurately located. It is planned to have this map available online and on the hillside so members of the public can use it to identify special features or alert Council staff to maintenance issues such as fallen trees and other matters of concern.

Heritage and special interest sites
1. Thomas Quarry and tunnel
2. Kohatu Quarry
3. Gold prospecting site
4. Project Crimson site
5. WWII anti-aircraft battery site
Implementation priorities

Any capital works undertaken on Tinakori Hill will be competing with all other Town Belt and reserves works in the yearly budget rounds. The following implementation priority list may need adjusting depending on budget allocation in each year.

1. Directional bollards for track network.
2. A) Walkway track from James Stellin Memorial Park to the southern end of the Northern Walkway.
   i) New access track to/from the Stellin Memorial car park to the link track to replace the existing steep steps.
   ii) Reforming of the walkway that was lost to the steep logging track above “Elephant Rock”.
   B) Improve access from Stellin Memorial car park to the look out.
3. Grant Road entry upgrade and St Mary Street upgrade.
5. Weld Street entrance.
   • Northern Walkway road and drainage upgrade.
6. Orangi Kaupapa Street entrance
   • Built viewing platform
   • Interpretation
   • Car park formed and link track through the bush area to Stellin Memorial Park installed.
7. Southern Connector installed.
8. Weld Street entrance.
   • Improve driveway road and car park area.

Other works to note:

Dependant on the outcome of the Mountain Bike Policy review any track work required to open the Northern Walkway to bikes will need to be completed before that can happen.

Mapboards will be developed when sufficient changes have occurred on the hillside to minimise the need to update them again later.

Information/interpretation will be installed at various stages where appropriate.

Tree work at view points will be completed on an on going basis via the tree team’s operational budgets.