
REPORT 4
(1215/52/IM)

CENTRAL CITY FRAMEWORK: OBJECTIVES, PROJECTS, APPROACH TO IMPLEMENTATION

1. Purpose of Report

This report provides a framework to guide future central city improvements. It outlines objectives, project workstreams, and the approach to implementing those.

The framework is a key part of the *Wellington Towards 2040: Smart Capital* strategy. It draws on previous studies such as the Spatial Structure Plan¹, the Space Syntax City Centre Movement Infrastructure Analysis², and public engagement. Its aim is to provide an urban environment that supports a dynamic central city now and into the future, and duly recognises the city's status as the capital.

2. Executive Summary

Wellington's central city is its economic engine and cultural heart. It is compact, lively and full of character; a centre of government, business, creativity – and the capital city. But, as the population grows, people's ways of living and working change, environmental and resource pressures intensify, and Wellington increasingly faces competition from other cities for people and investment, the central city will face challenges.

This Central City Framework outlines a set of objectives and projects for how we can respond to some of those challenges (see attached). It provides a reference point – a coherent and integrated way of looking at improvements to the urban environment. It aims to enhance quality while reducing long term cost by ensuring works are done once and appropriately (avoiding the need to revisit costs associated with incremental decisions).

¹ This comprehensive urban design study was undertaken by Boffa Miskell and Randles Straatviet Architects. It was received by the Strategy and Policy committee on 16 June 2011.

² Space Syntax is an internationally renowned movement analysis company. They studied pedestrian and vehicle movement patterns and potential in the central city. The report was received by Strategy and Policy committee on 16 June 2011.

The framework builds on the city's strengths: the capital city; its compactness; growing density; setting; variety; and its commitment to urban design. It provides direction for progress and managing change in the built form, streets and landscape.

The framework draws from recent studies to present a series of project workstreams. These cover both the public and private domain. Successful implementation of these will require: commitment; design; capital works; demonstrating potential through catalyst projects; guidance (e.g. the creation of a Residential Apartment Design Guide); investment and collaboration.

Overall the framework aims to enhance the streets, built form and open spaces in the central city. It also provides for the creation of precinct plans to enhance the urban character of different areas. This in part reflects a desire to retain the city's vitality and avoid the potential effects of dispersing some functions or activities thinly across the city.

As the framework has a long term focus it includes principles for prioritising the projects. While some catalyst projects are identified here, the remainder will be assessed against these principles. A long term work programme will then be presented as part of the long term plan, 2012-22.

3. Recommendations

Officers recommend that the Strategy and Policy committee:

1. *Receive the information.*
2. *Agree to the guiding objectives (outlined in section two) of the framework:*
 - *Create a prosperous central city*
 - *Accommodate growth and change*
 - *Make our streets green*
 - *Build the city in response to the landscape*
 - *Create an eco inner city*
 - *Ensure connections are easy to make*
 - *Create inner city neighbourhoods*
 - *Tell our stories*
 - *Strengthen character and coherence.*
3. *Agree to the project workstreams and implementation actions (outlined in section four) of the framework:*
 - **Streets:** *North-south boulevards; East-west green links; Laneways; Irregular streets*
 - **Built structure:** *Building quality; Built heritage; Strategic sites*
 - **Open space:** *Triangular spaces; Green walls and roofs; Stream streets; Landscape (areas)*

- **Precincts:** Parliamentary; Memorial; Te Aro (east); Victoria - Cuba; Waterfront; Pipitea
 - **Systems infrastructure:** Green infrastructure; Movement; Climate.
4. *Agree that the following priority projects be initiated as a catalyst to the framework:*
 - *Laneways: Opera House Lane/Eva Street/ Waterfront connection*
 - *East-west links: Willeston Street and associated case study site*
 - *Victoria St: precinct planning*
 - *Building quality: residential apartment design guide*
 - *Green infrastructure: develop a central city vegetation plan.*
 5. *Note that officers will develop a long term work programme based on the principles of prioritisation (outlined in section six); and associated project costs.*
 6. *Agree in principle to the establishment of a central city improvements budget (for consideration in the long term plan) for the implementation of the framework.*
 7. *Agree to delegate to the Mayor and Chief Executive the authority to amend the Central City Framework to include any amendments agreed by Committee and any associated minor consequential edits.*
 8. *Recommend to Council the adoption of the final Central City Framework.*
 9. *Recommend to Council that the Mayor and Chief Executive be delegated the authority to include any amendments agreed by Committee and any associated minor consequential edits.*

