

Understanding
Wellington City's

District Plan

Absolutely

POSITIVELY

ME HEKE KI PŌNEKE
WELLINGTON CITY COUNCIL

Wellington

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Her artwork may be viewed at www.breaksea.co.nz

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1. INTRODUCING THE DISTRICT PLAN

1.1 What is the District Plan?

The Wellington City District Plan sets out the policies and rules that Wellington City Council uses to manage the city's natural and built environment – sustainably, sensibly and fairly. It is a legal document which the Wellington City Council is required to have under the Resource Management Act 1991 (the RMA).

The RMA is New Zealand's main piece of environmental legislation, and provides a framework for managing the effects of activities on the environment. Under the Act, every district or city council must have a district plan and every regional council must have a regional plan to help them manage their local environment.

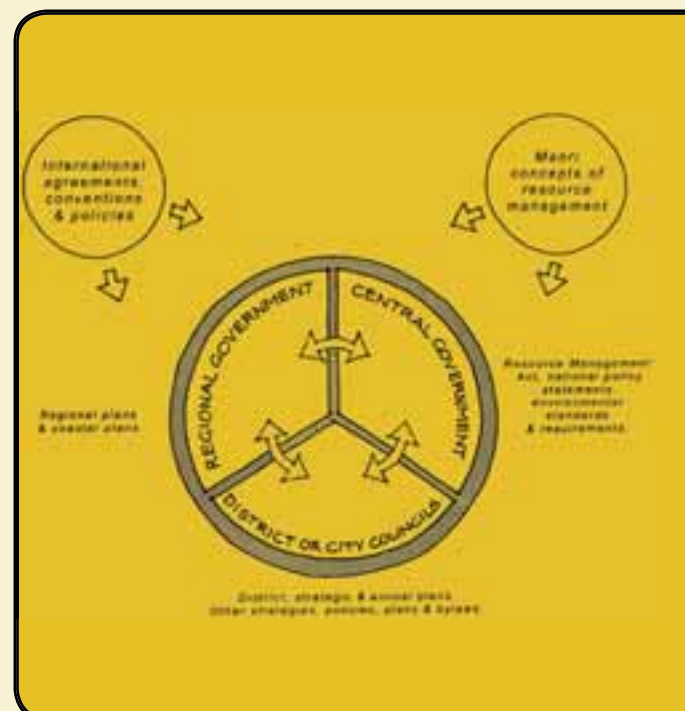
The key aim running through both the RMA and the District Plan is sustainable management of the city's natural and physical resources. Those resources include:

- Land. The RMA requires the Council to focus particularly on land use and this is reflected in the District Plan.
- Water
- Air
- Soil
- Energy
- All plants and animals (native or introduced)
- All structures.

Sustainable management, as defined in the RMA, means balancing human needs and activities with the need to protect the natural, physical and built environments and the resources they provide.

The District Plan is a tool with which the Council aims to achieve the best possible balance between these various demands. But it is not the only tool. Operating above and alongside the Plan are many other laws, plans, policies and standards which also influence how the Council manages the city.

Some originate from central or regional government. Wellington City Council's own Strategic Plan and Annual Plan are closely integrated with the District Plan. At a broader level, the District Plan also endorses the principles contained in global agreements – such as Agenda 21, which came out of the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. Maori principles of resource management are another key influence on the District Plan.



1.2 *What does the District Plan do?*

Through the District Plan, the City Council seeks to turn broad sustainable management principles into a practical set of guides and controls covering the various areas which comprise Wellington City:

- residential areas
- the central city
- suburban centres
- rural and coastal areas
- open spaces such as the Town Belt
- areas occupied by large institutions such as the hospital, universities and airport
- heritage and conservation sites.

While the Plan's provisions are specific to each area, they can be grouped under five overall objectives:

Objectives of Wellington's District Plan

1. **Protect and enhance** the natural, or 'green' areas of the city. This is chiefly all the land beyond the outer town belt, including rural and open space zones, and conservation sites.
2. **Encourage** more intensive and mixed-use development within the existing urban area to achieve better use of transport, infrastructure and energy – in other words, a more sustainable city.
3. **Improve** the overall quality of the built environment from an urban design perspective.
4. **Reduce** the risks associated with natural and technological hazards.
5. **Safeguard** the natural environment – land, air and water – from pollution and contamination.

