

# Open Space Concept

## What is Council's open space concept?

The *open space concept* sets out what we want Wellington's open spaces to look like in the future. Generally it is not practical to identify specific pieces of land, so the concept is more concerned to identify what sorts of open space we want to see in different *areas*. Different parts of Wellington have different open space values and we want different open spaces to reflect these values. Each of the areas has a different mix of the four open space values.

## Will I have to sell my land?

Council does not intend forcing anybody to sell their land. The concept is for all of the district and covers both private and public land. However, this does not mean that Council intends to acquire or manage all land in the district. The concept identifies what sorts of open space would be appropriate in different areas.

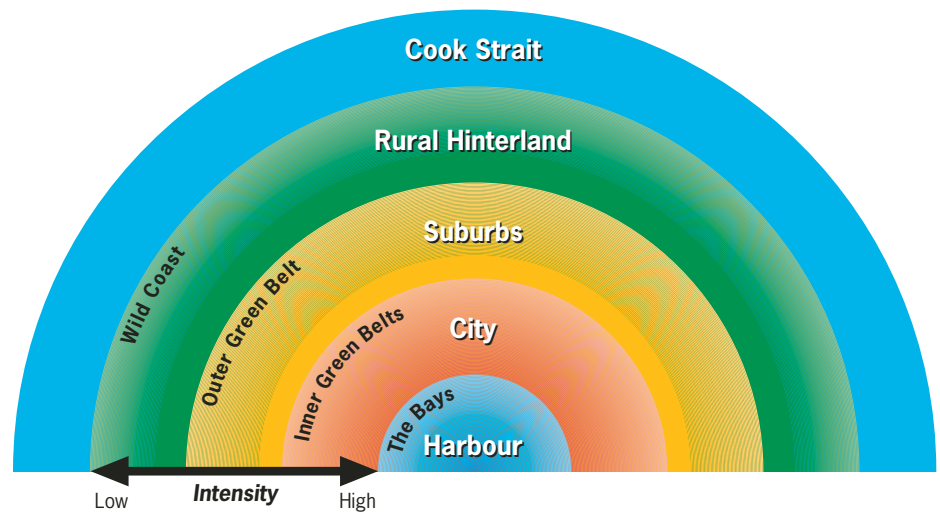
The concept is not intended to specifically identify individual bits of land; rather it is intended to show the general area where certain types of open space might be appropriate. Council wants to achieve its open space vision through partnerships or willing seller-willing buyer scenarios.

If you think that your land might be affected and would like to discuss this please don't hesitate to contact Council. Don't forget that Council is not going to force you to do anything.

## What sorts of open spaces has Wellington got now?

The first step taken towards developing an open space concept was to identify what sorts of open space Wellington has now. In an open space assessment carried out in 1997 each of the four values, (ecological, recreation, landscape and natural heritage) were assessed throughout the district. When the maps for each of the values were overlaid it quickly became apparent that the district could be divided into seven areas, each of which had a different combination of the four values. The sorts of open spaces that Council would like to see in the future reflect these values.

The areas and their key open space features are identified on the map on pages 40-41. A conceptual diagram showing the relationship between the areas is shown on page 28. Each area is discussed in more detail in the following sections.



Conceptual diagram showing the relationship between different areas of Wellington.

## THE CITY

A vibrant inner city where the streets, parks, squares and waterfront form a network of safe, functional and stimulating spaces for people and events; and the design, features and planting give a unique sense of Wellington.

### Description

This area encompasses the open spaces contained in the area between Lambton Harbour and the motorway from the ferry terminus to Willis Street, Webb and Buckle Streets and Kent Terrace and including Oriental Parade to Point Jerningham. This includes public spaces such as city parks, plazas, streets, and the waterfront.

### Open space values

#### *Ecological*

The area has low ecological values including small grass areas, street trees and the harbour edge.

