

Mayor's report

Wellington is a city of many communities.

Our 190,000+ people include those who were born and raised in the city and those who have come from elsewhere to make Wellington their home.

We think of ourselves as New Zealanders, as Wellingtonians, as people of Newtown or Miramar or Thorndon. We speak many languages. We spend our time with families and friends, and in churches, or volunteer groups, or cafes, movies or galleries, or playing football or netball or any of a hundred other pursuits.

We are, in short, a diverse group with a wide and ever-expanding range of interests and aspirations.

As a Council, our job is to respond to those diverse needs and, from them, build a common vision for the city.

That has required us to listen, to create an urban environment that supports residents' aspirations, and to be nimble and responsive as new needs and demands arise.

This report is about that process. Throughout, you will find examples showing the Council engaging with the community, responding to a changing environment and to new demands.

Whether we are making schools safer by lowering speed limits, or enhancing the Botanic Garden experience for the sight-impaired, or installing all-weather turf on sports fields, committing to an indoor community sports centre, or supporting volunteers to clear weeds and plant native trees and shrubs alongside the city's streams, we are reflecting community demand in Council action.

While it is a record of Council spending and activities, this report is also a celebration of the people of Wellington, of all that makes us diverse and vibrant, and all that bring us together.

HIGHLIGHTS

Quality of life

- **Wellington continues to offer world-class quality of life.**

In our 2009 residents' survey, 93% of Wellingtonians said their quality of life was good or very good.

The city has consistently ranked well in national and global quality of life surveys over several years. In fact, we ranked first in New Zealand for quality of life in the 2009 Quality of Life in New Zealand's 12 Biggest Cities Survey.

Urban environment

- **88% of Wellingtonians are proud of the city's look and feel.**

After the completion of Waitangi Park and other urban parks, we continued to develop an attractive inner city and waterfront. These areas bring together high quality open spaces, places to live and work, culture and heritage sites, and the city's famous cafe culture.

- **We are focusing development and protecting character and heritage.**

Our new Centres Policy is part of our strategy that seeks to accommodate growth, raise urban design quality, and control 'big box' retail developments outside of existing suburban centres.

It complements other policies which aim to improve the quality of infill housing and focus development in high density areas with strong transport infrastructure.

The new policies are reflected in exciting new plans for Adelaide Road, Johnsonville and those being developed for Kilbirnie and other areas of the city. We also continued to enhance protection for heritage buildings.

Transport

- **Our commitment to public transport has made bus travel more convenient.**

In recent years we have established bus lanes throughout the central city, reducing travel times and improving reliability.

In June, we set aside funds for a proposal to open Manners Mall to buses and further extend Cuba Mall. The proposal to open Manners Mall is subject to further consultation with community and decisions of Council.

We've also worked alongside other agencies to improve the vital transport corridor from Ngauranga through the city to the airport and have made commitments to enhance the city's network of cycle ways.

- **75% of residents think the city is easy to get around.**

There have been dramatic improvements since 2007 in the number of people who think the city is easy to get around and the number who find peak traffic volumes acceptable.

Economy

- **Tens of thousands of Wellingtonians enjoyed Cuba Carnival, the IRB Sevens and other Council-funded events.**

We secured the rights to host two Rugby World Cup 2011 quarterfinals, and the highly popular Montana World of WearableArt Awards committed to Wellington for another four years.

The city continued to perform well as a visitor destination despite the economic slowdown and the regions economic development agency Grow Wellington continued its support of emerging industries.

Environment

- **More than 300,000 people visited conservation attractions including Wellington Zoo, the Karori Sanctuary, and Otari-Wilton's Bush.**

Tens of thousands more took advantage of the leisure opportunities provided by the city's 34+ square kilometres of Town Belt and reserve land, parks and gardens, and coastline.

The sanctuary was rebranded Zealandia and work got underway towards its new visitor centre, while progress was also made in the long-term development of the Zoo and in finding a home for the Marine Education Centre that all Wellingtonians can support.

People and recreation

- **We've started to weatherproof winter sports.**

The installation of artificial turf on the upper field at Nairnville Park has improved conditions for winter sports training and competition and allowed the field to be used in all weather. The Council has committed to install all-weather surfaces elsewhere in the city over time.