To achieve these objectives, the District Plan sets out a range of policies, methods and rules. Their aim is not to restrict development but to guide and control the effects of development on the environment.

The District Plan is a *guide* to how Wellington can become a better city – sustainable, accessible, healthy, safe, cohesive and vibrant, capable of providing for change while also retaining character and connections with the past. These values have been identified through a long process of public consultation and research, and reflect the interests of the many communities which make up Wellington. They provide the vision underpinning the District Plan's policies and rules.

The policies and rules *control* the effects of development activity in Wellington. Developments that can take place as of right and without the Council's specific consent (although usually subject to some conditions specified in the Plan) are described as 'Permitted'. All other developments are categorised as either 'Controlled', 'Discretionary' or 'Non Complying', and may not take place without a resource consent. Further information about these categories is provided in the Glossary.

Implementing the District Plan: Resource Consents

The District Plan is implemented mainly by means of the resource consent process. Through this process, the Council assesses developments or activities people want to undertake – for example, building new townhouses, or industrial activities – against the objectives of the District Plan and any negative effects the proposed development may have on the environment.

More detail about resource consents, how to apply for them, and how to make submissions on publicly notified resource consents is in the Council's publication, *A Guide to Resource Consents in Wellington City*, available free from the Council. For more information, please contact the Council's Resource Consents staff on 499 4444, or call in to Level 1, Council Offices, 101 Wakefield Street.

Monitoring and Changing the District Plan

The District Plan is not a static document but subject to ongoing monitoring and review throughout its lifetime. Changes to the Plan may be initiated by the Council or private persons to update the Plan but particularly whenever new information, research or public opinion justifies it.

There is a plan change process to allow for such updates. Proposed Plan Changes must be publicly notified, and anyone may make a submission on the proposal and on the submissions of others. A public hearing is normally held. Once the Council has made its decision, it may be appealed to the Environment Court.

The existing District Plan is due to be reviewed by 2010.

1.3 *The District Plan in Context*

The District Plan and city planning

The District Plan is not the only city planning tool used by the Council, and in fact focuses on only one aspect of city planning – environmental management. The Council's approach to city planning is much broader, drawing not only on the District Plan but also on other strategies and policies covering transport, urban design, heritage, parks and open spaces, and more.

In addition, the new Local Government Act also requires all councils to prepare long-term community plans. These are a way for councils to coordinate their long-term financial planning with city development and planning. Wellington's District Plan is now part of this wider strategic planning framework, and will continue to be the primary means by which the Council implements regulations to achieve specific land use or environmental results.

The District Plan and the Resource Management Act

The present District Plan is the first Wellington City Council has produced under the RMA.

The passing of the Act allowed councils to take a completely new approach to their management of natural and physical resources. The main difference between the RMA and previous planning and environmental legislation is its focus on the effects proposed activities or developments will have on the environment – not on whether activities are or are not allowed.

Another important aspect of the Act is that it assumes local communities are the best judges of their own environmental issues and how to deal with them. For this reason, the Act does not say how District Plans should be formulated. It is enabling – giving councils scope to develop the plans their communities want – not prescriptive.

Under the Act, Wellington's District Plan is a platform upon which – in combination with other elements, including community participation, central government policy, and other city council initiatives – the vision of a sustainable city can be realised.

The District Plan and Tangata Whenua

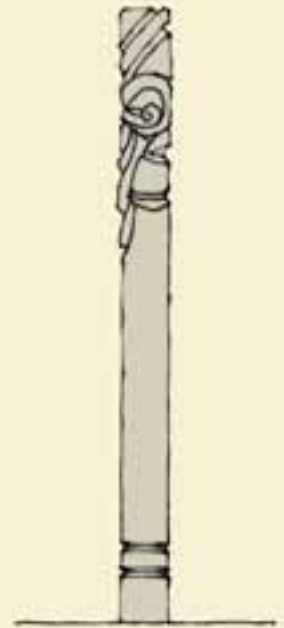
Under the Treaty of Waitangi, Wellington City Council and the tangata whenua¹ of the area have a special partnership. The RMA requires the District Plan to put the principles of the Treaty into action, and to affirm the importance of Maori approaches to sustainable resource management.

