

DISCUSSION PAPER



# *Promoting quality of place*

*– a targeted approach  
to infill housing  
in Wellington City*

URBAN DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY  
WELLINGTON CITY COUNCIL  
MAY 2007

**Absolutely**

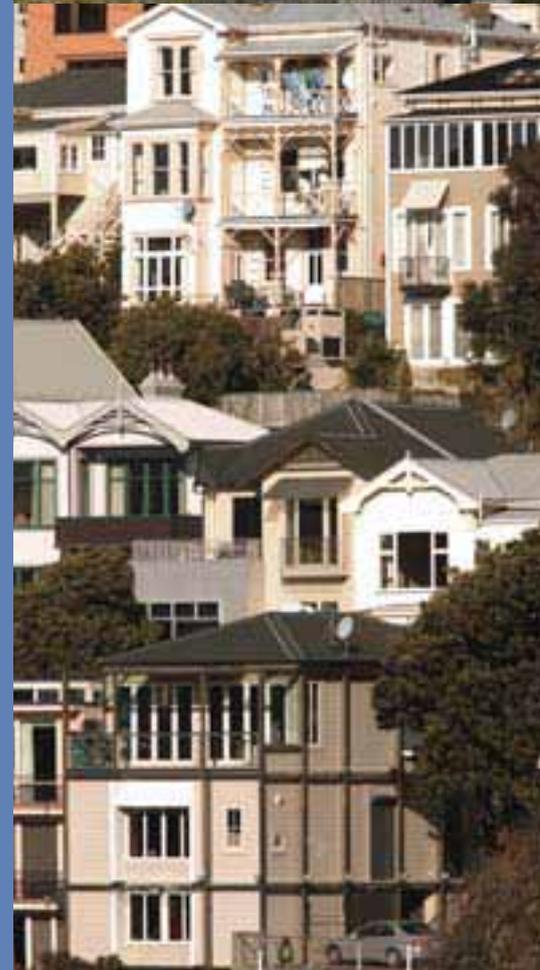
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WELLINGTON CITY COUNCIL

**Wellington**

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## A message from the Mayor

Wellington is the best little city in the world. It's compact, set on the edge of a beautiful harbour, is vibrant and offers a great urban lifestyle. It's a fantastic place to live – our suburbs have their own unique sense of place and identity and are highly accessible to the CBD and other key employment locations. Some are fortunate enough to have retained a lot of their original character and have values worth protecting.

Our population is growing and changing. The population of Wellington City has grown by nearly 16,000 over the past five years and is not showing any signs of slowing down. We are getting older and changing demographics means fewer people are living in each home. That is pushing up demand for infill housing, townhouses and apartment blocks.

How we manage growth through infill housing is one of the key challenges for the City and a high priority for the Council. While housing growth within existing suburbs is needed and encouraged, we need to be mindful of the particular qualities that make Wellington so special. We also need to ensure that our approach to infill housing is sustainable, promotes the efficient use of resources and meets future demands.

This paper will form the basis for discussion of Wellington City's approach to infill housing with the community.

I would encourage you to engage in this critical debate on the future of our City. You can start by commenting on this Discussion Paper via Council's website [www.Wellington.govt.nz](http://www.Wellington.govt.nz) or mail or fax, as listed in *Have Your Say* on page 20 of this booklet.



Kerry Prendergast  
**Mayor of Wellington**



# 1 What is this discussion of infill housing about?

## Introduction

In July 2006 Wellington City Council agreed to review the way infill housing is managed in Wellington City. The review fits within the Council's new Urban Development Strategy and comprises the following parts:

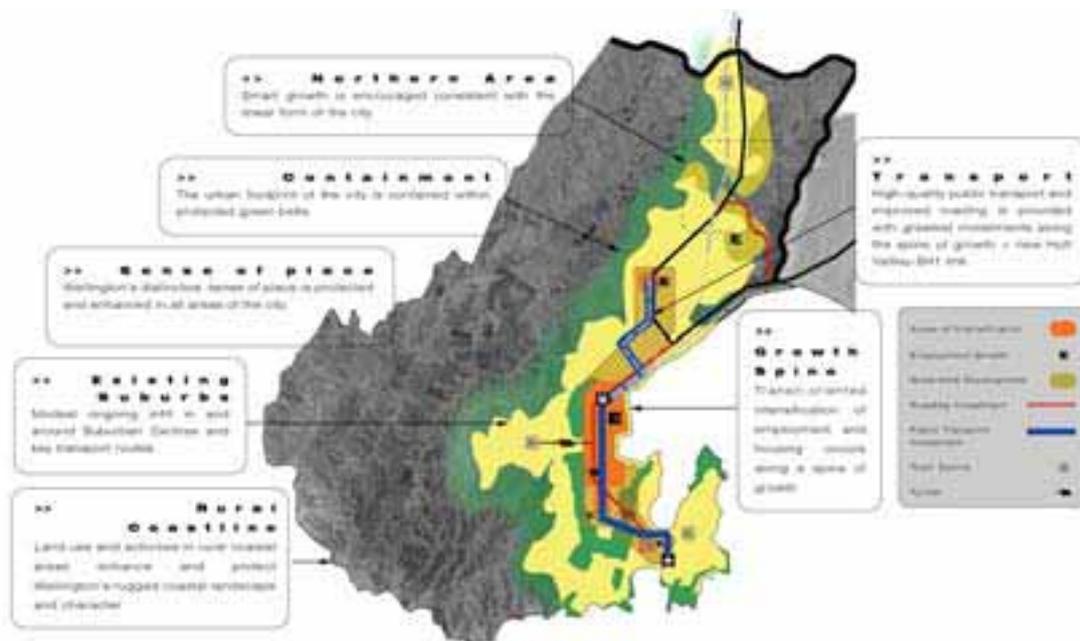
- Part 1 – examining the specific District Plan provisions affecting the quality of individual infill housing development; and
- Part 2 – examining the Council's current long-term policy for the location of infill housing, including how we might target infill housing and intensification to produce better fit with land use and transport infrastructure.