#### *Recreation*

The city is a prime recreation hub for leisure, entertainment and shopping. The city's open spaces are places for people, providing a network throughout the city and allowing people to move around and to meet, socialise, watch, shop, sit, walk and generally participate in city life. With a steady trend towards inner city residential living, often in apartments with little or no private outdoor space, the city's open spaces also serve as local neighbourhoods.

#### *Landscape*

The character of the public spaces contributes greatly to the sense of a Wellington identity. Particular features which should be noted are:

- Civic Square and the Bridge to the Sea;
- Lambton Harbour;

- Parliament grounds;
- City parks (eg. Midland Park, Aro Park, Cobblestone Park)
- Golden Mile (Lambton Quay, Willis Street, Manners Street and Courteney Place);
- Oriental Parade; and
- Kent and Cambridge Terraces.

#### *Heritage*

The city is rich in cultural meaning with icons ranging from the Pipitea Marae to the Beehive and the copper nikau palms in Civic Square. Monuments and historical objects give a rich setting for city life, eg. Bolton and Mount Street cemeteries. The city has a pre-European heritage underlying the built environment. Although many of these sites are no longer physically evident, they need recognition and protection.

#### **Threats and issues**

- Apart from the roading network there has been little consistent planning of inner city open space and most of the parks and squares appear to be left over from the provision of space for buildings.
- There are notable gaps in the distribution of city parks in key areas of high pedestrian numbers and increased residential living including the central area of the golden mile, the Courteney and Cuba character areas and the Te Aro flats.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> *Assessment of Open Space in Wellington City*, Boffa Miskell Limited, February 1998.



The lagoon on the waterfront at night

- The high cost of land and density of development constrains opportunities for developing new open spaces.
- The waterfront contains the greatest area of remaining open space available in the central city. There is consistent public support for maintaining and developing its green character and public access to the water's edge.<sup>4</sup>

### Opportunities

- Develop the waterfront as a major open space with frequent connections to the city, significant green areas and continuous public access along the water's edge.
- Provide additional inner city parks in areas identified as lacking in open space.
- Promote the interweaving of small green spaces, and roof and balcony gardens, into the city centre.
- Implement a planting programme to provide sheltered microclimates for pedestrians and visitors in the city centre, in accordance with planting guidelines to strengthen the identity of the central city and character precincts.
- Provide information signage interpreting the natural and historic features in the city centre.
- Upgrade Oriental Bay beach to enhance recreational use and attractiveness

## THE BAYS

An accessible urban coastline which is rich in recreational opportunities and cultural meaning, and emphasizes the natural character and beauty of the coast through the protection of prominent landforms and indigenous vegetation.

### Description

Open spaces including the shoreline, headlands, coastal cliffs and escarpments from Petone to the ferry terminus and from Point Jerningham to Owhiro Bay.

### Open space values

#### *Ecological*

Remnant primary forests on the Wellington Fault escarpment and ecologically sensitive shoreline have high ecological value.

#### *Recreation*

The shoreline is an extremely popular destination for numerous types of leisure including water-based activities, fishing, swimming, picnics, cycling, walking, driving and enjoying the scenery.

#### *Landscape*

The steep escarpments and prominent headlands are significant landscape features around Wellington Harbour. The vegetation and landforms contribute to the coast's natural character and form a distinctive characteristic of Wellington.

<sup>4</sup> *Our City ~ Our Future: Resident Survey Results*, Wellington City Council, August 1997.



Esplanade road and coastal escarpment behind Island Bay

### *Heritage*

The coastline is significant for iwi and has waahi tapu sites extending from the South Coast and through the harbour. Significant European heritage items include fishing wharves and military installations.

### **Threats and issues**

- Recreational activity is focused along the shore platform with limited width for competing uses. Safety is an issue along the narrow road which is a popular route for pedestrians, cyclists and motorists. The remaining natural shoreline is narrow, limiting the potential for recreational uses and for enhancing remnants of ecologically sensitive vegetation.
- The escarpments and headlands may come under pressure for development as new building techniques make building on steep land more feasible. Mount Crawford and Point Halswell may pass out of public ownership.
- The Miramar Peninsula is isolated from other natural habitats by the densely developed Rongotai area. Mature native vegetation is unlikely to be re-established on the peninsula without human assistance.

