

Introduction

Why do we need an Open Space Strategy?

Wellington City Council's *Strategic Plan* establishes a vision for the city. It sets long-term outcomes for Council in 15 key policy areas, one of which is open space. In each of these areas a specific strategy is being developed to plan how Council can achieve these outcomes.

The *Open Space Strategy* aims to identify:

- What is Council's vision for Wellington's open spaces in the future?
- What sort of open spaces does Wellington have now?
- What is the best way to move from the present to the future?

How was the Open Space Strategy developed?

The Open Space Strategy has been drawn from a wide range of sources. These include:

- an *Open Space Assessment of Wellington City* carried out in 1997;
- existing statutory and consultative documents (see references);
- *Wellington City Council's Strategic Plan*; and
- *Our City ~ Our Future*: a major community consultation on residents' vision for the future of Wellington.

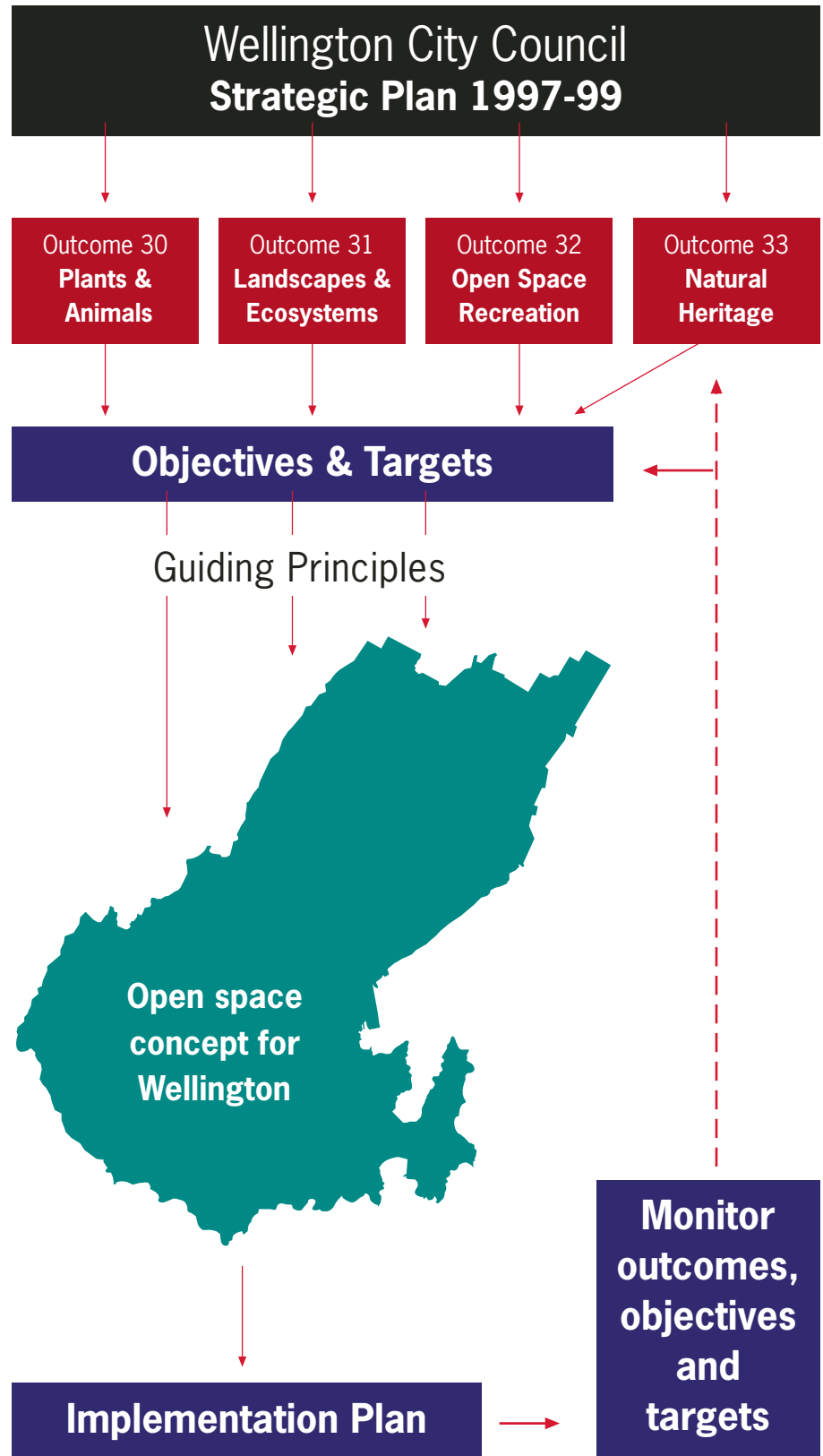
The strategy was shaped over nine months through a series of workshops for Councillors and Council officers, and public consultation. The public consultation included over seventy written submissions and an Open Space Strategy Hui at the Wellington Botanic Garden.