For Maori, sustainable management means maintaining *mauri*, the life essence of all animate and inanimate resources. This is done by caring for *Te Ao Turoa* (the natural world) in accordance with Maori custom – especially through the practice of *kaitiakitanga* (the exercise of guardianship and stewardship, usually by those with genealogical links to a particular place or resource). These concepts underpin the relationship Maori have with the environment.

What does the Council's Treaty-based partnership with Maori mean for the District Plan ?

- Consultation with Maori about specific resource management issues (especially water, pollution and sacred sites), and the broader concepts of resources and the environment, was a core part of the development of the District Plan. This consultation continues as the Plan evolves.
- Places of traditional importance to Maori are shown on the District Plan Maps, demonstrating how the area has been shaped by Maori settlement throughout history.
- Whenever development activities are proposed that have the potential to affect Maori traditions, interests and aspirations, tangata whenua representatives participate in the resource consent process.

As the District Plan evolves, the role of tangata whenua will expand, adding a valuable dimension to the management of Wellington's resources.



" The complex history of human settlement in the Wellington area means several tribes can claim to be regarded as tangata whenua, including Te Atiawa and Ngati Toa. The group representing the tangata whenua in its partnership with the Council is the Wellington Tenth's Trust, the longest-standing organisational structure for Te Atiawa and an iwi authority under the Resource Management Act. The Council also has a relationship with Te Runanga o Toa Rangatira, another iwi authority, which promotes the interests of Ngati Toa.

2. GUIDE TO THE DISTRICT PLAN

Structure of the District Plan

The District Plan consists of three separate volumes. All are linked, and should be consulted together:

- *Volume 1: Objectives, Policies and Rules* for each area (see page 3 of this publication for a full list). Before listing any objectives and rules, the Plan first identifies and describes each area's character.

This is because the level and rate of allowable change is very much linked to each area's particular character. Character may derive from an area's landforms, vegetation, streets and buildings, history and communities – singly or in combination. Character is not fixed or finite: it can change. In some areas, change is in fact a key feature of the local character.

- *Volume 2: Design Guides*. These set guidelines for developments of particular types (eg multi-unit housing), or on particular sites (eg within institutional precincts, or in defined 'character' areas such as Thorndon). New developments which fall into these categories are generally Controlled or Discretionary and therefore require a resource consent. In assessing a resource consent application, Council will take into account the extent to which the proposal meets the relevant Design Guide.

The District Plan also contains design guides for information purposes relating to design against crime and wind.

- *Volume 3: Maps*. These identify various areas or zones within the city where particular policies or rules apply. These are usually the first part of the District Plan consulted by people wishing to undertake developments, or who are affected by proposed developments.

Overview of this Guide

The purpose of this section is to give a broad overview of the approach taken to each area in the District Plan. It explains why the Council has taken this approach, and how it is put into effect – through rules, policies and/or Design Guides.

This is not a comprehensive summary of all the objectives, policies and rules contained in the Plan. There are several objectives that are common to all areas – including reducing the risks from natural and technological hazards, promoting personal safety and wellbeing, and allowing for the special needs of tangata whenua. To avoid repetition, these have not been summarised here.

The District Plan contains tables listing which developments or activities are Permitted, Controlled, Discretionary or Non-complying in each area. These terms are used in this summary: for clarification, please see the Glossary.

For a more detailed understanding of the District Plan's provisions, please consult the Plan itself or talk to the Council's planning staff.



2.1 Residential Areas

The District Plan defines two broad residential areas. The Inner Residential Area adjoins the central city and is mostly within the inner town belt. Its features include high population density, many multiple dwelling units (houses divided into flats; apartment blocks etc), a generally nineteenth century character, and the presence of diverse non-residential activities.

The Outer Residential Area comprises the remaining suburbs from the inner town belt to the boundary of the Rural Area. Houses of varying character are located on larger sections. Most non-residential activities in the outer area directly service local residents.



KEY OBJECTIVES OF THE DISTRICT PLAN:

- **Generally contain development within the established edges of the city**

Explanation:

The outer town belt and other rural areas effectively establish clear edges to the city. The Council believes that the continual expansion of the city beyond these edges does not support sustainable management except where it builds on existing communities. So that the city remains compact, the rules promote more intensive building development. This will help reduce transport distances, make public transport more viable and result in better use of existing infrastructure.