## Opportunities

- Enhance the esplanade road as a scenic and recreational route including a cycle route and walkway
- Protect and where possible restore the remnants of native vegetation along the shoreline and inland of the marine drive as described in the enhancement and restoration guidelines.<sup>6</sup>
- Upgrade parking, boat ramps and fishing wharves to promote recreational usage and limit environmental impacts.
- Promote and facilitate the protection of prominent open spaces at Point Halswell, Mount Crawford, Fort Dorset and Palmer Head.
- Work with landowners to promote the protection of native vegetation on the Wellington Fault escarpment, and the cliffs behind Greta Point, Seatoun and from Lyall Bay to Island Bay.
- Consult with iwi about appropriate management of Maori sites and possible interpretation of their significance.
- Support and promote the establishment of a marine reserve on the South Coast.

## SUBURBAN OPEN SPACES

Accessible open spaces close to people's homes which provide a flexible range of recreational opportunities and which provide green spaces that contribute to the identity of the suburb.

### Description

These are small scale green areas in the suburbs including neighbourhood parks, school grounds, playgrounds, sportsfields and private gardens.

### Open space values

#### *Ecological*

The suburban open spaces have limited ecological values due to their isolated nature and intensive use. They can provide locally significant green areas and vegetation.

#### *Recreation*

These open spaces are often intensively used for both formal and informal activities and are significant for local users where accessibility is an issue. They have high recreation value.

#### *Landscape*

There is limited landscape value in these open spaces, although some areas may be locally significant.

#### *Heritage*

These spaces have varying heritage values which may be important to local communities.

<sup>6</sup> Wellington Coast from Owhiro Bay to Oriental Bay Enhancement and Restoration Guidelines, Wellington City Council, February 1997.

### Threats and issues

These open spaces will become increasingly significant as the density of settlement in Wellington increases, leading to a higher intensity of use and greater potential conflicts. Changes in demographics and recreation patterns over time will also affect the ways these spaces are used. A useful response to these trends requires a flexible and consultative approach.

The topography of Wellington does not lend itself to an even distribution of open spaces in suburbs. The steep hillsides and containment of the suburban areas tends to limit the availability of suitable areas for neighbourhood parks, playgrounds and sportsfields. The *Recreation Strategy* proposes establishing a hierarchy of community and neighbourhood facilities so that recreation opportunities are available to people in or close to their communities. The strategy recommends consolidating facilities in four developing recreation 'hubs' in:

- City
- Kilbirnie
- Karori
- Johnsonville

These hubs will provide clusters of high standard facilities such as a swimming pool, sportsfields, recreation centre, and play equipment catering for a range of age groups.



Macalister Park

The city currently has an adequate number of sportsfields to cater for demand. Increasing demand can be absorbed by increasing the utilisation of existing parks. At some stage the existing parks will reach their capacity and new sportsfields will be required to meet demand. Acquiring suitable areas of flat land is potentially difficult and expensive and requires long-term planning. The levels of usage need to be monitored as part of the sportsfield asset management plan with appropriate long-term planning.

### **Opportunities**

- Secure public open spaces through reserve contributions and land purchase to cater for recreational demands in new subdivisions and areas of increased density.
- Maintain flexibility in the provision of suburban open spaces to retain the ability to respond to changing recreation demand and patterns.
- Upgrade sportsfields with improved drainage and surfaces to improve level of utilisation.
- Upgrade playgrounds to meet New Zealand Safety Standards and provide safe play environments for children.
- Develop a hierarchy of playgrounds with more extensive facilities associated with the recreation hubs. Rationalise existing under-utilised playgrounds.
- Promote planting in private gardens through environmental education to create habitats for plants and animals and to provide green networks.

