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**REPORT 2**  
(1215/52/IM)

## **CAPITAL CITY/CENTRE INITIATIVE UPDATE**

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### **1. Purpose of Report**

This is an update of the work done since last reporting to the Strategy and Policy Committee in April 2006 and proposes a way forward for this project.

### **2. Executive Summary**

In April 2006 the Council signed-off on a series of objectives as outlined in the Capital Precinct Framework. The framework proposed that the Council focus on the area around Parliament as a major urban design programme. In 2006, the Council committed funds of approximately \$2.6 million in the LTCCP for the upgrade of the physical environment in the area around Parliament for the years 2012 -2014.

As noted in the previous report, Wellington could do much more to acknowledge its Capital status. The built form is substantially in place. There has been a rejection of a formal 'designed capital city' so evident in national capitals such as Canberra and Washington. However the built and open space environment around Parliament is generally of an average to poor quality and lacks any reference to any national significance.

Further exploration has led to a different emphasis, in particular considering all of Wellington as the capital, with the area around Parliament being proposed as the Capital Centre. Also the traditional aspects of urban design have been expanded to consider the idea of 'story telling'.

This has culminated in the draft booklet ***Our Extraordinary Democracy - The Capital City Initiative*** which builds on the Framework. It is proposed that this forms the Council's proposition to central government and a vision of what Wellington could be as a capital city.

The report also proposes a series of initiatives that central government in partnership with the Council could consider that would further enhance this initiative.

### 3. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee:

1. *Receive the information.*
2. *Note the on going work on this project*
3. *Agree that the Mayor and the Chief Executive will approach the Minister for the Environment and the Minister of Culture and Heritage and the respective chief executive officers to seek Government approval and commitment to the Capital City Initiative and report back to Council by the end of June 2008.*

### 4. Background

The report entitled ***Capital Precinct*** was presented to the Strategy and Policy Committee on April 20 2006 and the following recommendations were accepted:

*THAT the Strategy and Policy Committee:*

1. *Receive the information.*
2. *Agree to the objectives as outlined in the Capital Precinct Framework as amended.*
3. *Agree to the proposed set of initiatives as a basis for further discussion with key stakeholders, including Central Government.*
4. *Note that funding for future planning and feasibility work is being considered as part of the 2006/07 Annual Plan round.*
5. *Agree that the Mayor and the Chief Executive approach the Minister for the Environment and the Minister of Culture and Heritage and the respective Chief Executive Officers to seek Government approval and commitment to the Capital Precinct Framework.*

The overarching objective in the framework was to **celebrate Wellington's role as capital city.**

This will be done by giving prominence to the legislative, judicial and administrative functions of the capital city, integrating the Capital Precinct more fully with the rest of the central city and promoting high quality design outcomes.

A set of detailed objectives had been developed to guide change and enhancement in the precinct. They have been tabulated into two categories of national and local relevance, emphasising the relationship the capital precinct has with both the nation and with Wellington as the capital city:

	<b>nation</b>	<b>host city</b>
<b>Identity</b>	Express the values, institutions and traditions which make up New Zealand's system of government.	Integrate the Capital Precinct into the wider city: improve physical and visual connections with surrounding areas including the harbour.
<b>Culture</b>	Create a place which all New Zealanders identify with: reflect the diversity of cultures which make up New Zealand.	Acknowledge Tangata Whenua and their ongoing stake in the precinct.
<b>Character</b>	Recognise and enhance the distinctive character and heritage of major government buildings.	Respect the local identity of areas around Parliament: promote heritage buildings and spaces, and their appropriate uses.
<b>Context</b>	Improve physical and visual connections between important government institutions.	Co-ordinate Council public space initiatives to increase amenity and enhance the precinct's identity.
<b>Vitality</b>	Promote and enhance visitors' experience of the precinct, balancing the needs of accessibility, amenity and security.	Foster a mix of activities for those that live, work and study in the precinct, including appropriate non- government uses.
<b>Partnership</b>	Encourage public involvement in the development and management of the Capital Precinct.	Establish ongoing co-ordination between Government and Wellington City Council.

In implementing the recommendations, Council officers consulted with the Deputy Chief Executive Officers of the Ministry for the Environment and the Ministry of Culture and Heritage as to how best to present the Framework to their respective Ministers. They raised the concern that while the objectives as outlined in the Framework were sound, there needed to be more tangible

outcomes. Council officers therefore undertook further work and the meeting with the respective Ministers has not happened.