We also committed, following extensive consultation and independent reviews, to the construction of an indoor community sport centre in Kilbirnie.

More than 1.6 million people used the city's swimming pools and recreation centres, while many more used sports fields and took part in Council-supported recreation programmes.

- **We provided homes for more than 4,000 people. These homes are being upgraded to make them warmer and healthier to live in.**

Te Ara Hou flats in Newtown is the first Council housing property to receive a makeover under the Council-Government partnership to upgrade the city's social housing.

- **A new community centre was opened in Newlands.**

Throughout the city, use of community centres and halls increased during 2009, reversing an earlier decline.

- **People are feeling safer in the city centre.**

Wellington is a safe city by national and global standards. About two-thirds of residents feel safe in the central city at night, up 9 points from 2008.

Culture

- **A major expansion of the City Gallery was started.**

Set to re-open in September 2009 the extended gallery will provide new exhibition spaces including one for Maori and Pacific art and an expanded Michael Hirschfeld Gallery for Wellington art.

Engagement

- **We reached new audiences during engagement on our long-term plan.**

Over 500 people made formal submissions and many more took part in online discussion groups or phoned our 0800 hotline. Other residents signed e-petitions or took part in online polls.

These are a few of the new ways residents chose to have a say about the city's future.

- **The number of residents who feel they can influence the Council is growing.**

Sixty-four percent of residents feel the public has some or a large influence on the Council, up 8 points over the past two years. Three-quarters of residents find it easy to access Council information.

KERRY PRENDERGAST MAYOR

Chief Executive's Report

The 2008/09 year has seen the Council and its staff respond to a changing environment.

The global economic slowdown has affected the city's households and businesses. The Council has also faced cost fluctuations in some areas throughout the year but overall we remain in good financial shape.

The slowdown has highlighted the importance of delivering services that are affordable and represent value for money. This is something that we always strive for.

The review of our long-term plan during the year gave us a chance to take stock of our progress and set out our response to this and other challenges. As the Mayor has noted, this review included an extensive engagement exercise.

The review looked beyond the immediate economic context. We considered issues such as population growth and diversity, demands on the transport network, changing service needs and retaining the city's character, amongst other issues.

The response is strategic. Take our approach to urban development. We aim to manage intensive growth along a 'spine' that connects key centres. This maximises the use of existing infrastructure, provides transport choices, including reducing the need to travel, and strengthens 'sense of place' – pride in our local areas. Our response is also tailored; a Braille walk (page xx) and 'natural' burials (page xx) are examples of meeting specific needs and providing choices in response to changing demands.

We've also looked at the way we are work to ensure that we are well positioned for the future. This process is ongoing and includes ensuring that health and safety remains at the forefront of our work. 12 December 2008 marked a tragic day for the organisation. Brian Taurerewa, an employee at our landfill, died in a vehicle accident while at work. His death is a stark reminder of the very real risks a number of our operational staff face as they aim to make the city even better.

Throughout the year, our team has maintained a high level of professionalism and dedication to public service. In our latest residents' survey, 73% of Wellingtonians rated the Council's performance positively – up five points since 2007.

The survey also found that 72% of residents believe they get value for money from the Council. This is a slight decline from last year – a solid result given the tightening in household budgets.

The financial and performance results in this report reflect our ongoing commitment to high quality services. As you will see throughout this report, we are generally performing well against our targets or past achievements. Where we fell below the levels we expect, we are working to address this and to sustain the city's place as an affordable and internationally competitive city.

I wish to express my gratitude to the Council's staff for their part in that.

ACHIEVEMENTS / AWARDS

Customer service and information

- In the 2008 CRM Contact Centre Awards, the Council's Call Centre won awards in the city council online (web/email) customer service categories. This was our fourth year winning the Customer Service category.
- Our annual reports were again recognised for excellence. In July 2008, we won the Supreme Award (all sectors) for an unprecedented third consecutive year at the NZ Institute of Chartered Accountants awards for our 2007 report. We also received a silver award at the Australasian annual report awards for our 2008 report.