- **Encourage more intensive development within existing residential areas**

Explanation:

To help contain urban development within the city's edges, the District Plan encourages subdivision and development of existing sites (known as infill subdivision or development) in the Residential Area. Infill is managed to maintain the general character and amenity of such areas.



- **Maintain a high standard of residential amenity**

Explanation:

'Residential amenity' means the many qualities and attributes which enable people to enjoy living where they do – such as visual amenities, sunlight, access, noise levels and safety.

To preserve these qualities for residents, there are rules to manage the effects of noise, traffic safety, nearby non-residential activities, storage of hazardous substances etc. Visual issues are addressed through the relevant Design Guides. While recognising that sunlight and views are important qualities for residents, the Council also recognises that Wellington's hilly terrain means it is not possible to safeguard these from change in all cases and locations. From time to time, therefore, activities that are Permitted may still have adverse effects for some people.





- **Encourage a greater mix of uses within residential areas**

Explanation

The character of Wellington's residential areas owes much to the many non-residential activities and community services that take place within them – schools, shops, churches, service stations, childcare facilities, medical centres etc. The District Plan encourages a diverse mix of activities, providing they are appropriately located and compatible with residential amenity.

It particularly encourages people wishing to work from home, as this is a way to reduce travel and save energy. In the Plan, working from home is a Permitted Activity; all other non-residential activities are Controlled or Discretionary and are therefore carefully assessed to ensure consistency with the character of the Residential Area.



- **Protect and enhance character areas**

Explanation

In Wellington's Residential Area, there are several neighbourhoods with a distinctive character due to the presence of many older buildings. The Council considers such areas – which include Thorndon, Mt Victoria and the Aro Valley – are important to Wellington's identity, and should therefore be protected from inappropriate development.

Protection is provided by the Design Guides, by extra controls on multi-unit housing in some neighbourhoods, and by rules restricting the demolition of pre-1930 buildings in Thorndon and Mt Victoria.



- **Improve the quality of multi-unit development**

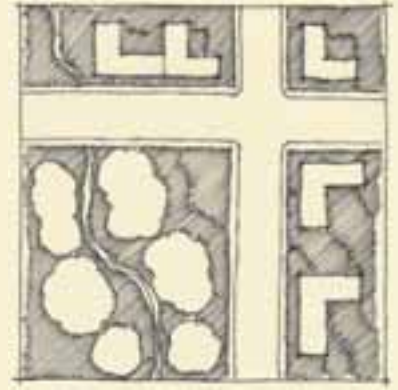
Explanation

Multi-unit housing developments are an effective way to use land in the city's more developed areas, but they can adversely affect residential amenity – especially if they are significantly different from an area's established style of housing. To ensure quality multi-unit housing, the Plan requires any new developments to be assessed against the relevant Design Guide for the area. The aim is to ensure certain design principles are followed, without dictating the development's appearance.

- **Improve the quality of subdivision design and development**

Explanation

Well-designed subdivisions make effective use of the available land, are well oriented to the sun, are accessible for pedestrians and are well serviced by public transport. To encourage such developments, the District Plan includes flexible siting provisions and Design Guidelines for larger subdivisions. Proposed subdivisions are assessed against these guidelines, and the Council's Code of Practice for Land Development.



2.2 Central Area



The Central Area comprises Wellington's commercial and business heart. In addition to business activities, the Central Area is host to a wide range of political, recreational, cultural and entertainment activities of national and local significance. The built form of the central area has been shaped by this diversity of activities, by the presence of a busy port, and by the topography of the harbour and hills.

KEY OBJECTIVES OF THE DISTRICT PLAN:

- **Contain development within the Central Area**

Explanation

The central city is physically contained in a natural amphitheatre between the hills and the inner harbour, making the Central Area compact, accessible and intensely 'urban'. Consistent with its sustainable management objectives, the Council aims to contain the Central Area within a defined boundary, large enough to accommodate the city's development needs over the ten year lifespan of the District Plan and beyond.



- **Preserve the existing 'High City/Low City' urban form**

Explanation

The Central Area can be divided into two distinct parts: the well-defined core of high-rise buildings centred on Lambton Quay and Willis Street (the "High City") and the low-rise development towards the outer boundaries of the Central Area (the "Low City"). To preserve this well-established urban form, the District Plan controls building height (and, in some cases, height thresholds) beyond which certain design conditions apply.