*The Council has already made significant progress on Part 1 – which focuses some of the technical rules and standards in the District Plan.*

*A change to the District Plan will be notified the same time as this discussion document is released.*

*The focus of this discussion document is on Part 2. This forms part of the Council's strategic assessment of infill housing and growth management framework.*

## WELLINGTON CITY URBAN DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY



Priority Action – Improve the way infill housing is managed in Wellington City

### Part 1 – Quality of Infill

Examine the District Plan provisions affecting the quality of individual infill housing developments – Proposed District Plan Change 56.

### Part 2 – Targeting of Infill

Examine the long-term policy for the location of infill housing, including how to target infill housing and intensification to produce a better fit with land use and transport infrastructure

*Currently we allow infill housing and medium levels of intensification to occur in all of our urban areas*

### What is infill housing?

Infill housing is generally referred to as 'backyard' housing. A more formal definition for infill housing is;

*... new development within an existing suburb of older houses. It includes one or more dwellings built behind, in front of, or beside an existing dwelling. It also includes two or more dwellings built where an original house has been removed or demolished.*

Infill housing is used in this document in combination with the term 'intensification'. Intensification refers to more comprehensive housing development, such as semi-detached and town houses, resulting in moderate to significant increases in residential density.



### What is a targeted approach?

A targeted approach suggests being much smarter about how we manage residential growth in the city.

Currently we allow infill housing and medium levels of intensification to occur in all of our urban areas. We do not differentiate between areas that are well-served by infrastructure, services and transport, and those that would have difficulty coping with significant increases in residential development.

With the aim of directing growth to where the benefits are greatest, a targeted approach would consider:

- Areas where infill housing may need to be constrained
- Areas where infill housing would be allowed, and
- Areas where greater intensification may be appropriate.

Any change to the current approach will be reflected in amendments to the Urban Development Strategy and, in time, in the District Plan.

## Need for a review of infill housing

The need for a review stems from the considerable pressure Wellington City is currently experiencing from infill housing. There is evidence in some areas that poorly designed infill housing is impacting on valued suburban character and amenity. There is also concern that infill development and intensification is being encouraged (or at least allowed) in areas that have poor access to public transport or are not well-served by infrastructure. We have anecdotal evidence that these conditions exist in a number of residential areas.

Some of these concerns are related to the growth pressures we are facing. The population of Wellington City grew by nearly 16,000 over the last five years and is not showing any signs of slowing down. We are getting older and have fewer people living in each home which is pushing up demand for infill housing and more intensive forms of housing such as townhouses and apartment blocks.

*There is evidence in some areas that poorly designed infill housing is impacting on valued suburban character and amenity*

## What have we done so far?

We have already made considerable progress.

A series of focus groups to better understand resident perceptions of infill housing were held in October last year. We also conducted a resident satisfaction survey on infill housing. Both of these surveys have provided us with a much better understanding of the issues that residents feel are important.

We have carried out research to better understand the implications of infill development and how to manage growth in Wellington City. Some of this research is on-going and includes research on the capacity for and effects of infill housing, infrastructure capacity, access to public transport and economic implications associated with infill housing and intensification.

We are currently notifying a District Plan Change to address some of the more urgent technical issues affecting the quality of individual infill housing development identified during Part 1 of the review.



*The next step will be to use this information and research findings to identify potential areas we think are best suited to infill housing and intensification and those that are not, we will seek further feedback from you on these potential areas and on the process and timing for rolling out the changes*

### What steps are proposed from here?

We will pull together comments and suggestions generated from this discussion document and the District Plan Change. These will be summarised and put on our website [www.Wellington.govt.nz](http://www.Wellington.govt.nz)

The next step will be to use this information and research findings to identify potential areas we think are best suited to infill housing and intensification and those that are not, we will seek further feedback from you on these potential areas and on the process and timing for rolling out the changes. This is likely to occur in early to mid-2008.