## **INNER GREEN BELTS**

A series of green belts or corridors, rich in ecological, recreational and heritage values, which weave green open space through the city, containing and identifying the suburbs and connecting other open spaces.

### **Description**

There are four proposed inner green belts:

- *Town Belt* and extensions flanking Island Bay;
- *Ngaio Gorge Green Belt* linking the coast and the Outer Green Belt;
- *Ngauranga Gorge Green Belt* linking the coast and Outer Green Belt; and
- Proposed *Marshall Ridge / Belmont Gully Green Belt* between Johnsonville and Tawa.

### **Open space values**

#### *Ecological*

These areas exemplify Outcome 1 in the *Strategic Plan* by weaving natural corridors through the city. The corridors have high potential ecological values. There is extensive regeneration of native species occurring and significant exotic vegetation. The remnant of primary forest in the Botanic Garden has high ecological values, while the breeding programmes for endangered species at the Zoo have significant conservation values.

*Recreation*

The Town Belt and associated facilities have high recreation values and are extensively used for formal and informal recreational activities. The Botanic Garden is a major recreational and educational 'hub' for the city. The other belts also have high potential for recreational use.

*Landscape*

All of the inner green belts have high landscape values. The Town Belt creates a picturesque green backdrop to the city and is inextricably bound



View from Mt Victoria

up with Wellington's sense of identity. The Ngaio Gorge and Belmont Gully are green corridors which emphasise the natural landforms and weave through the city. The regenerating native vegetation in the Ngauranga Gorge hints at a striking gateway to the harbour in the future.

#### *Heritage*

All of the inner green belts are high in both European and Maori heritage values.

#### **Threats and issues**

- There are significant tenure gaps with alienated Town Belt lands. Returning this land to the Town Belt or ensuring its protection is a high priority.
- There are large areas of mature pine forest on the Town Belt. Council has a significant liability if the trees become over-mature, when wind throws could threaten neighbouring properties.
- The trend to in-fill housing and higher population densities is likely to create more pressure for development on remaining open spaces, as well as greater demands for outdoor recreation. These conflicting pressures suggest that greater control will be needed in these areas than in some of the outlying areas.
- With ongoing subdivision occurring within the Johnsonville-Tawa valley, the key elements of the proposed green belt need to be protected before opportunities and linkages are lost.
- Industrial, quarry and motorway land uses in the Ngauranga Gorge may conflict with open space values.

#### **Opportunities**

- Negotiate the return of the alienated Town Belt lands.
- Implement the Town Belt Management Plan and revegetation programme focusing on removing areas of mature pine forest adjacent to neighbouring properties.
- Implement the Botanic Garden Management Plan to develop and promote the gardens as a recreational and educational attraction for Wellington.
- Redevelop the Zoo into a series of natural habitat enclosures to promote endangered species breeding programmes and public education.
- Facilitate protection of the Belmont Gully Green Belt linking the Outer Town Belt and Belmont Regional Park.
- Plan and implement a revegetation programme for Ngauranga Gorge to create a future gateway to Wellington.

## **OUTER GREEN BELT**

A continuous green belt following the ridges west of the city from the South Coast to Colonial Knob, in which indigenous vegetation is restored and an informal recreation network is widely accessible.

## Description

A continuous spine of open space following the ridgelines which flank the west of the metropolitan area from the South Coast, including the Hawkins Hill-Polhill ridge, Wrights Hill, Makara Peak, Johnston Hill-Mt Kaukau ridge, and the hills west of Tawa running north towards Yoxon and Colonial Knob.

## Open space values

### *Ecological*

A few remnants of primary native forest including Otari/Wilton Bush and Khandallah Park have high ecological values. Large areas of regenerating scrub are ecologically significant and have the potential to succeed to native forest, so forming an extensive ecological corridor.

### *Recreation*

The accessibility of these ridges from many parts of the city and the range of environments from open hilltops to forested walks, provides opportunities for numerous informal recreational activities including walking, running, mountain biking, scenic enjoyment, picnicing and horse riding.