- **Permit a wide range of activities, but control their effects**

Explanation

A wide range of activities and uses are permitted as of right in the Central Area, allowing building owners and developers to respond readily to changing market needs or other influences such as new technologies. However, the District Plan seeks to control the potential adverse effects of activities in the Central Area, such as noise, traffic or the discharge of contaminants.



- **Apply special controls at the boundaries with residential areas**

Explanation

The District Plan recognises the potential for activities in the Central Area to have unwelcome impacts on adjacent residential areas. For this reason, there are additional controls relating to issues such as building height, noise, lighting and signage in these sensitive areas.



- **Improve the quality of new developments through design controls**

Explanation

The District Plan recognises that the design, appearance and quality of buildings in the Central Area has a significant influence on the city's public environment. Areas of particular character are covered by separate Design Guides (see below). For new developments outside of these character areas, the overall Central Area Design Guide applies. The Council also has an Urban Design Strategy aimed at enhancing the streetscape of the Central Area. There are additional rules relating to the design of structures on and over roads, the continuity of retail frontages in certain streets and the provision of continuous verandahs on certain pedestrian routes.



- **Protect and enhance character areas through Design Guides**

Explanation

The Design Guides provide for the special character of certain areas of the central city to be retained: Courtenay, Cuba and the Civic Centre. The Design Guides list criteria against which new building proposals are assessed, and are intended to ensure appropriate design principles are incorporated without dictating the appearance of new developments.



- **Protect and enhance features which contribute to the public environment**

Explanation

The District Plan has specific provisions to help protect important public views and access to sunlight, and to reduce the effect of wind around buildings. All these factors contribute significantly to the quality of the public environment in the Central Area.

The Plan identifies significant views of the harbour, local hills and the townscape. Any developments that intrude on those views – especially the focal point on which a view is concentrated – are classified as Discretionary. The panoramic view from the top of the Cable Car is singled out for specific protection by means of height restrictions. To ensure people enjoy reasonable access to sunlight in the Central Area, especially in well-used parks and malls, the District Plan requires new buildings to meet performance standards. Recognising that tall buildings may create unpleasant or dangerous wind patterns at ground level, new buildings are also required to comply with wind standards intended to reduce the worst effects of wind for people on the ground.





- **Manage traffic effectively to avoid congestion**

Explanation

The Council believes traffic entering the Central Area should have a good reason for doing so, rather than simply passing through it to reach other parts of the city. It is for this reason that the Council supports the development of a bypass through Te Aro, which would allow motorists to skirt the Central Area. The bypass will help contain the Central Area and improve accessibility across the whole city.

Within the Central Area itself, the District Plan seeks to control the growth of commuter traffic by limiting the supply of parking spaces. New developments are allowed a maximum number of parking spaces, determined on the basis of the proposed gross floor area. Larger developments with more than 70 parking spaces must meet certain conditions to ensure the traffic they generate does not create problems for surrounding streets.

2.3 Suburban Centres

The Suburban Centres covered by the District Plan are the more significant retail and industrial centres in Wellington's suburbs. The distinction between retail and industrial centres has blurred over recent years, and most now incorporate a wide mix of retail, service and industrial activities.

KEY OBJECTIVES OF THE DISTRICT PLAN:

- **Contain suburban centres within defined boundaries**

Explanation

Suburban centres have developed across Wellington in locations that allow them to service their local communities effectively. To ensure this servicing function continues, and also to ensure non-residential activities do not adversely affect surrounding residential areas, the Council seeks to contain suburban centres largely within existing boundaries. Expansion beyond those boundaries is not prohibited but requires a resource consent or Plan Change so that the potential environmental effects can be fully assessed. The establishment of any new suburban centres also requires a Plan Change.

- **Encourage a wide range of mixed use activity**

Explanation

A wide range of activities is permitted in suburban centres as of right, so that they can continue to provide the services, facilities and job opportunities local communities want. However, rules do apply to activities that may have adverse noise or safety implications for surrounding residential areas.