Race relations

- The Council was honoured with a Te Wiki o Te reo Maori Award for promoting Maori language. Council initiatives include promotion of Te Wiki o Te Reo Maori (Maori Language Week), Waitangi Day entertainment and commemorations, promotion of Matariki (Maori new year), and development of a Maori heritage trail which was completed in June 2009.
- The Council won a Human Rights Commission Award for an internal Council programme to celebrate Race Relations Day.

Environment and conservation

- At the New Zealand Plant Conservation Network’s annual conference in August 2008 the Council’s Berhampore Nursery won the best nursery award.
- The Kelburn School Gully Project, which is supported by the Council, also won an award. Over the past decade Kelburn School has returned a blackberry-infested gully to something like its native state, using plants from Otari-Wilton’s Bush and the Nursery.
- The Owhiro Bay interpretation centre won three awards: the New Zealand Recreation Association Outstanding Park award, the Wellington Civic Trust Best Environmental Project award, and a Merit award in the Special Purpose category at the Property Council New Zealand Awards.
- Wellington Bush Builders, a Zoo-based project that saw more than 700 children explore their local ecosystems, won a Department of Conservation Wellington Conservation award for education and advocacy.
- Zealandia was named one of Australasia’s top ecological restoration projects, won the Tourism Industry Association of NZ’s 2008 Conservation in Action award, and continued its progress towards becoming a ‘living ark’ of native wildlife with the birth of its first baby tuatara.

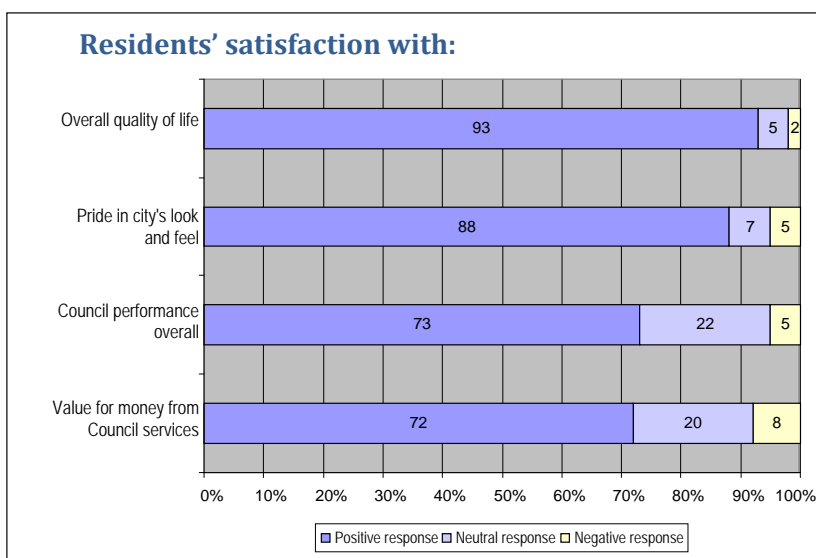
Urban environment

- The Adelaide Road town planning framework was highly commended at the New Zealand Planning Institute’s 2009 annual awards.
- Shed 13 won a silver award of merit from the Association of Consulting Engineers.

- Kumutoto Wharf won an urban design award at the New Zealand Institute of Architects annual awards, and an Illumination Engineering Society lighting design award.
- Waitangi Park won the supreme award and best public space award at the Wellington Civic Trust awards, while the waterfront sculpture Solace to the Wind won the people’s choice award.

Staff awards

- Jasmine Zimmerman, a Botanic Gardens curator, was a finalist in the Young Horticulturist of the Year for the Amenity Horticulture sector.
- Brayden Rawlinson received the Groundsman of the Year award from Cricket Wellington.
- Three Walkwise Officers received Certificates of Appreciation from the Police in recognition of their work in assisting to catch offenders from two serious incidents in the city.
- The New Zealand Recreation Associations - Mark Mitchell Memorial Award was awarded to Esther Bukholt of our Recreation Wellington team.
- David McLachlan received the Association of Local Government Information Management’s Excellence in Leadership Award.
- The Association of Local Government Information Management also recognised Adrian Humphris work. He was named Archivist of the Year for 2008.



GARRY POOLE CHIEF EXECUTIVE