What do these words mean?

In this document the following technical words mean:

- ***Open Spaces*** are generally the outdoor places in the city which have ecological, recreational, landscape or heritage values. Open spaces include both privately and publicly owned land.
- ***Outcomes*** are big-picture ideas about how we would like Wellington to be.
- ***Objectives*** are what the Council aims to do in order to achieve the outcomes.
- ***Guiding Principles*** tell us how we can achieve our objectives.
- ***Targets*** are milestones which tell us when we have reached our objectives.
- The ***Open Space Concept*** is what we would like Wellington's open spaces to look like in the future.

Figure 1: Diagram showing the relationship between Council's strategic outcomes and the different parts of the Open Space Strategy.



What is in *Our City ~ Our Future*?

Our City ~ Our Future is a strategy for the future of Wellington which was developed in 1996-97 by a wide range of Wellington residents, organisations and groups. It was guided by a group of community representatives, and resulted from over 70 public meetings and workshops, and more than 1,000 individual 'visions for the future' submitted by the public.

The strategy sets a series of goals in eight theme areas. The relevant goals for open space are included in the natural and built environment sections, and the recreation and leisure section of *Our City ~ Our Future*. These are:

Natural environment

For our city's sustainable future we will:

- protect and restore ecosystems so that they are rich in plant, bird, lizard, insect and fish life, and assist them to approach that of Wellington's original natural environment; and
- encourage people to experience the natural environment, (while living in this vibrant capital city), through easy access to urban parks, gardens and open spaces.

Goals:

1. Restored and well managed natural ecosystems in the city area.
2. Open and green spaces are enhanced.

Built environment

For our city's cosmopolitan, beautiful and vibrant future environment we will:

- interweave and complement the built and natural environments; and
- improve the health of people and ecosystems.

Goal:

1. Conservation of heritage areas, buildings and features.

Recreation and leisure

For our city's future superb recreation and leisure opportunities we will:

- provide varied and affordable recreation and leisure opportunities for all; and
- use and enhance sustainable recreation and leisure environments.

Goal:

1. An abundant and diverse range of affordable, quality recreation and leisure activities and opportunities.

What is in the Wellington City Council Strategic Plan?

The strategic vision in Council's *Strategic Plan* is derived in part from *Our City ~ Our Future* and includes:

“Wellingtonians respect their natural environment from the harbour to beyond the hills and there are abundant examples of restored natural heritage. The waters are sparkling and clear, the air is fresh and clean. Wellington’s unique character and beauty are enhanced in its built environment.”

The *Strategic Plan* sets *priority focus areas*. These are areas that Council will focus its attention and resources on. There are seven priority focus areas for 1998 and 1999, and seven different areas for 2000 to 2002 including:

1998-99: Priority Focus Area

Biodiversity: To protect and enhance the range of native habitats for plants and animals in the City's open spaces.