- **Manage the adverse effects of activities, especially at the interface with residential areas**

Explanation

The wide range of activities permitted within suburban centres can lead to undesirable effects, such as fumes, smell, vibration, glare, noise etc. The points at which suburban centres adjoin residential areas are particularly sensitive, and the District Plan contains specific rules for dealing with the impact of activities on residents. These include height controls, noise requirements, and controls limiting the intrusive effects of signage on nearby properties.





- **Protect and enhance suburban centres with special character**

Explanation

The shopping areas of Newtown and Tinakori Road, Thorndon, share a distinctive nineteenth-century character that is important to the city's overall identity. The Council aims to preserve this character by means of Design Guides. While the guides do not require new development to copy nineteenth century buildings, they must incorporate certain elements found in traditional commercial developments in these areas.

The District Plan also contains rules to protect the particular qualities of suburban centres located on the coastline, notably Shelly Bay. Maintaining public access to the coastal marine area, and protecting its ecological status, are especially important. There is a Design Guide for the Shelly Bay area.

2.4 Institutional Precincts and the Airport

The Institutional Precincts are the areas occupied by Victoria University, Massey University and Wellington Hospital. Each is located among residential and suburban centre areas and is close to the central city. All are characterised by intensive building development including large blocks or tower buildings, constant people and vehicle flows, considerable impact on surrounding residential neighbourhoods (such as availability of parking), and constant pressure for change and growth.

The Airport Precinct covers Wellington Airport, a distinctive area where the specialised activities are controlled by separate rules.



KEY OBJECTIVES OF THE DISTRICT PLAN:

- **Recognise and permit existing uses to continue**

Explanation

The primary activities undertaken in the institutional precincts – educational and health services – have taken place there over a long period of time. The universities and the hospital contribute significantly to the economy, culture and welfare of Wellington and its residents.

Therefore the District Plan encourages their core activities to continue and related activities to develop, providing nearby residential areas are protected from adverse effects. This especially applies to the Airport Precinct where there are rules controlling the effects of airport noise, and the use and storage of hazardous substances such as aviation fuel.



- **Establish boundaries to contain expansion into residential areas**

Explanation

In the past, moves by the universities and the hospital to expand into surrounding residential areas have sometimes caused conflict. For this reason, the District Plan generally confines development to within the existing boundaries of these precincts. Although expansion is not prohibited, it requires a resource consent or Plan Change so that the effects can be fully assessed. However, the Council believes there is ample scope for growth in the Central Area and Suburban Centres, especially of education-related activities, and few restrictions are placed on the activities undertaken in these areas.





- **Use design controls to better integrate new development with residential areas**

Explanation

Buildings erected within these precincts often contrast dramatically with surrounding residential areas. There are Design Guides for each precinct (apart from the Airport) against which proposals must be assessed before construction starts. These guidelines deal only with the general form and scale of proposed buildings, not with their detailed design, and are particular concerned with developments that adjoin or face residential areas. The Design Guides also aim to improve the visual quality of the precincts through good site layout and landscaping. The overall aim is to ensure that new developments are visually well-integrated with nearby residential neighbourhoods.



- **Improve noise environment at the airport**

Explanation

Noise is inevitably one of the main adverse effects associated with an airport. The District Plan sets acceptable noise emission levels, as measured in the Outer Residential Area. There are also various provisions relating to the timing of flights, the use of particular aircraft and engine testing. The airport is required to prepare a noise management plan addressing how aircraft operating procedures, and the airport's layout and equipment, could be modified to improve the noise environment.

2.5 Rural Area

Wellington's Rural Area represents about 65 % of the city's total land area, although only a small proportion of the local population lives there. It extends from the outer boundaries of the city's urban areas to the coast and, in the north, to the boundaries of Hutt City and Porirua City.

The generally rugged landscape comprises steep ridges and deep gullies, and contains many sites of importance to Maori. Most of the land is used for pastoral farming, and settlements are small and scattered. However, the increasing demand for rural 'lifestyle' blocks close to the city is creating continued pressure for subdivisions and other development.



KEY OBJECTIVES OF THE DISTRICT PLAN

- **Encourage a wide range of rural activities**

Explanation

The Council believes the Rural Area should be maintained primarily for rural purposes (farming, with associated residential activities). However, the District Plan does not prevent applications for non-rural activities that serve the local or wider population. Because the rural environment is more sensitive to nuisances such as noise or traffic than urban parts of the city, most non-rural activities are classified as Discretionary so that their potential effects on rural character and amenity can be fully assessed during the resource consent process.