4. Background

The Central City Framework has been developed as part of the Wellington Towards 2040 project. The development has included:

- public consultation on the future of the central city covering the risks, opportunities and priorities
- a facilitated workshop series
- elected members' workshops
- two background technical studies to feed into the development of the central city framework:
 - Spatial Structure Plan
 - City Centre Movement Infrastructure Analysis.
- the development of nine project ideas to encapsulate key themes as a basis of public engagement

- an extensive engagement programme between June – August (see section 5.1 of this report)
- adoption of *Wellington Towards 2040: Smart Capital*
- ongoing meetings with interested parties
- refinement of the project streams and objectives / development of this report.

4.1 Structure of the framework

The framework provides a ‘layered’ analysis of the city³. It is focussed around five sections: street structure; built form; open space/landscape; precincts and systems infrastructure. Within each of these sections are a series of projects and actions. While some projects may relate to only one section, often they will have multiple benefits. For example, improvements to a laneway can ease traffic flow through the street network as well as being the catalyst for improved built form along its edge.

The key components of the framework are:

1. A summary of central city’s current strengths, future challenges.
2. Objectives: these set out the key elements / goals to be achieved through the framework (see section 5 of this report)
3. Making it happen: this provides a summation of the implementation mechanisms required for the framework.
4. Projects: this outlines the streams of work that will be done to implement the objectives. The projects are at different stages of the design process. For each one a more detailed brief will be developed.
5. Principles for prioritisation: this outlines the key factors that will be taken into account when prioritising the projects.
6. Measures of success: this relates back to the objectives – it outlines the key indicators that will be developed to measure progress.

4.2 Next steps

Following consideration by the Strategy and Policy committee and adoption by Council, the next steps in the process will be:

- Development of design briefs and actions for the agreed catalyst projects
- Development of a prioritised work programme for the projects and actions
- Establishment of costings for the long term implementation and associated phasing to feed into the work programme
- Report back as part of the long term plan.

³ The Central City Framework sits as part of a sweet of frameworks that outline the long term development of Wellington city. These include: Wellington Airport’s 2030 Master Plan; the Waterfront Framework; CentrePort’s Master Plan (in development); a partnership plan to support *Wellington Towards 2040: Smart Capital* (in development); the Wellington Regional Strategy.

5. Discussion

The Central City Framework is a core part of the *Wellington Towards 2040: Smart Capital* strategy. While it is a primary contributor to the outcome of sustaining a dynamic central city, its objectives also reflect the outcomes in the strategy of being connected and a place that is ecologically sound and created for people.

Achieving the objectives in the framework will mean:

- *Ensuring the city is prosperous.*

A place that is attractive and offers high amenity so that investors, employers and employees choose to live here, retailers and hospitality businesses can prosper, and smaller creative businesses can choose to cluster there. It will offer a mix of building types and rents so that smaller, independent businesses can exist alongside larger corporate ones.

- *That it can accommodate growth and change.*

The central city will be adaptable, flexible and robust to accommodate growth and change in uses, lifestyles and population.

- *Making the city streets greener and more appealing.*

The streets account for around 80 percent of the open space in the central city. Making greater use of vegetation on the street edges will add to their appeal and reduces the need for inner city land being used for additional large scale parks.

- *Building the city in response to the landscapes.*

Wellington is dominated by its natural landscape – its harbour and hills – in a way that very few other cities are. This landscape provides drama and interest, makes the city attractive, and shapes the city's growth. Development will be managed in way that causes least harm to these features.

- *Creating an eco inner city.*

The city will support sustainable transport choices, by encouraging people to walk, bike, skate, drive when needed or use public transport. Buildings will also reflect an eco-city ethos, meeting strong environmental standards and providing high levels of comfort for building users while minimising use of energy and water. Innovations such as solar energy, rainwater harvesting and green walls and roofs will be supported where practicable.