### *Landscape*

These ridges form a series of visually prominent skylines which provide a backdrop to and contain the urban part of the city. Many of the high points are geologically significant as remnants of the former Wellington peneplain.



Mt Kaukau

### *Heritage*

There are a number of features of heritage value including the gun emplacements at Wrights Hill, the dams at Karori reservoir and the Old Coach Road.

### **Threats and issues**

- Significant areas of the Outer Green Belt are owned by the Council but there are large gaps particularly in the north. Alternative means of maintaining open space values on privately owned land need to be considered.
- There is enormous potential for a natural corridor of restored native forest along the Outer Green Belt, which would provide an ecological spine for the city. Although there are two primary forest remnants which could act as seed sources, the natural spread of successional species from these sites would be relatively slow given the large distances involved. Revegetation programmes would be needed to speed this process up.
- In planning for the Outer Green Belt provision should also be made for maintaining some areas of grazed land in order to provide a variety of recreational environments, to preserve views, and to enable continued pastoral use. The management of specific areas would need to be worked out in consultation with the landowners.
- Community support for the degree to which the city is contained within the Outer Green Belt should continue to be reviewed.

### **Opportunities**

- Support the Karori Wildlife Sanctuary Trust in constructing a predator-proof fence around the Karori Reservoir, eradicating all possums and other predators within the fence, and re-introducing endangered plants, birds, lizards, insects and fish species.
- Facilitate the protection of the key ridges along the western edge of the city from the South Coast to Colonial Knob, including public access along a continuous recreation route, areas of open grazed land and an ecological corridor.
- Prepare and implement a revegetation plan for areas of high fire hazard along the Outer Green Belt.
- Implement *Otari Native Botanic Garden Management Plan* to promote the gardens as a recreational and educational attraction for Wellington, and a nationally significant native plant collection.

## **RURAL HINTERLAND**

A scenic rural environment where rural land uses are interwoven with a network of restored natural ecosystems and informal recreational access.

### **Description**

The rural hinterland includes:

- all land west of the Outer Green Belt to the Wild Coast; and
- the rural land between Johnsonville/Tawa and the northern boundary of the city.