The end of 2008 should result in an amendment to the Wellington City Urban Development Strategy (2006) that will include:

- A clearly developed and robust rationale for taking a targeted approach to infill housing
- Identification of areas that are considered appropriate and areas considered inappropriate for further infill housing
- Identification of areas that would support more intensive housing development
- A programme of actions (including further District Plan changes) to implement the new strategy direction.



Finally, if further District Plan changes are required, these will also be available for further public input in accordance with the processes under the Resource Management Act 1991.

## 2 A snapshot of Wellington City

### Population Growth

Wellington City has an estimated population of 188,500. According to current projections, the population is expected to increase to between 204,500 (medium) and 221,800 (high) by 2026. Over the last five year period our population growth has been higher than predicted.

*Between 2001 and 2026 we expect to need around 19,000 homes for 33,000 more people...*

### People and Housing

The average household is becoming smaller, with 42.4% of all Wellington households comprising couples without children. Smaller households means more dwellings are required to house the same number of people.

Over 60% of all building consents over the last six years were for terrace units or apartments. The majority of these were located in the Central Area.

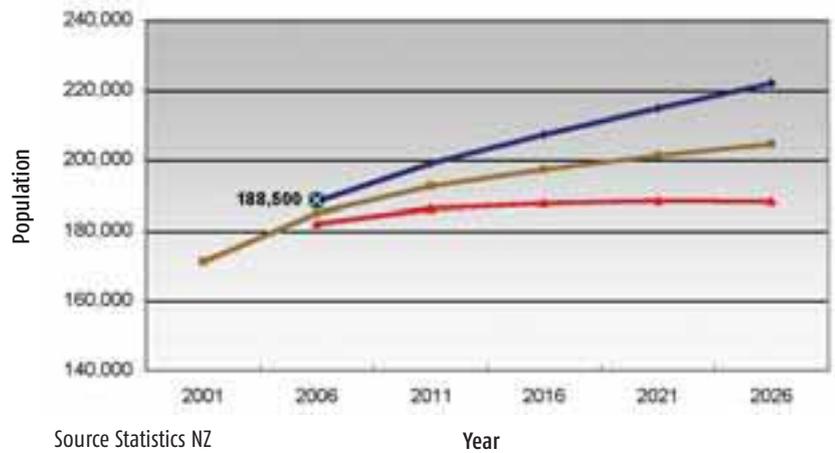
Between 2001 and 2026 we expect to need around 19,000 homes for 33,000 more people, with a different mix of dwellings – more apartments, flats and townhouses and less single detached houses.

### Employment

Wellington City is the economic powerhouse of the region. Key sectors include: building and construction, government and business services, with on-going declines in manufacturing as the City transforms into a service and creative industries economy.

Central Government makes significant contribution to the economic growth to the city. Almost 40% of people employed in the core public service are based in Wellington and Government tenants occupy about 30% of Wellington's CBD office space.