- *Ensuring connections are easy to make.*

No matter the mode of transport it should be easy to orient yourself in the city and find your way around efficiently. Wellington's streets, buildings and public spaces can be better integrated physically and visually into their surroundings. This will make it easier to find their way from place to place, and encourage a stronger sense of connection

- *Create inner city neighbourhoods.*

As the city grows areas will come under pressure to change. This objective will ensure that precinct plans are developed so that the character of areas is enhanced as they change.

- *Telling our stories.*

The central city is the region's showcase to the world. It's the destination or portal for most visitors. It's also the setting for significant cultural institutions like Te Papa and home to Parliament. The city also has a rich history both Pacific colonial and that of tangata whenua. These combine to make a unique place – factors that will be considered in the development of the city.

- *Strengthening built character and coherence.*

Many parts of the central city have clearly defined built character, with most buildings conforming to a distinctive size, shape and relationship with the street. Cuba Street, for example, is characterised by low rise heritage buildings built close to and opening out onto the street. Upper Victoria Street by contrast has a mixture of building shapes, sizes and styles. This can create areas that feel 'discontinuous' or disconnected from the city making them unappealing places to be or do business. This objective aims to reduce these outcomes.

Key indicators for these objectives are outlined in section six of the framework. Specific targets and measures will be completed as part of the long term work programme.

5.1 Consultation and Engagement

The overall approach to the framework has been the subject of extensive consultation during June - August. This included three full pages of coverage in the DomPost, 6,000 people visiting the Storyboxes, web presence, public meetings and feedback. The submissions have previously been distributed⁴. Officers have reviewed these and made changes as part of the development of the framework. A summary of the key themes and responses are provided here.

5.1.1 Key themes from submissions

The Council was commended for its aim of creating a comprehensive framework for the central city. The value of developing such an approach was acknowledged by professional organisations and individuals.

The submissions covered broad support for the overall project ideas, suggestions to make the final framework more cohesive, criticisms/corrections of some specific points, and interest in being involved in its ongoing development and implementation.

⁴ These were provided during the report on Towards 2040 in August.

Key themes from the submissions included:

Theme	Response
The importance of sustaining a sense of place and liveability in attracting people and business – and that this is a core role of Council.	This is a key platform of the framework and of the ‘dynamic central city’ outcome in Towards 2040: Smart Capital.
The need to more directly address the city’s resilience to earthquakes and sea level rise.	The importance of resilience is reflected in a number of the objectives and projects. For example the triangular spaces/parks provide additional places for people to congregate during emergency events. The systems section has been added to specifically capture the need for ongoing work in this space.
Clearer reference to heritage and its contribution to the city’s appeal.	A specific subsection has been added in response to this.
Support for making more of streets as open spaces in the city – improving their amenity for people.	Retained.
Support for interventions that use streets as places to improve storm water quality.	Retained.
Support for improving public connections in the city.	Retained: the streets and open space projects aim to provide this.
A call for greater consideration and expression of local conditions and identity.	An introductory section on the city’s current strengths and future challenges has been added. A series of precinct studies have also been recommended and these would draw on input from locals and the local design and development community.
Concerns about the status and need for interventions on the waterfront (as indicated in the Space Syntax study) and the limited commentary on the waterfront.	The Waterfront Framework was subject to a concurrent review during consultation and was therefore not featured in the framework. Any recommendations from the Space Syntax report that relate to the area covered by the Waterfront Framework (ie the promenade) have not been retained in the Central City Framework. Projects that relate to connections to the waterfront have.
Broad support for the concepts around transport management (ie address the impacts of the one way system) noting that further evidence will need to be developed and work done to understand and test any changes.	Retained: the need to continuously monitor to ensure movement efficiency for all modes.
The need for clarification on the status of the background reference documents and the next steps.	<p>Note: officers provided clarification during meetings and forums that the recommendations contained in the Spatial Structure Plan and the Space Syntax report were those of the consultants and did not represent council policy (as is noted in both documents).</p> <p>Noted: the need for officers to provide clear and diagrammatic outlines of processes as part of future consultations.</p>