- **Control subdivision to limit housing**

Explanation

To maintain rural amenity and help contain the city within the existing urban area, development – especially housing – is limited. Any proposed subdivisions in the Rural Area require a resource consent.



- **Protect ridgelines and hilltops**

Explanation

The undeveloped ridges and hilltops of Wellington's rural area are an important part of Wellington's identity, which can be dramatically and detrimentally altered by new structures. The District Plan controls all ridgetop/hilltop developments.



2.6 Open Space and Conservation Sites



Wellington's open space consists of both private and public land, and many environments – coastal areas, hills, bush areas and playing fields. The Council administers all public open spaces (including the Inner Town Belt) and manages these areas under both the Reserves Act 1977 and the District Plan.

Many open space areas have important conservation values and are identified as Conservation Sites. These are significant areas of Wellington's natural heritage requiring particular protection because of their ecological significance or other values – for example, native bush remnants and wetlands. Whether they are located on public or private land, the Council is responsible for controlling activities at these sites, which will be added to over time.

KEY OBJECTIVES OF THE DISTRICT PLAN:

- **Protect open space and ecological values**

Explanation

The District Plan seeks to protect the open character and ecological significance of such land, whether in private or public ownership. The Plan outlines the Council's criteria for determining ecological values, and contains rules protecting those values and restricting activities that might compromise them.

An important principle underlying the Council's approach to open space is that people enjoy such spaces in different ways: both through active recreation and simply as part of the view. The Plan seeks to preserve the open, natural character of these spaces, while also acknowledging the need for facilities and structures essential for active recreation. Recreation activities are subject to noise and other conditions, while new structures are controlled in terms of size and form.

In the Inner Town Belt, a significant part of Wellington, proposed activities must meet additional conditions spelled out in the Town Belt Deed and the Management Plan, as well as the District Plan. The District Plan also supports the Council's ongoing efforts to create an Outer Town Belt that provides an open, undeveloped edge to the city.



2.7 Heritage

This section of the Plan deals with the preservation of important aspects of Wellington's natural and cultural environment that have been inherited from the past, provide a context for the present, and help shape the future. This includes Maori sacred and historical sites, buildings and sites dating from European colonial times, and some natural elements including gardens and trees. The Council strongly supports the protection of heritage values in the city, and the District Plan is an important protection mechanism.

KEY OBJECTIVE OF THE DISTRICT PLAN

- **Protect heritage values of buildings, areas, objects and trees**

Explanation

The District Plan contains a detailed list of buildings, areas, objects (eg statues), sites of importance to Maori, and notable trees which are judged to be of heritage value. The criteria used in preparing the list include cultural values, use values (deriving from an item's existing or potential use or reuse), and level of significance (which takes into account authenticity, uniqueness and/or quality). Items can only be added to or removed from the list through a Plan Change.

The District Plan seeks to safeguard the heritage values of the listed items. Any proposed development that involves destroying or significantly altering a listed item requires a resource consent. The Council also uses other methods to preserve the city's heritage values including financial and non-financial incentives.



2.8 Utilities and Designations



The city is served by a complex network of communications utilities and others handling energy, water, drainage and waste management. The District Plan provides for utility providers to carry out their core functions efficiently. The Plan also allows for designations, whereby the Council, another local authority, a utility provider or a government ministry may secure land in Wellington for essential public works or services.

KEY OBJECTIVE OF THE DISTRICT PLAN:

- **Provide for necessary public works and infrastructure**

Explanation

While recognising the need for utility operators to develop and maintain efficient utility networks throughout the city, the Council is also concerned to manage the potential environmental effects.

Therefore, while some of the functions of utility networks are Permitted activities (for example, underground pipes or cables), others require resource consents – especially where structures and activities with a significant impact are proposed. There are conditions relating to the size, scale, location and design of such proposals that must be met for a resource consent to be granted.

The Council aims to ensure the designation process is used only where necessary to allow essential public works or infrastructure to proceed.

GLOSSARY

**Amenity
(or residential amenity)**

The qualities and attributes that enable people to enjoy living where they do. These may include sunlight, access, visual qualities, noise levels, safety and other qualities.