2000-02: Priority Focus Area

Green Open Spaces: To promote the greening of the urban environment.

Council will use these priority objectives to make decisions on policy options and project funding, and to prioritise its asset management programmes.

The *Strategic Plan* also identifies four long term *outcomes* for open spaces in Wellington.

Outcome 30: Plants and animals

The City environment hosts and protects a representative range of indigenous plants and animals in their natural communities and habitats.

Outcome 31: Landscape and ecosystems

The City's natural landscape and ecosystems are recognised and, where appropriate, protected and restored.

Outcome 32: Open space recreation

A wide range of recreational opportunities in the City's open spaces are accessible to all.

Outcome 33: Natural heritage

The features of the City's natural environment that possess historical, spiritual, social, traditional or other special cultural significance are acknowledged, recognised and, where appropriate, protected.

The *Strategic Plan* contains other relevant outcomes, particularly:

Outcome 1: Built - natural relationship

The built and natural environments are woven together at all levels.

What about other Council strategies?

The *Open Space Strategy* is linked to other Wellington City Council strategies:

Recreation Strategy

The recreation strategy also includes the use of open space for recreation and leisure activities, however where the recreation strategy is concerned with the *activities* which take place on open space, the open space strategy is more concerned with open space as a *setting* for recreation.

Arts Strategy

The arts strategy addresses the ways in which the arts might use open spaces, both as a *site* for artworks and a *venue* for performing arts.

Urban Design Strategy

Both the urban design and the open space strategies are concerned with public spaces in the City. They approach public spaces from different ends of a spectrum. Whereas the urban design strategy starts from the *built* environment, particularly the central city, the open space strategy focuses on the *natural* environment, which is often situated ‘around the edges’ of the built environment. Having said this there is significant overlap between the two strategies and most successful public spaces have both built and natural elements.

Emergency Management Strategy

The emergency management strategy is concerned with avoiding or mitigating the adverse effects of natural and technological hazards on people, property and the environment. One of the principle natural hazards in Wellington is *fire hazard*. To a large extent fire hazard in Wellington is associated with open space areas due to the flammable vegetation cover (gorse or scrub) and steep topography. Fire hazard can be mitigated by revegetation which is one of the key elements of the open space strategy.

Transport Strategy

The transport strategy is concerned with achieving an integrated transport system including provision for pedestrians and cyclists. The open space strategy addresses the provision of routes for pedestrians and cyclists across open space.

Waste and Pollution Strategy

The waste and pollution strategy is under development and will provide an integrated approach to all waste management. In particular it is concerned to reduce sewage and stormwater pollution of the harbour, coast and streams, and to increase the amenity of natural streams. The strategy will address both point-source and non-point-source pollution. The *Open Space Strategy* and associated Esplanade Areas Policy are concerned with the protection and potential revegetation of stream margins.

Is this strategy linked to the District Plan?

The Council is required to prepare a district plan under the Resource Management Act 1991. The purpose of the plan is “to promote the sustainable management of natural and physical resources”.¹ The plan seeks to manage land use activities on the basis of their effects on the environment. The district plan is prepared and amended under a statutory process which allows all affected parties to make submissions on those parts of the plan which affect them.

The open space strategy is a statement of Council’s vision for the open spaces of Wellington in the future. It does not bind landowners but gives an indication of Council’s plans. Council has a number of different roles with regard to open spaces including as a landowner, an advocate and as a regulatory authority under the Resource Management Act.

The *Proposed Wellington City District Plan: Te Kaupapa Whenua and Capital Spaces* are broadly consistent. Where the strategy proposes new initiatives that could appropriately be addressed through the district plan, Council will consider amending the plan. New initiatives are identified in the Implementation Plan.

What about asset management plans?

The Local Government Amendment Act 1996 requires all Councils to prepare asset management plans by July 1998. Asset management plans describe the current condition of the asset, the desired level of service and a lifecycle management plan to maintain that level of service. Council has prepared asset management plans for all of its major assets including roads, water supply systems, stormwater and sewage systems and parks, gardens and sportsfields.