Projected Population Wellington City 2001



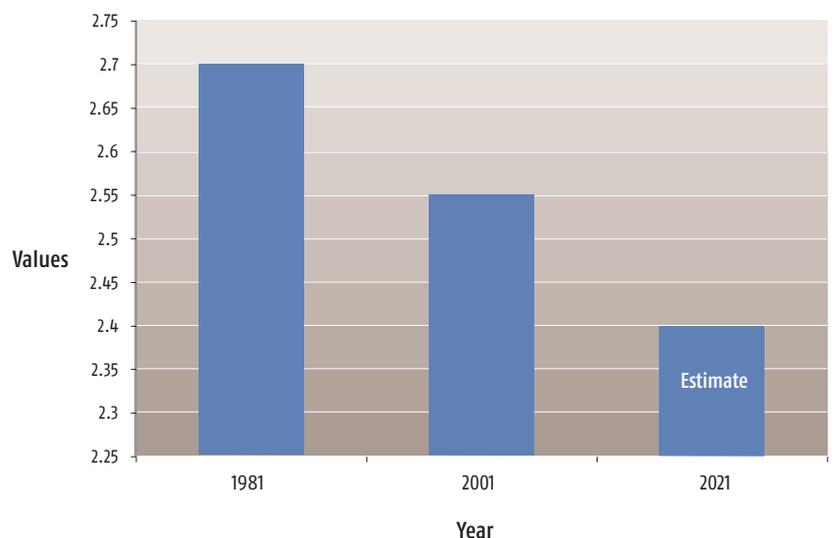
Source Statistics NZ

Annual Forecast Demand by Dwelling Type, Wellington City 2006 to 2051

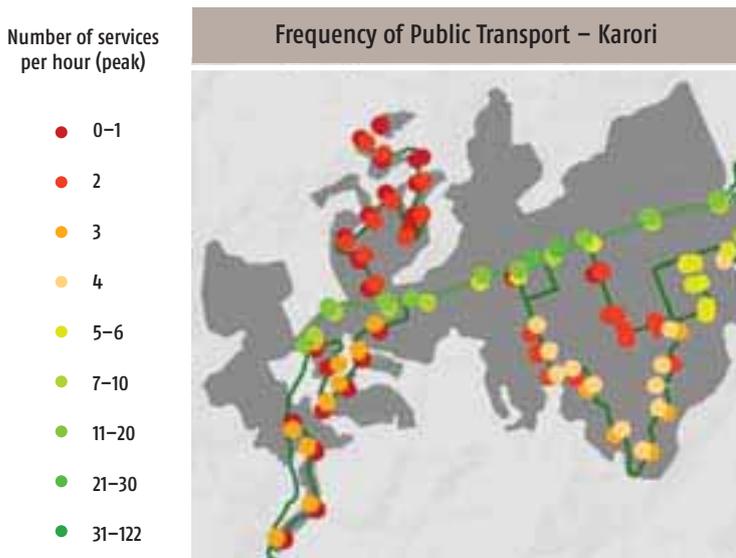
Year	Apartment	Terrace / Unit	Detached	Total
2006	202	202	455	860
2011	198	198	267	664
2016	241	241	252	734
2021	271	271	228	770
2031	238	238	200	676
2041	169	169	142	479
2051	102	102	86	291

Source: Property Economics 2005

Average Number of People per Dwelling 1981–2021

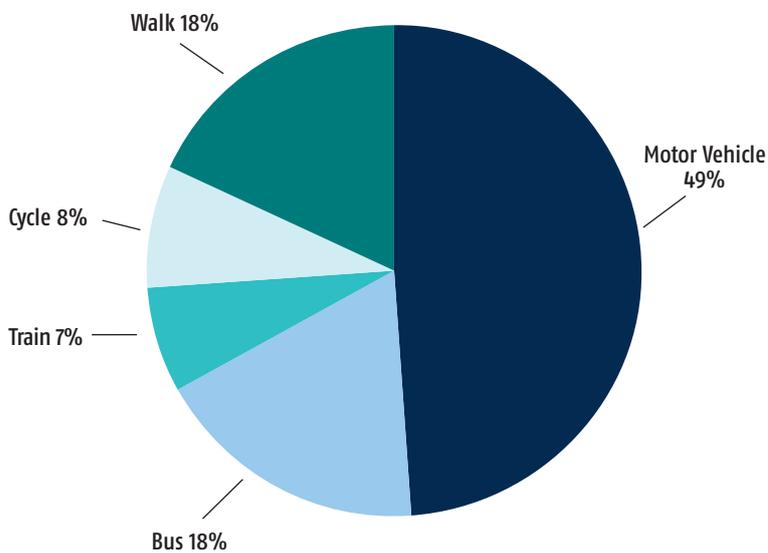


Source: Statistics NZ, MERA 05



*Our traffic congestion levels are lower than many comparable cities...*

Main method of Travel to the Wellington CBD – 2007



Source: Resident Satisfaction Survey 2007

## Transport

On many indicators, Wellington's transport system is performing well – our traffic congestion levels are lower than many comparable cities and use of public transport and walking is much higher. We are a compact city with short travel distances and a good level of connectedness.

Nevertheless, we have several challenges that need to be faced:

- Population and economic growth is causing increased congestion – longer travel times for motorists and more unreliable bus services
- More trips on weekends and to dispersed places across the city
- Many parts of the city have poor access to public transport
- Capacity constraints on some passenger transport routes, in particular rail
- On-street parking is at capacity in some suburbs
- The cost of removing bottlenecks at Mt Victoria and the Terrace tunnels is high.

## Environment

Our unique physical environment has shaped Wellington City's character significantly. This has resulted in a number of very positive attributes for the city, including the development of a network of open spaces along hilltops and ridgelines including the Town Belt and Outer Green Belt.

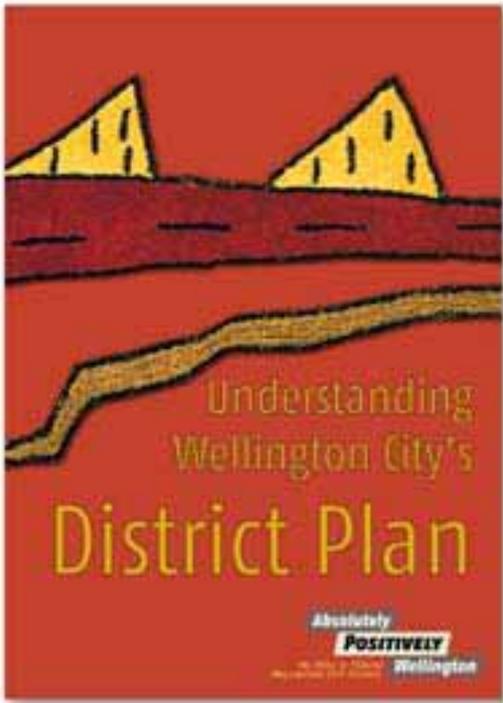
Key environmental challenges as they relate to infill housing include:

- Ensuring we have enough public spaces in the areas that are growing
- Managing the risk from environmental hazards such as earthquake risk and slope instability
- Using good urban form to ensure resources are used efficiently
- Protecting biodiversity.