Character areas

The character of an area derives from those qualities – social, cultural, physical and economic – that distinguish it from its wider surroundings. These may include the presence of old buildings, distinctive streetscapes, significant natural features, important public views, a diversity of uses, and more. The Council has identified the following Character Areas and prepared design guides for each: Courtenay, Cuba, Civic Centre, Thorndon, Mt Victoria North, Newtown suburban centre, Shelly Bay.

Controlled activity

In the District Plan, some permissible activities in some areas are 'controlled' if they relate to specific issues of concern to the Council. The Council must grant consent for such activities, but consent may be subject to conditions – such as complying with Design Guides when building in character areas. Most resource consent applications for controlled activities are non-notified.

Design Guides

These offer general guidance to people wishing to undertake developments/activities of specific kinds (eg multi-unit developments) or in particular locations where the Council has decided such control is warranted. The Design Guides contain standards or criteria against which the controlled elements of proposed developments are assessed during the resource consent process. They do not prescribe specific design solutions. Design Guides are found in Volume 2 of the District Plan.

Designations

A provision made in the District Plan and under the RMA, allowing land to be secured for public works or other projects providing essential services in the city. A designation may be sought by a local authority, a network utility operator (eg telecommunications provider) or a ministry of central government.

**Discretionary activity
(restricted/unrestricted)**

In the District Plan, 'Discretionary' activities require a resource consent, which may or may not be granted. Activities defined as Discretionary (Restricted) relate to some specific issue specified in the Plan. If consent is granted, conditions may only be imposed in relation to that specific issue. Applications can be non-notified. Discretionary Activities (Unrestricted) are activities or uses that fall outside of the Permitted, Controlled or Discretionary (Restricted) categories. If consent is granted, the Council may impose conditions that help to control any aspect of the activity's potential adverse effects. Applications regarding unrestricted discretionary activities may be publicly notified.

Infill subdivision/development

The further subdivision or development of existing sites. The Council encourages such development in residential areas, subject to certain conditions, as a way to help contain Wellington's existing urban area and achieve more intensive development.

Kaitiakitanga

Guardianship of the environment and natural resources. This concept has long been the basis of the Maori approach to environmental management, which predates the colonial period. It is practised in diverse ways, eg maintaining sacred or otherwise important sites, managing fishing grounds, good resource management, and formal and informal environmental protection practices.

Mixed Use

The presence, within a particular area, of a wide range of activities: residential, retail, recreational, commercial, educational, institutional etc.

Multi-unit development

Residential developments containing three (in some cases, two) or more household units on a site. The Council encourages such development as a way to achieve a more compact city. To ensure high standards, new multi-unit developments are defined as Discretionary Activities in the District Plan and require a resource consent

Non-complying activity

An activity that is beyond the scope of Permitted, Controlled or Discretionary Activities. A resource consent may be granted, with conditions, if the Council is satisfied that consent would be consistent with the objectives and policies of the Plan. Consent applications relating to non-complying activities may be publicly notified.

Permitted activity	An activity that can be undertaken as of right (ie without the Council's specific consent) providing it meets any conditions specified in the District Plan. A resource consent is not required for permitted activities.
Resource consent	Permission granted by the Council to an applicant wishing to undertake an activity or development that the District Plan does not define as Permitted. In granting a resource consent, the Council will consider what effects a proposed development will have on the environment, and whether it is consistent with the objectives of the District Plan. Resource consents may be granted with conditions – for example, the Council may require noise levels to be monitored while a construction project is underway
Reverse sensitivity	An increasingly common issue as more mixed use development takes place in the city. It generally occurs when commercial or industrial areas start being used for residential purposes, and residents object to the inevitable effects of non-residential activities nearby – such as noise, smell or traffic.
RMA	The Resource Management Act 1991. The Act's purpose is to promote the sustainable management of New Zealand's natural and physical and resources. Under the Act, all cities and districts are required to have district plans that give effect to the sustainable management principles laid down in the Act.
Sustainable management	As defined in the RMA, this means balancing human needs with the need to protect the natural, physical and built environments and the resources they provide – now and in the future.
Utilities	Essential systems and networks that provide the city with water, energy, communications and sewerage.
Working from home	In the District Plan, this means an occupation, art/craft, business, trade or profession carried out in a residential building by no more than three people. At least one must live there as their main place of residence. Car and engine repair businesses are excluded from this definition.