Karori Golf Club

## Open space values

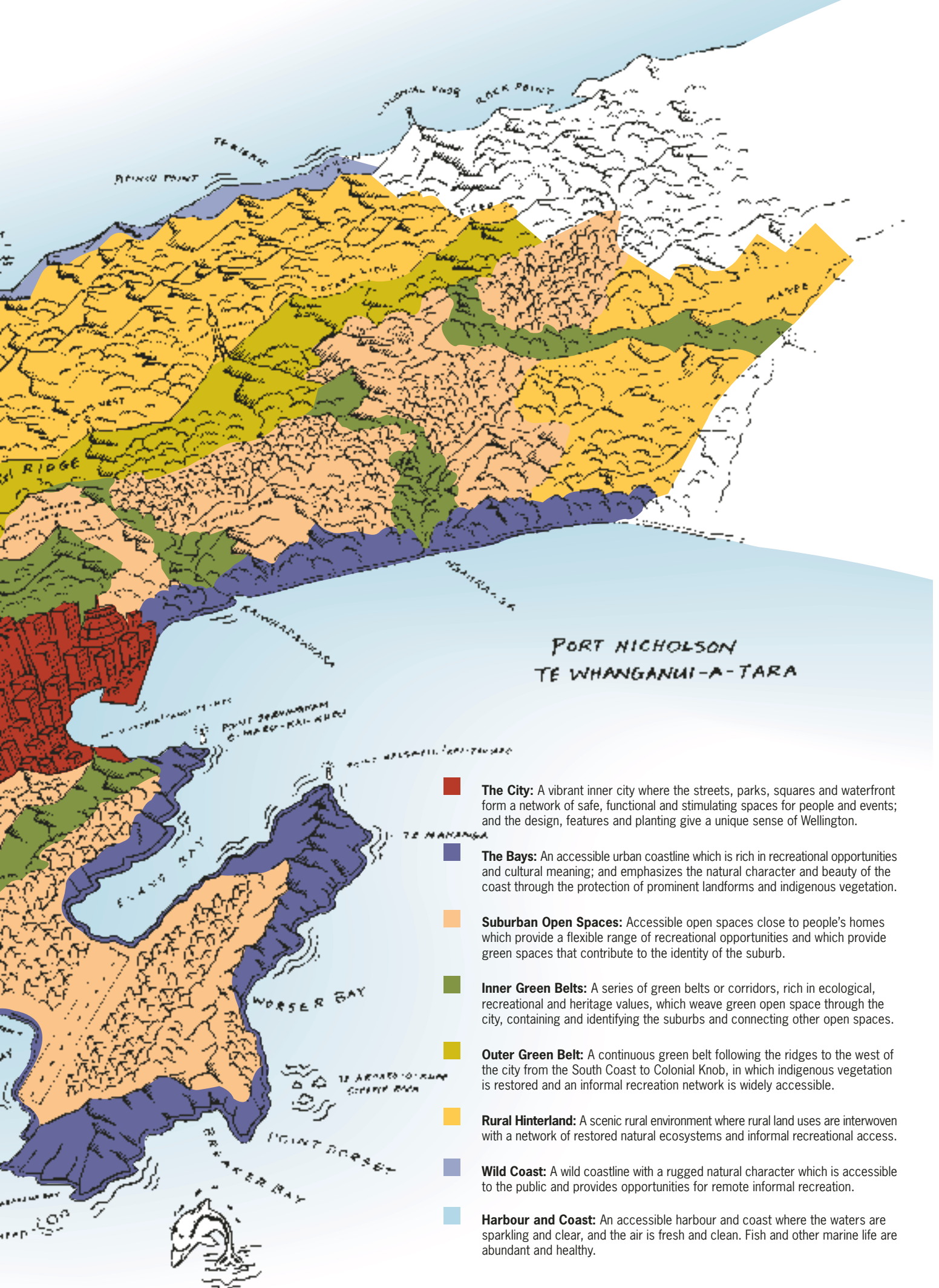
### *Ecological*

There are a few remnants of primary native forest including those located at Quartz Hill and Warrens Bush which have high ecological value. Elsewhere significant areas of marginal land are reverting to scrub with potential to develop into native forest. To the east this area borders on the Belmont Regional Park which has significant areas of remnant and regenerating native vegetation.

### *Recreation*

The Ohariu/Makara Valley roads provide a scenic route through farmland for driving and cycling and Makara Beach is a popular destination with access to the Wild Coast. The typically steep ridges and hills have potential for challenging outdoor recreation but are little used as yet. The rural landscape allows more expansive recreation including horse riding and golf. Potential links to the Belmont Regional Park would offer significant recreational opportunities.





PORT NICHOLSON  
TE WHANGANUI-A-TARA

- The City:** A vibrant inner city where the streets, parks, squares and waterfront form a network of safe, functional and stimulating spaces for people and events; and the design, features and planting give a unique sense of Wellington.
- The Bays:** An accessible urban coastline which is rich in recreational opportunities and cultural meaning; and emphasizes the natural character and beauty of the coast through the protection of prominent landforms and indigenous vegetation.
- Suburban Open Spaces:** Accessible open spaces close to people's homes which provide a flexible range of recreational opportunities and which provide green spaces that contribute to the identity of the suburb.
- Inner Green Belts:** A series of green belts or corridors, rich in ecological, recreational and heritage values, which weave green open space through the city, containing and identifying the suburbs and connecting other open spaces.
- Outer Green Belt:** A continuous green belt following the ridges to the west of the city from the South Coast to Colonial Knob, in which indigenous vegetation is restored and an informal recreation network is widely accessible.
- Rural Hinterland:** A scenic rural environment where rural land uses are interwoven with a network of restored natural ecosystems and informal recreational access.
- Wild Coast:** A wild coastline with a rugged natural character which is accessible to the public and provides opportunities for remote informal recreation.
- Harbour and Coast:** An accessible harbour and coast where the waters are sparkling and clear, and the air is fresh and clean. Fish and other marine life are abundant and healthy.