In response, the Council in late 2006 and early 2007 convened two one-day workshops to further explore the issues. The results of these two workshops are included in Appendix 1.

The main message from these two workshops was that the New Zealand way is not to present nationhood through grand, institutional, patriotic architecture and pageantry. (*"A bush track is more 'New Zealand' than a wide tree-lined boulevard."*) Our Government buildings and grounds should foster a sense of accessibility, rather than symbolise a detached, authoritarian state.

At the same time the workshop attendees were seeking the highest quality of urban design; *"Be smart and contemporary in everything we do."* The area must still feel like a Capital City. Stories, open space and buildings should be well told, well executed and well presented. The area should have a quality, and a scale, to which New Zealanders can relate and in which they can take pride.

The outcomes from these workshop led to further analysis around the following themes:

- **National institutions in the Parliamentary Precinct:** Roy Wilson, Warren & Mahoney Architects
- **Traffic flow and transportation planning:** Gary Clark, Traffic Concepts
- **Public spaces and connections to the city:** Megan Wraight, Wraight + Associates
- **The precinct's stories and how they should be told:** Steve La Hood, Story Inc.
- **The role/functions of central government:** Carole van Grondelle, Lyric Communications
- **The communications plan:** Sue Elliott, Communications Chambers
- **Design of the information centre:** Chris Kelly, Architecture Workshop
- **Sustainable office development:** Belinda Tuohy, Architecture +

Finally **IntensCITY Week** (27 September-5 October 2007) focused attention on the importance of good urban design. A series of events was run including the '**Capital Centre: LOOK Again**' urban art installation at the corner of Aitken and Molesworth streets. Built on a raised platform, with illustrated panels, this outdoor installation sought to highlight the many buildings, spaces and functions of national importance nearby. A publication of the illustrated panels has been published – **Capital Centre: Look again.**

## 5. Discussion

The work undertaken since April 2006, in developing the framework has resulted in the following change in direction:

- In regards to the capital function, a change was proposed that the whole city needed to be considered with the area around Parliament being seen as the centre.
- A change in name from the Capital Precinct to Capital Centre
- As well as the traditional consideration of urban design (the development of the physical fabric - the buildings and open spaces) this needed to be aligned with the presentation of the stories, the ideas, debates and decisions that have shaped the lives of all New Zealanders to give a fully integrated approach to developing the capital role our city has.

This new direction is summarised in a draft plan called ***Our Extraordinary Democracy - The Capital City Initiative*** which builds on the Framework presented two years ago. It is proposed that this is the Council's proposition to central government of a vision of what Wellington could be as a capital city.

## 5.1 Initiatives

The draft plan contains a series of initiatives around four themes:

### 5.1.1 Developing a coherent physical area

How do we create a coherent, accessible and attractive Capital Centre at the heart of the capital city? Following are some propositions which have not been costed or yet considered as new initiatives.

**A new symbolic public space:** There might be a long-term – even a 100 year – vision of a Capital Centre that connects two of Wellington's formative attributes; the Town Belt and the Waterfront. This would spatially connect the Capital Centre with the city's landscape. This could be developed over time.

**Upgrade and extend Parliament Grounds:** The landscape of Parliament Grounds might be extended beyond the perimeter wall into Molesworth Street and Lambton Quay to create a space that knits better with the rest of the city and conveys a shared ownership and connection.

**A common visual language:** The detailing of the Capital Centre's urban fabric – the paving, trees, street furniture and street design features – should be of a quality that reflects both this change in scale and its national significance.

**Simplify the cluttered landscape:** There is potential to improve the streetscape design, clarity and legibility. It has been suggested that simplifying the landscape so that key landmarks in the Capital Centre are more clearly seen would go a long way to improving its physical experience.

**Celebrate Aitken Street:** This street has potentially the most intimate scale of any in the Capital Centre. It is flanked by the National Library at one end and

Archives New Zealand at the other. Its qualities could make it ideal as an outdoor exhibition and ceremonial space.

**Repair edge along High Court:** The High Court building on lower Molesworth Street engages poorly with the street. This street edge needs to be improved to produce positive interaction with Molesworth Street, and to provide pedestrian shelter from the elements.

**Open up the buildings:** Great streets have a quality of 'transparency' at their edges. Views through windows and doors, or glimpses through fences, trees or hedges, provide a sense of openness and reassurance. A number of key public buildings in the Capital Centre are not, by design, open and inviting.