Theme	Response
An interest in the levers that could be used to advance the outcomes in the framework (eg urban design panels; the introduction of codes vies a vie strengthening existing guides to enhance residential amenity).	An overall approach to implementation and actions to support the initial development of projects is now contained in the framework.
The viability of wetlands / stormwater management on waterfront sites.	Waterfront Technical Advisory Group (TAG) provided feedback on the limited viability of some sites identified in the Spatial Structure Plan. These have not been recommended.
The need for clarity and accuracy around keys/legends and graphics.	<p>A number of graphics contained 'indicative / notional' lines (ie indications of where historic streams run) and these were difficult to distinguish from intentions (ie proposals to recover the streams).</p> <p>The legends/graphics in the framework have been revised.</p> <p>Note: the graphics in the consultants' background documents remain unchanged.</p>
Support for initiatives that enhance and reflect the city's landscape. These covered historical, visual, recreational and biodiversity values. The role that the landscape has played in the city's settlement and containment were seen as significant to advance. Cross valley links and city greening initiatives were supported.	Retained: a specific objective has been introduced in response to this – build the city in response to the landscape.

5.2 Financial Considerations

The framework has been developed in light of the need to ensure that the central city remains viable long term. As the primary centre of employment in the region; a transport hub for commuters, passengers, freight and goods; the main focus and venue of festivals and events; and one of the few areas in New Zealand to offer a level of density to capture the economic benefits of agglomeration, it is essential that investment occurs in a way that sustains these characteristics.

The success of the framework will require both public and private investment. The Council's contribution is towards the design and leadership of the framework and the public space improvements. Specific costings are yet to be undertaken. While some projects can be covered from the reprioritisation of existing budgets, additional funding will be required.

A key question for elected members at this stage is what proportion of the overall budget should be committed towards sustaining the central city – and its rating base.

5.3 Climate Change Impacts and Considerations

A number of the objectives in the framework aim to consider the impacts of climate change on the city. These include studies of the impact of sea level rise, revitalisation of upper Victoria Street, supporting increased density (thus adding to the economic viability of major long term interventions such as sea walls).

5.4 Long Term Plan Considerations

A number of projects are anticipated to be implemented within the coming long term planning period. These will be presented back as part of the work programme.

Officers are currently reviewing the out year budgets within the existing long term plan⁵ with a view to recommending the reprioritisation of those to the priorities identified in the Central City Framework.

6. Conclusion

Agreement to the Central City Framework: objectives, projects, approach to implementation (appendix one) will provide long term guidance to future improvements to the city. The overall aim being to create an urban environment to support a 'dynamic central city'—one that is built for people is distinctive and holds appeal to locals and internationally.

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⁵ These include projects such as Greening Taranaki St that align directly with the framework and others such as an upgrade of Molesworth Street that may be reprioritised or expanded to cover a holistic approach to the parliamentary precinct.

Supporting information

1) Strategic Fit / Strategic Outcome

The Central City Framework is a key implementation tool for the Wellington Towards 2040: Smart Capital strategy, especially in the key direction of “dynamic central city”.

The evolution of this strategic direction is intended to support the increased economic, social and physical resilience of Wellington City.

2) LTP/Annual Plan reference and long term financial impact

The Central City Framework sits under the current 6.1 Urban Planning and Policy as part of the Centres programme.. No specific financial implications have been identified at this stage.

3) Treaty of Waitangi considerations

The Central City Framework acknowledges the role of mana whenua and iwi in Wellington City. It proposes that this role be made more visible in the City – in terms of the place of Maori in both Wellington’s history and future.

4) Decision-Making

The report does not seek a significant decision. The proposed Central City Framework: Approach to implementation is draft. Councillors will be asked to make decisions on the final content and direction of the Central City Framework.

5) Consultation

a) General Consultation

A series of consultation activities and workshops have been held using material from the background documents (Spatial Structure Plan and Space Syntax Report). This consultation demonstrated general support for the proposed direction of the Central City Framework.

b) Consultation with Maori

Mana whenua have been consulted on the proposed direction of the Central City Framework and are supportive of the general direction. They will be further consulted as part of the scoping of the specific project workstreams.

6) Legal Implications

There are no legal issues.

7) Consistency with existing policy

There are no immediate policy implications as a result of the draft Central City Framework.