### *Landscape*

This area is characterised by extensive rural scenery, largely pastoral with some forestry. The Horokiwi-Magee ridge in the north and the Quartz Hill-Outlook Hill ridge are part of a visually prominent series of skyline ridges which are geologically significant as remnants of the former Wellington peneplain. The Takarau Gorge has high landscape value as a narrow winding scenic road.

### *Heritage*

Significant heritage features in this area include Maori tracks, gold mining relics, early farming sites, World War II fortifications, and the Makara and Ohariu cemeteries.

### **Threats and issues**

- Changing land uses (forestry, wind farms, lifestyle blocks) may alter the landscape character. This change may conflict with public expectations.
- Most of this area is privately owned and consultation with landowners will be a key factor in allowing public access and promoting the revegetation of marginal areas.
- Public access from Horokiwi Road into Belmont Regional Park is currently limited to a single block of Council land near Magee.

### **Opportunities**

- Promote the protection of the Quartz Hill and Warrens Bush native forest remnants and consult with land owners to protect the adjacent regenerating vegetation.
- Manage the Makara and Ohariu Valley roads as a scenic route for cycling and driving, with Makara Beach developed and managed as a visitor destination.
- Negotiate with landowners for public access to walking and mountain biking routes from the Outer Green Belt to the Wild Coast, and from Horokiwi Road into Belmont Regional Park.
- Promote the establishment of a 'Wild West Park', as proposed in *Our City ~ Our Future*, in partnership with other agencies and landowners.
- Consult with landowners to promote the protection of riparian land for regeneration of native vegetation as ecological and recreational links across the rural hinterland.

## **WILD COAST**

A wild coastline with a rugged natural character which is accessible to the public and provides opportunities for remote informal recreation.

### **Description**

The shoreline, coastal platform and land to the top of the coastal cliffs and escarpments from Owhiro Bay to Rock Point north of Makara.

## Open space values

### *Ecological*

Part of the Cook Strait Ecological District, this is a rugged environment exposed to extreme coastal conditions. Little remains of the original vegetation but the native plant communities and the Sinclair Head seal colony have ecological value. There is significant potential for native regeneration.

### *Recreation*

The remote wild nature of the coast offers challenging recreational opportunities for remote experiences. The more accessible parts of the coast attract walking, running, four wheel drive, mountain biking and sea-based activities. There is a two day tramp from Owhiro Bay to Makara.

### *Landscape*

This area is a regionally significant landscape, seen mainly from Cook Strait from the ferry and from planes arriving in Wellington.