### 5.1.2 Developing a better relationship to the city

It is important that there is some consistency in the public space treatment of the Capital City. There should not be an entirely separate visual language compared to other parts of the city. It may well be that a much higher level of scrutiny is applied to development in the Capital Centre, similar to what happens now on Wellington's waterfront.

It is important that there are stronger physical connections between the Capital Centre and the rest of the city, particularly to the other national institutions. A number of these 'connections' are currently under consideration by Wellington City Council, including:

**Taranaki Street upgrade:** A proposal to extend the planting of pohutukawa trees from Aotea Quay along Taranaki Street is being considered. This street has the potential to be used as an important processional route connecting with the National Memorial Park.

**National Memorial Park;** The Council is working with the Ministry of Culture and Heritage on development of the new park on Buckle Street.

**Government House:** Detailed planning for a major upgrade of Government House has been underway since 2007. Part of this work should address the entrance to Government House on Dufferin Street, off the Basin Reserve.

**Basin Reserve;** The Basin Reserve is a key focus of Transit NZ's 'Ngauranga to Airport' study into regional transport issues. The Council is also looking at development issues around the northern end of Adelaide Road, and creating a 20-year plan to guide future growth. This area is a critical hinge to the southern part of the city and links major government institutions.

**Molesworth Street upgrade:** A comprehensive upgrade of Molesworth Street is provided for in the Council's current planning for 2013. The upgrade would seek to have Molesworth Street better reflect its position as the 'front

door' to Parliament.

**Bowen/Whitmore corridor:** This corridor has the potential to be used as an important symbolic space that helps connect Parliament with the waterfront.

### 5.1.3 A conceptual approach to story-telling

It is suggested that a dynamic programme of activities and initiatives that celebrates Wellington's capital city status could be developed. The stories told should be based on the following hierarchy:

**Celebration of New Zealand as a democracy:** This is the main theme of story-telling in the Capital City. These are national stories that happen to be embodied in institutions in Wellington.

**Democracy at work:** This might cover events that happened here, from famous debates, to protests, demonstrations, hiko of all kinds, and the odd moments of political life.

**Physical changes to the landscape:** This layer of story would be only loosely linked to the core subject of democracy. Stories would feature the rich layering of history on the landscape, from Maori use of the land in the 1840s to stories of the streets.

### 5.1.4 Bringing the Capital City to life

There is little reason currently for people to care about what happens in the capital. We need to re-position the institutions involved, and present them as a package of immense significance. This involves changing perceptions of the institutions themselves, and of Wellington. Initial ideas ranged from the use of old-fashioned signposts and plaques at one end of the spectrum to innovative sound-and-lighting technology at the other. Ideas include:

**Defined pathways** to our national institutions. Wellington's walkability means we can tell our stories not only at the buildings but on the journey between them. Whimsy and humour would be memorable.

**Interpretive resources** that reveal what each building or space is, the part it plays in our history and governance, and the stories related to it. These resources might include signage, publications, and interactive displays. One suggestion is for 'then and now peekaboos', in which visitors might look through a viewer to compare a street scene before them with the same scene in 1889 or 1945.

**Events** that mark the nation's calendar of memorable or historic occasions, and celebrate our journey to nationhood in the streets and civic spaces of the Capital City.

**Lighting technology** could be used in innovative ways to highlight elements of the Capital City experience. Several cities around the world have experimented with large-scale public interactivity. For instance, laser pointers could be used to 'paint' large buildings with projected light. Laser beams could write on the cloud cover over Tinakori Hill.

## **5.2 Proposition for central government consideration**

The above initiatives require a renewed partnership between the Council and central government. A discussion needs to be undertaken with government as to how some form of partnership arrangement could be developed. Considerations of the partnership could include:

- The status of the project must position the Capital Centre in the minds of the public appropriately, and foster the relationship between central government and the Council ensuring a long term future for the initiative.
- The leadership must work across a wide range of government and government related agencies and with the Council to ensure all stakeholders are involved.
- Sufficient, well structured and long term funding that recognises the importance of the Capital Centre to New Zealand and to Wellington, while at the same time reflecting the fact that major capital investment in new buildings is not proposed.

It is recommended that these issues be raised with central government when the proposals (set out above) are presented to the Minister for the Environment and the Minister of Culture and Heritage.