### 3 What is our current approach for infill housing?



Wellington City's current approach to infill housing and intensification is shaped by two key documents: the Wellington City District Plan and the Urban Development Strategy.

#### Wellington City District Plan (2000)

The Wellington City District Plan sets out the rules governing all development in the City. The Plan sets out where residential development is allowed and includes controls for things such as site coverage, sunlight access, building height and parking. It also includes additional controls on urban design and demolition to protect the unique character our inner-residential neighbourhoods. For this reason, the District Plan is the key document for making changes to the way we deal with infill housing and intensification.

In terms of the location of infill housing and intensification, the Wellington City District Plan is permissive and allows for a wide range of housing to be developed across the city. This makes it difficult to limit or target infill housing to certain areas. The following diagrams illustrate this by identifying what type of residential development is currently permitted in different parts of the city.



## A Cross section of Wellington's Housing

### Rural areas

What sort of housing development is allowed?

- Single house subject to strict subdivision rules (minimum 50 hectare lot size in most areas, 1 hectare in some rural areas)
- No infill housing allowed.

1



### New subdivisions

What sort of housing development is allowed?

- Single detached dwellings (low density)
- Multiunit dwellings and townhouses (medium density)
- Very limited scope for infill housing due to larger houses taking up most of the allowable building envelope.

2



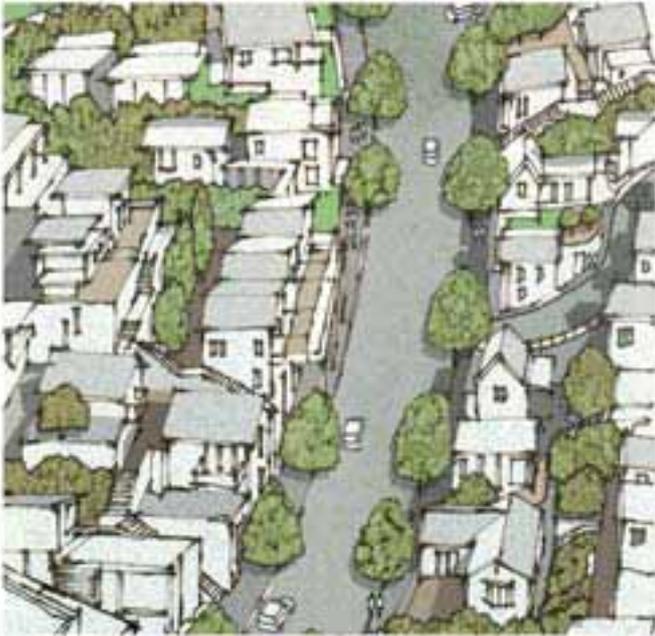
### Older outer residential suburbs such as Karori, Kilbirnie, Island Bay, Miramar

What sort of housing development is allowed?

- Single detached dwellings (low density)
- Multiunit dwellings and townhouses (medium density)
- Considerable scope for infill housing and intensification, particularly in hilly suburbs with larger sections.

3





## Inner residential areas such as Thorndon, Mt Cook, Mt Victoria, Te Aro, Newtown and Berhampore

What sort of housing development is allowed?

- Single detached dwellings (low density)
- Multiunit dwellings and townhouses (medium density)
- Infill housing does occur but this is more limited due to the existing higher levels of housing density.

4



## Commercial areas such as town and local centres and industrial areas

What sort of housing development is allowed?

- Any form of housing development is permitted, including infill housing (low, medium, high-density)
- Increasing conversion of industrial or commercial land to multiunit residential development, such as terrace housing or apartments
- Infill housing is allowed but is generally not commercially viable.

5



## Central area

What sort of housing development is allowed?

- Any form of housing development is permitted in the central area
- Apartments are the most common form of housing development
- Infill housing is allowed but is not commercially viable.

