

**East Asia Summit Liveable Cities Conference  
23-25 June 2008**

**Wellington City – Liveable City Challenges and Responses:  
A summary**

**Introduction**

Wellington is New Zealand's capital city and has an increasing reputation as a beautiful, smart, innovative and liveable city. Known as the arts and events capital of New Zealand, Wellington is a vibrant city with an abundance of recreation and leisure opportunities. It is also a compact city with a high quality urban environment, surrounded by a dramatic landscape and has sound infrastructure including a good public transport system and one of New Zealand's busiest ports.

The city is home to museums, theatres and arts festivals, including Te Papa Tongarewa (the Museum of New Zealand), the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, the Royal New Zealand Ballet, and the biennial Festival of the Arts. Wellington is also a leading centre for creative industries, such as film and computer technology, and it is the home of the New Zealand Stock Exchange (NZX).

Wellington is well-placed in terms of its liveability. It is an attractive, compact city, that is well connected and easy to get around, and offers a variety of places to live, work and play. The Wellington City Council's efforts are therefore focused on building on what we already have, capitalising on our competitive advantages to help achieve economic growth, greater prosperity and an improved quality of life for all Wellingtonians.

**Challenges to liveability & our responses**

Wellington City faces a number of challenges to its liveability. These include for example, climate change and environmental sustainability, sustainable economic growth and development, and urban growth and development.

**Climate Change**

Climate change is a serious issue facing the global community, posing serious environmental, social and economic threats. The Wellington City Council is concerned about addressing the impacts of climate change on the city and as a result, has committed to a vision of becoming a carbon neutral city and to reducing the city's carbon-footprint. Council's response to climate change is also about demonstrating leadership, making the most of opportunities, and building on Wellington's strengths.

Climate change is a high priority strategic issue for the Council and the community. In 2007 the Council agreed to a vision for Wellington to be carbon neutral by 2012. The Council has also adopted ambitious goals for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. These include reducing Council emissions by 40 percent and community emissions by 30 percent by 2020.

Some of the specific actions initiated by the Council as part of its response to climate change include for example:

- *Adoption of a Climate Change Action Plan* – identifies cost effective initiatives for Council operations and the community that will help the Council achieve its carbon neutral vision and promote sustainable behaviour.
- *Establishment of a Council Climate Change Office* - the Office will implement the Action Plan and help the Council champion and lead the change to a lower carbon future for Wellington.
- *Establishment of an Eco-Advisor position within the Council* – the eco-advisor provides free public advice on home building projects to help create more energy efficient and sustainable homes.
- *Production of Sustainable Building Guidelines* – these publicly available guidelines explain the benefits of sustainable building and provide options for achieving sustainability.
- *Investigating the refit and refurbishment of the Council's two main office buildings within the Civic Complex* – recognising that Council needs to get its own house in order for it to play a leading role in driving climate change in Wellington City.

### Urban growth and development

Wellington is a dynamic and growing city. In recent years Wellington has had relatively high population growth – nearly 16,000 people over the last 5 years. This is an increase of 3,500 people each year since 2001 and this growth is showing no signs of slowing down. By 2031 it is estimated there will be 44,000 more residents. At the same time as population growth there has been a strong trend toward central city living, particularly apartment living.

The challenge is to manage the development pressures resulting from these trends, while still preserving the values, character and environment Wellingtonians value. Issues such as the cost of living, housing affordability, and building design and quality (particularly new multi-unit and apartment developments) are all key challenges that need to be addressed in order to ensure the city's vibrancy and liveability.

In responding to these challenges, the Council has put in place a set of long-term strategies to manage the city and region's growth needs. These strategies put in place management directions and priorities for urban development, transport, economic development, the environment, cultural wellbeing, social and recreation needs, and governance.

In order to build a compact, sustainable, and liveable city and to make sure that urban growth happens in the right way, the Council is proposing a new approach to managing residential growth. The initiative is based on the idea of taking a more targeted approach to infill housing development – encouraging new residential growth in and around key centres with good infrastructure and public transport. Liveability, sustainability, connectivity, prosperity, compact urban form, safety, and a strong sense of place are all key outcomes being sought.

### Economic Development

*“Creative Wellington - Innovation Capital”* is the Wellington City Council's long-term strategic vision for the city. It aims to promote Wellington's reputation as New Zealand's centre of creativity and innovation in order to attract and retain smart, innovative people and creative, forward-looking enterprise.

However, as with all cities, Wellington is competing on a global stage for people, skills, business, investment and success. This is a significant challenge for Wellington particularly considering the city's modest GDP growth, relatively low labour force productivity, and a skills shortage across many sectors.

The Council recognises that offering a superior quality of life will help attract new residents, businesses and investment to Wellington. The Wellington City Council is working with all other councils in the region to boost the region's economic growth. Some of the responses to ensuring Wellington is a competitive and successful city on the global stage include for example:

- Nurturing and actively promoting the dynamic, creative and inventive spirit of the city
- Encouraging smart, creative businesses to make Wellington their base
- Growing world class centres of excellence that build on existing regional advantages
- Marketing and branding Wellington City
- Ensuring the city has a high quality urban environment, is compact and easy to get around, and has a strong sense of place
- Using design-led approaches to rejuvenate key areas of the city, e.g. Wellington waterfront redevelopment, Waitangi Park, the new Capital Precinct initiative
- Promoting Wellington as a great place to live and work
- Celebrating the city's social and cultural diversity
- Actively attracting migrants to Wellington (e.g. international marketing campaign, one-stop-website for migrants)
- Continuing investment in Wellington's reputation as the events and cultural capital
- Continuing investment in the city's infrastructure (including public transport, high speed broadband etc) and community assets.