## **6. Conclusion**

A series of initiatives have been proposed and presented in the booklet ***Our Extraordinary Democracy - The Capital City Initiative*** for Central Government's consideration to foster a better outcome to celebrate Wellington's role as New Zealand's capital city.

Contact Officer: *Gerald Blunt, Chief Urban Designer*

## **Supporting Information**

**1) Strategic Fit / Strategic Outcome**

*This proposal supports Council's overall vision of Creative Wellington – Innovation Capital.*

**2) LTCCP/Annual Plan reference and long term financial impact**

*This proposal has no added financial implications*

**3) Treaty of Waitangi considerations**

*No implications*

**4) Decision-Making**

*The implications of this decision will be dependent on Central Government's response.*

**5) Consultation**

**a) General Consultation**

*Consultation has been undertaken with key stakeholders to develop the ideas in this project, however given the nature of the project there is no requirement to undertake further consultation.*

**b) Consultation with Maori**

*The Tenth's Trust have been involved in developing up this proposal.*

**6) Legal Implications**

*No legal implications are implied in this paper*

**7) Consistency with existing policy**

*There are no inconsistencies with existing policy*

# APPENDIX ONE

## **Workshop One – The nation's on-site institutional heritage**

This workshop was attended by representatives from major national institutions within the area and related institutions, such as the Historic Places Trust, National Library and the Ministry for Culture and Heritage. Attendees were asked to identify the history of the site, its institutions and stories and identify what should be retained.

Outcomes highlighted were:

Major themes

### Identity

*Rituals, ceremony, tikanga, myths. A place of pilgrimage and protest. Symbolism of evolving identity and character. Re-interpretation of ceremony. Quirkiness and relative informality. Home of the original Treaty document.*

### Storehouse and showcase

*Cultural and administrative institutions rich in stories; church history – eg Old St Paul's. A basket of knowledge – Archives, the Treaty, National Library, whakapapa, national memories.*

### Power influence and conflict

*Profile, leadership, evolving democracy, capturing the nation's views, celebration of history, a place of political and legal decisions, contests.*

### Maori for Maori

Iwi telling Iwi stories, mana whenua – story and acknowledgement (Maori were also identified as having a place in all other themes as well)

### Physical nature of the site

Geography, the natural environment, retention and protection of historic buildings sites and views. Engineering, water, motorway. Transport hub, central portal in NZ for both journey and destination.

### Sense of welcome, accessibility

*“Walkability”, freedom of access, freedom to have lunch on the lawn, language accessibility. Accessibility of information is important.*

## **Workshop Two – National identity, national character**

The second workshop was attended by and sought views from a range of writers and commentators on the national character. Given that all attendees of the previous workshop had firmly rejected the so-called Canberra model (described as "tombstone buildings in an over-planned and sterile environment") the question was posed: “if we (New Zealand) develop a Capital Centre our way, what do we mean by our way?”

The main themes identified in the previous workshop were used to frame this discussion.

Outcomes highlighted were:

### A place to talk

*The Maori words for a place to talk (places to talk) were suggested in Workshop Two as a replacement for the working title of Capital Precinct. Te Pa Tapuwa (or Nga Pae Tapuwa). This was reinforced by the Workshop Two participants.*

*A place of democratic intervention. A place of boisterous (windy) debate, demonstrations referenda, a place of the big and important conversations.*

### Move from Storehouse to Showcase – Storytelling

*Making the shift from storehouse to showcase – it's all there, make it visible. (For example, there is no sign outside National Archives explaining the Treaty original is on permanent public display inside. This was seen as symptomatic of the whole Precinct's lack of self-promotion.)*

*The Storehouse (the precinct) is a suite of significant national repositories and a gateway to nationally distributed treasures. The need for a consolidated capital city interpretive centre was highlighted.*

### A sense of theatre, presentation

*A recognised processional space. Major events that mark or shape our history will continue to take place in the precinct and could be enhanced by the design of the site.*

### Citizenship and representation

*Parliament, the Treaty, Fisheries Commission, Turnbull Library*

### Connectivity, Coherence, Informality

*Accessibility, arrival, lighting, a sense of 'open house,' notion of arrival to a distinct area*

In answering the question “What is the New Zealand way in developing a Capital precinct?”, the following key words emerged from the workshops:

**Uplifting • Confident • True • Clear • Friendly • No chest thumping • Generous  
Informative • Relatively informal • Quirky • Involving • and Collegial** in the sense  
that all on-site stakeholders should work together.