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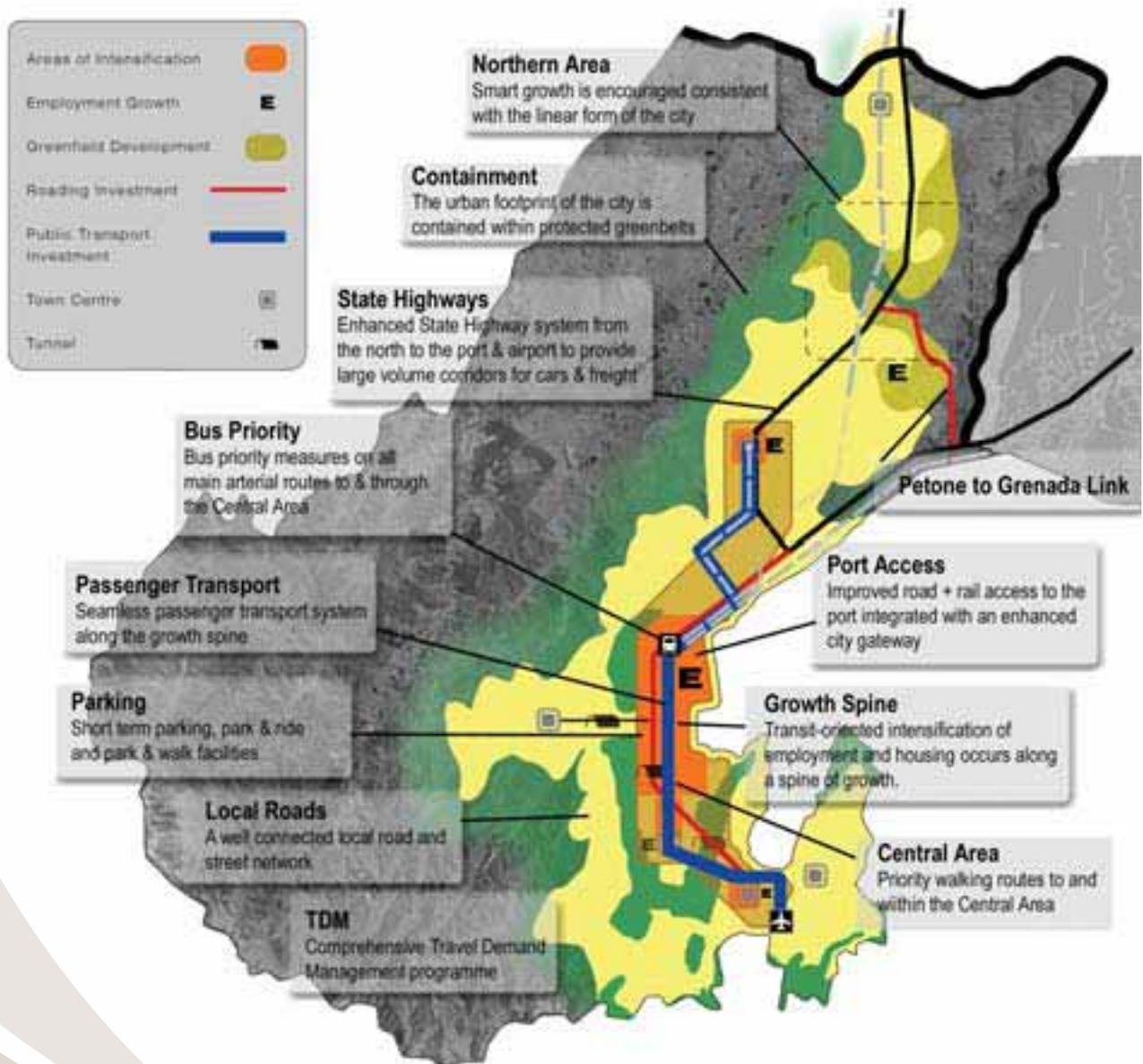
## Urban Development Strategy (2006)

The Urban Development Strategy provides the direction for an examination of infill housing as it sets out the Council's preferred long-term outcomes for urban development.

The Urban Development Strategy introduces the idea of targeting, and suggests that the benefits to the City are greatest when residential 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. The concept of the 'growth spine' is based on this idea. The growth spine encourages intensification of employment and housing in key locations along the City's major transport spine and is supported by the Council's Transport Strategy.

*The Urban Development Strategy introduces the idea of targeting, and suggests that the benefits to the City are greatest when residential new growth is directed to areas that are already well connected...*

## Key elements from Wellington City Council's Transport and Urban Development Strategies



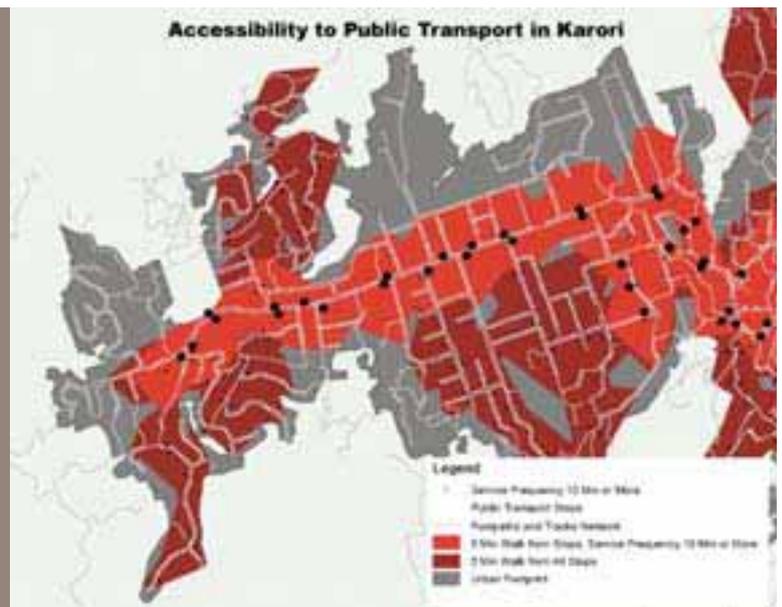
## 4 Why a targeted approach?