The *Wellington City Council Strategic Plan* together with the relevant strategy and policies describe the objectives that Council is seeking from an asset. The asset management plans take this strategic direction, together with legislative requirements, industry standards and customer expectations, and establishes a level of service and a life-cycle maintenance plan that will deliver the desired objectives.

Where does the annual plan fit?

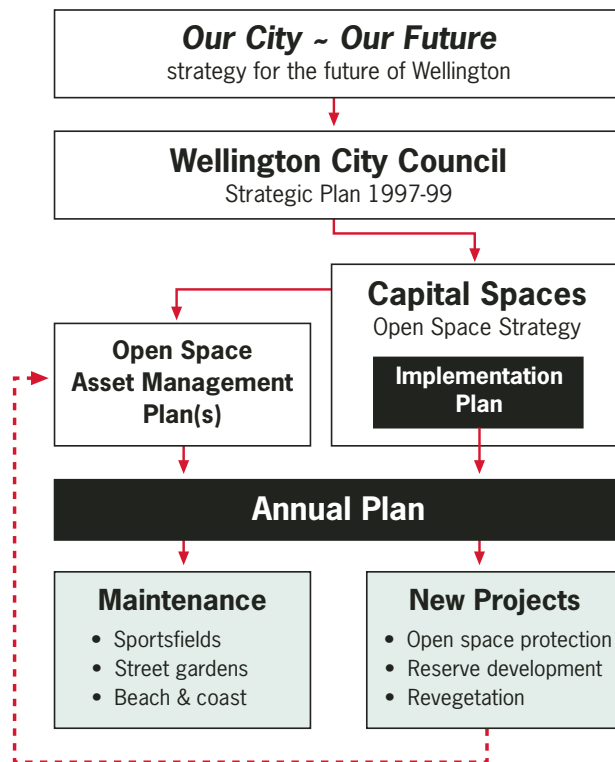
The Local Government Act 1974 requires Council to produce an annual plan in consultation with residents. The annual plan covers all of the work Council is planning to undertake that year together with approved budgets. Except in special circumstances Council is not able to undertake work that is not included in the annual plan.

¹ Section 5(1),
Resource Management Act 1991

The implementation plan in this strategy feeds those projects into the annual planning process which allocates resources to the highest priorities for Council to achieve its strategic outcomes and objectives. Each year funds for projects identified in Council's strategies and asset management plans are approved through the annual plan.

Figure 2:

Diagram showing the relationship between Our City ~ Our Future and various Council documents and projects.



What is Council working to achieve?

Council has established objectives in its *Strategic Plan* under each of the four open space outcomes. The objectives relate to what Council can do to achieve the outcomes. This recognises that a number of factors other than the Council also affect the outcomes.

OUTCOMES	OBJECTIVES
Outcome 30: Plants and animals The City environment hosts and protects a representative range of indigenous plants and animals in their natural communities and habitats.	Priority objective for the next five years 1. To protect and enhance the range of native habitats for plants and animals in the City's open spaces.
Outcome 31: Landscape and ecosystems The City's natural landscape and ecosystems are recognised and, where appropriate, protected and restored.	2. To protect and enhance the natural processes which sustain the City's natural landscapes and ecosystems. 3. To contribute to the City's structure and identity by defining and containing urban areas with open spaces 4. To protect and emphasise prominent landforms and natural features.
Outcome 32: Open space recreation A wide range of recreational opportunities in the City's open spaces are accessible to all.	5. To provide a wide range of opportunities for people to use and enjoy the City's open spaces.
Outcome 33: Natural heritage The features of the City's natural environment that possess historical, spiritual, social, traditional or other special cultural significance are acknowledged, recognised and, where appropriate, protected.	6. To protect and enhance the cultural and historic values of open space. 7. To increase community awareness, use and involvement in providing and managing open space values.