### *Heritage*

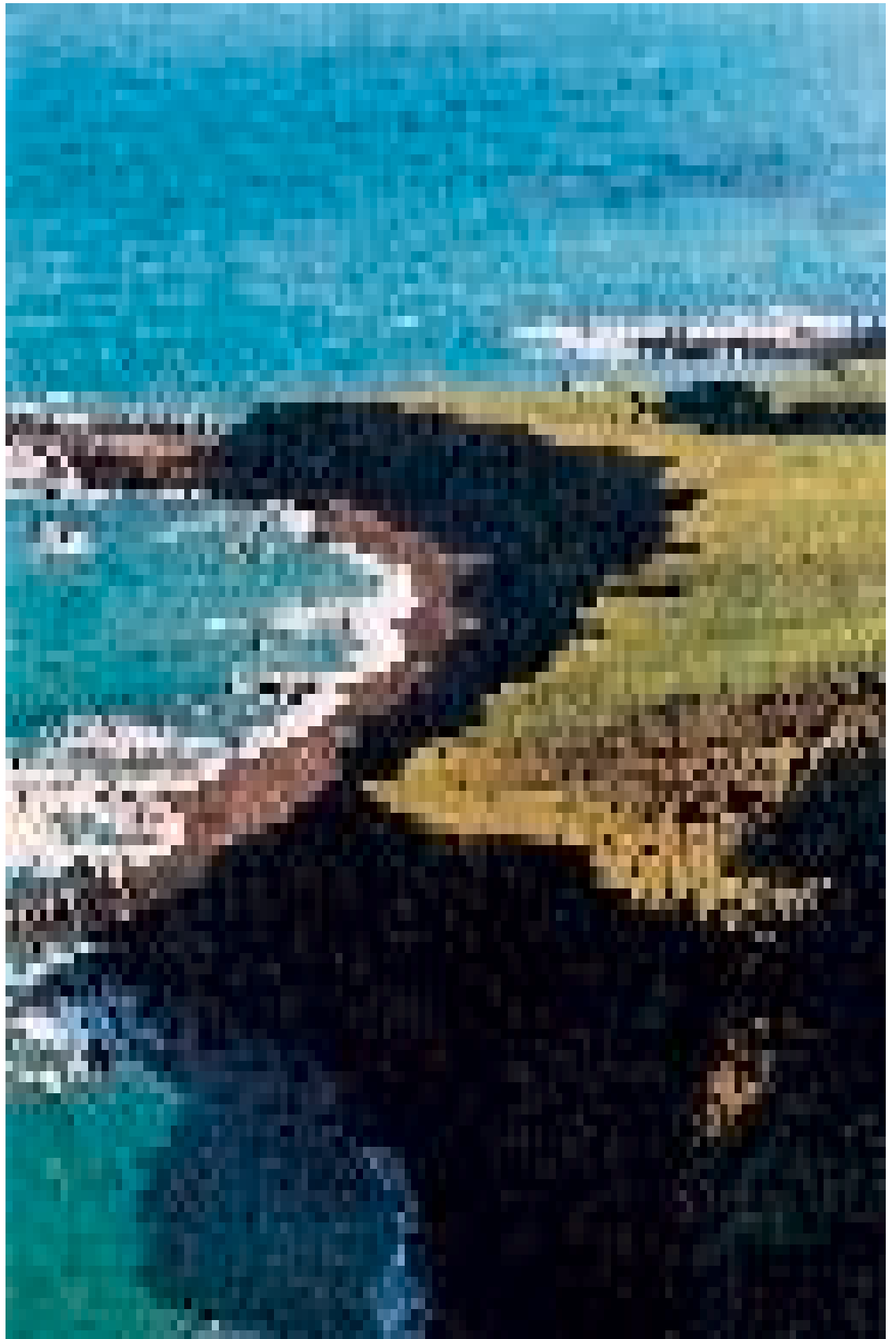
The coastline is significant to iwi in both cultural and landscape heritage. There are sites of waahi tapu including urupa and pa sites. The traditional food sources of kaimoana also make this area important. Shipwrecks are scattered around the coast.

## Threats and issues

- For most of the length of the coastline public access is protected by legal road or esplanade reserve, apart from 20 kilometres of coastline north of Makara where private land extends down to the shore.
- Isolation from seed sources will impede native succession. This is likely to depend on the development of natural corridors from adjacent areas, particularly the Outer Green Belt.
- Much of the escarpment is privately owned and consultation with landowners is likely to be a key factor for public access and the regeneration of native vegetation.

## Opportunities

- Closure of Owhiro Bay Quarry.
- Monitor the regeneration of native vegetation and consult with landowners about managing the process initiated in *Healing the South Coast*.
- Upgrade the walking track around to Red Rocks and Sinclair Head.
- Develop a 'Coastal Trail' from Owhiro Bay to Rock Point north of Makara as part of the walkway proposed to run the length of New Zealand.
- Negotiate with landowners to obtain public access north of Makara to Rock Point.



South coast, Wellington