The underlying reason we are doing this review is to be much smarter about the way we manage growth in the city. High levels of population growth, a changing demographic and increasing demand for housing close to the CBD present the City with some real challenges. We also need to be mindful of the particular qualities that make Wellington so special and the need to maintain adequate family housing. The following section describes the key growth management challenges facing the city in relation to infill housing and intensification.

### To be more efficient and sustainable

Wellington City's approach to urban development already supports the efficient use of resources and promotes environmental and social wellbeing. It does this in part by containing development within the established edges of the city and being smart about how we allow growth in new subdivision areas.

We could do better however – particularly within the established areas of the city. By allowing infill housing and intensification to occur almost anywhere in the city, we are not benefiting to the extent that we could. Some of these areas are poorly-served and relatively inaccessible from urban centres and transport, and in other areas we are not achieving the density levels needed to support an efficient transport system.



### To build on our sense of place

Wellington's success as a city relates closely to its sense of place. We recognise that many of our residential areas are special, in part due to the challenging topography and historic housing style. Some of our suburbs have heritage and character specifically recognised and protected through the District Plan but there may be other areas in the City that require protection.

A key issue to consider in this review is how do we allow for infill housing and intensification and at the same time build on and reflect our sense of place?

This is a particularly relevant issue for the City as the places that have a strong sense of place tend to be the places that face the most pressure for residential development.

In terms of traditional backyard infill – sense of place can be affected by too much poor quality development or development that is out of scale with surrounding buildings. The proposed District Plan Change goes some way to addressing this problem.

The issues are more complex where intensive housing development such as apartments or terrace housing is proposed, as this usually results in a significant change to the character of a particular area. While the Council has some control through the District Plan, there is an opportunity through this review to consider where higher-density development should be allowed and what processes should be in place to ensure good quality development.

## To meet the housing needs of a changing population

Wellington's population has changed significantly over the last decade, and is expected to continue to change. We are getting older and have fewer people living in each home as the household formation changes towards more single dwellers and couples without children.

Our current housing stock of mainly detached housing is considered inadequate to cope with the challenges of a changing population. For example, we know there is limited opportunity for retired people to move into suitable housing that is close to essential services and still remain in their suburb. The problem is expected to get worse in the future. While around 66% of our existing housing stock comprises single stand-alone houses, we expect over 60% of future demand over the next 30 years to be for more intensive forms of housing such as terrace style housing and apartments.

A targeted approach to infill housing and intensification would provide more opportunity to bridge the gap between what we have now and what we need in the future.

## *Our current housing stock of mainly detached housing is considered inadequate to cope with the challenges of a changing population*

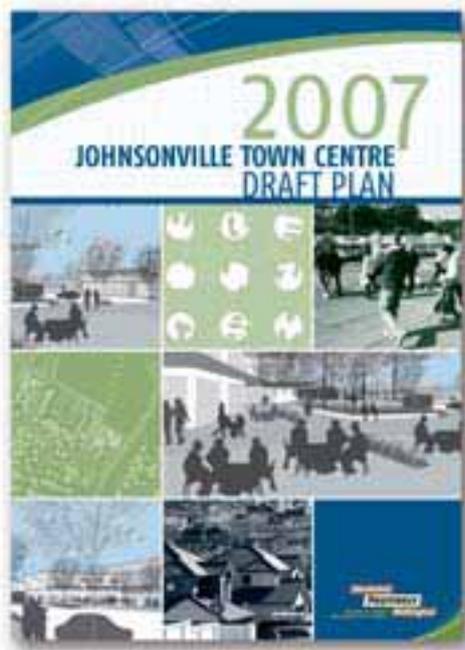
### To ensure we can accommodate growth in the right places

Preliminary research on the capacity for residential development in Wellington City indicates we have:

- considerable capacity for apartment growth in the Central Area
- adequate capacity for the next 20 years for green field subdivision development in the Northern Growth Area and considerable capacity at the regional level
- considerable capacity for general infill housing in the outer residential suburbs.

The same cannot be said however for more intensive forms of housing such as medium size apartments and terrace houses. While we expect the demand for this type of housing to increase (for the reasons discussed above), the lack of opportunities in residential areas close to the CBD and town centres is leading to an overspill of this type of housing in outer residential areas. Some of these areas are less well-served by infrastructure and tend to impact more on the surrounding low-density neighbourhoods.





*Targeting more intensive development to fewer specific locations provides an opportunity for Council to focus its resources and ensure better quality development*

### To be able to better manage change

One of the problems with our current approach to infill and intensification is that it makes it difficult for Council to influence change and align it better to our investments in infrastructure and facilities.

Targeting more intensive development to fewer specific locations provides an opportunity for Council to focus its resources and ensure better quality development. We are already doing this for Johnsonville town centre as part of the 'growth spine' work plan. Using this approach would help avoid the situation of Council having to spread resources too thinly. It will also enable improved passenger transport planning and investment in areas identified for infill housing and intensification.

### To provide more opportunity for affordable good quality housing

The issue of housing affordability is becoming increasingly relevant in New Zealand society. Being smarter about the way we manage infill housing could have positive spin-offs for the issue of affordable housing.

For example, while a targeted approach to infill housing may result in less scope for development in some areas of the City, it could also provide greater opportunity in other parts of the city to facilitate more affordable forms of housing. Council could work with government agencies and private developers to ensure a percentage of low cost (but good quality) housing is included in major development schemes. This approach is already being pursued successfully by several councils within New Zealand.

It is also important that the desire for housing affordability is not achieved at the expense of quality of design, which often results in additional ongoing costs.



## 5 What a targeted approach might look like

### A targeted approach

A targeted approach to infill housing and intensification would likely include the following three key elements:

#### Areas of stability

Infill housing and intensification would be tightly controlled or not allowed at all in areas of stability. Areas of stability could include areas that do not have the infrastructure, roading, transport and community services to support further intensification. They may also include areas of strategic importance and key employment areas where it is difficult to manage the adverse effects of nearby residential development. Areas of particular heritage or character value may also warrant further protection.

#### Implications:

- Greater certainty for residents that any change will be limited in scope
- Development opportunities would be more limited in areas of stability
- The process for identifying areas of stability would have to be very robust and transparent
- Boundaries and new rules guiding development will need to be introduced through the District Plan.



*Areas of limited infill would allow infill housing and moderate intensification to occur but with a greater focus on quality*

#### Areas of limited infill

Areas of limited infill would allow infill housing and moderate intensification to occur but with a greater focus on quality. The Proposed District Plan Change 56 that is being released the same time as this discussion paper will assist in ensuring better quality.

#### Implications:

- No changes from the current situation, apart from a greater emphasis on the quality of infill housing.



## Areas of change

Areas of change would be those areas where comprehensive re-development of housing would be encouraged and facilitated, resulting in moderate to significant increases in residential density and changes to the character of some parts of the city. The location of areas of change would need to be carefully considered depending on proximity to employment, services and public transport, and the ability of the market to respond.



## How will we decide?

Firstly, by considering feedback from Wellingtonians on the ideas and questions set out in this discussion paper. Comments will be summarised and put on our website [www.Wellington.govt.nz](http://www.Wellington.govt.nz)

### Implications:

- The process for identifying areas of change would have to be robust and transparent, taking particular account of existing character and proximity to public transport and employment.
- There may be a need in some parts for increased investment in infrastructure and passenger transport services.
- One of the biggest challenges for areas of change will be to ensure good amenity and quality urban design outcomes. To ensure this, development proposals may be subject to some form of comprehensive planning process.



- Leadership and active participation from Council will be required to influence change and ensure quality outcomes, including aims to achieve good quality affordable housing.
- Managing areas of change could be resource hungry – this means being very selective about areas of change that warrant intervention. It may be necessary to phase the rollout of change areas following detailed planning studies – as we are doing for the 'growth spine'.
- Development rights of land owners may be limited in areas of change. Even in the interim, it may be necessary to constrain ad hoc development or traditional 'backyard' infill housing in change areas to enable more comprehensive development to occur at a later date.

We will continue to gather technical information to help identify areas that are appropriate for infill and intensification and areas that are not. This includes research on the character of residential areas, transport opportunities and constraints, social and environmental effects and other infrastructural issues. It is expected that technical research and information gathering will continue throughout the rest of this year and into the first part of 2008.

Once we have an idea about potential areas we think are best suited to infill housing and intensification and those that are not, we will seek further feedback from you on these potential areas and on the process and timing for rolling out the changes. This is likely to occur in early to mid-2008 and could include some short-term and long-term actions, including possible suggestions to amend the District Plan.

Finally, if further District Plan changes are required, these will also be available for further public input in accordance with the processes under the Resource Management Act 1991.

## 6 Have your say

We are inviting your comments and feedback on this Discussion Paper until Monday 2 July 2007.

Feedback can be made via mail, email, internet and fax as follows:

**Mail** Wellington City Council

PO Box 2199

Wellington 6011

**Attention** Urban Development Team

**Internet** An online submission form from

[www.Wellington.govt.nz](http://www.Wellington.govt.nz)

**Email** [infill@wcc.govt.nz](mailto:infill@wcc.govt.nz)

**Fax** 04 801 3165

If you have any queries or would like to find out more about the review of infill or the Urban Development Strategy visit our website at [www.Wellington.govt.nz](http://www.Wellington.govt.nz) or contact project manager Paul Kos on 04 499 4444.

### **Privacy and Personal Information:**

Personal information will be used for the administration of the consultation process and may be made public. All information collected will be held by Wellington City Council, 101 Wakefield Street, Wellington, with submitters having the right to access and correct personal information. If you wish your personal details or any parts of your feedback to be treated confidentially, please state this in your feedback. You may submit comments anonymously.

