

1. Review of infill housing – building on a compact city

1.1. Introduction

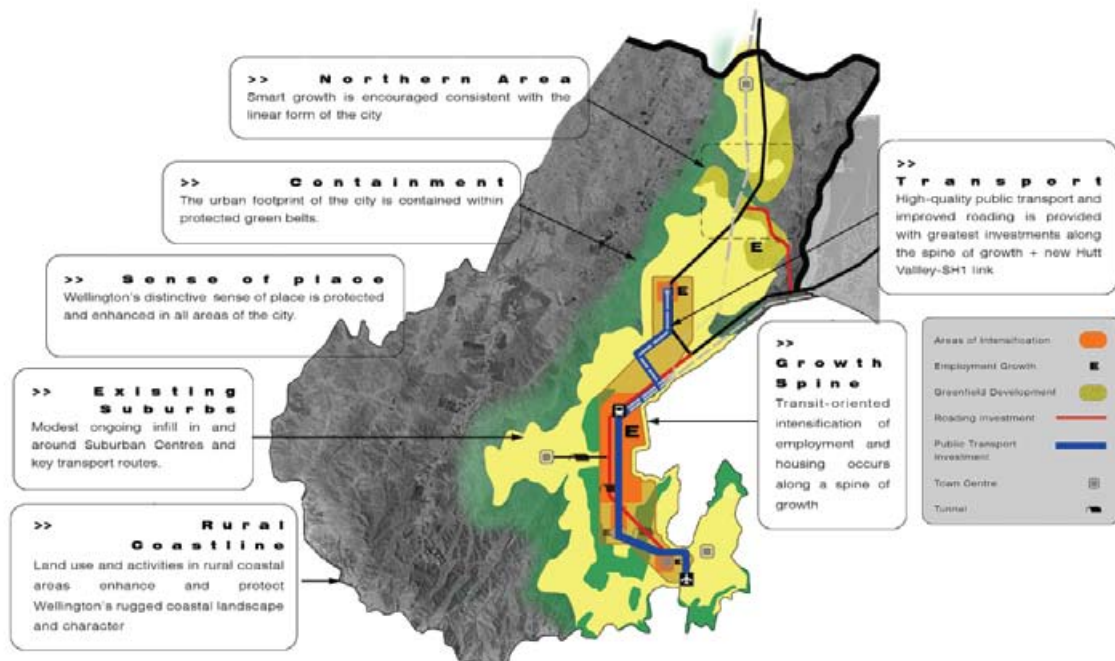
With Wellington's population steadily increasing, growth has to happen somewhere. In order to build a compact, sustainable, and liveable city and to make sure that growth happens in the right way, Wellington City Council is proposing a new approach to managing residential growth.

The initiative is based on the idea of taking a more targeted approach to infill housing – encouraging growth in and around key centres with good infrastructure and public transport, while safeguarding identified character in others. This concept was subject to public consultation last year, and received significant public support.

The Council has now put together a list of potential 'areas of change' and 'areas of character protection', and we want to hear from you what you think about these areas. The comments and suggestions generated from this consultation process will help us to prepare a final proposal, on which we will again seek public feedback later in the year.



WELLINGTON CITY URBAN DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY



1.2. How does Wellington City plan for growth?

Wellington City Council has several policies and projects that contribute towards managing the City's growth in a sustainable way.

URBAN DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

This aims to *direct growth to where the benefits are greatest* and sets the overall framework for managing growth and change in the city. It introduces the concept of the *growth spine* – which encourages growth in housing and employment in key centres linked by a public transport spine between Johnsonville and the Airport.



INTEGRATION WITH OTHER COUNCIL PROJECTS

The Council is also working on several other projects relating to how we plan for growth. Some of the most important ones are:

- Developing a Centres Policy to guide development in our centres
- Reviewing the Suburban Centres chapter of the District Plan
- Developing concept plans and action plans for Johnsonville town centre and Adelaide Road
- The Ngauranga to Airport transport study
- The bus lane priority study
- Developing walking and cycling plans.

REVIEW OF INFILL HOUSING

As part of the implementation of the Urban Development Strategy, the Council initiated a major review of infill housing in July 2006.

The review is made up two parts:

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

The Council has already made significant progress on Part 1 by tightening the rules for residential housing with Plan Change 56.

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





1.3. What is infill housing?

Infill housing is a general term that refers to new housing within existing areas. For the purposes of this discussion paper, it covers both 'backyard' infill, new dwellings built within an existing suburb of older houses, and more intensive housing such as apartments and townhouses, creating higher levels of residential density.

1.4. Why a targeted approach?

Wellington residents value the city's compact nature, its character and heritage, and its superb natural setting¹. Growth should not be allowed to put these things at risk.

There is evidence in some areas that poorly designed infill housing is impacting on valued suburban character and amenity. There are also examples of higher-density development in areas not well serviced by infrastructure and public transport. Allowing growth to continue in this way represents a potential threat to our unique sense of place, compact urban form and the efficient use of infrastructure.

From a climate-change perspective, our compact urban form is fundamental to reducing vehicle use and congestion, and helps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. It also increases the city's resilience to increased energy prices.

Some of these concerns are related to the growth pressures we are facing. The population of Wellington City grew by nearly 16,000 over the last five years and is not showing any signs of slowing down. Demographic projections show that Wellington will require some 23,000 new dwellings to house 37,000 more residents by 2051².

Of these dwellings, it is estimated that over 60% will be for high or medium-density housing – units, apartments and townhouses. This high demand for apartment-style living reflects a number of trends including the shift to inner city living, smaller households, an ageing population and declining home affordability.

The Council therefore must be smart and strategic about how it manages growth.

A targeted approach to infill housing allows us to:

- Be more sustainable – makes the most efficient use of existing services and infrastructure (roads, businesses, shops, bus and train services, broadband, power and water) and reduces urban sprawl.
- Support our centres – having more people living close to town and neighbourhood centres will provide an economic impetus for our centres, some of which are struggling or need further investment.
- Accommodate growth and improve housing affordability – provides opportunities for increased housing supply in places where the benefits are greatest and where people want to be (especially as they age), close to shops, jobs, services and public transport.
- Preserve sense of place – it protects neighbourhood character and heritage values where they are most valued.
- Promote housing choice – increases the range of housing options for everyone from first home buyers and young families to empty nesters and the elderly.

¹ Quality of Life 07, in twelve of New Zealand's cities.

² UDS Working Paper 9 (revised 2008) – Quantifying the growth spine, MERA (2007) revised regional projections, Property Economics (2005) housing demand study.

1.5. What have we done so far?

We have already made considerable progress.

PLAN CHANGE 56 – MAY 2007

In May 2007 we tightened the rules of the Wellington City District Plan to improve the quality of new residential development and to better protect the amenity of surrounding residential areas. Plan Change 56 came into effect on 29 November 2007. While it will take some time to see improvements in the quality of development on the ground, Council officers have already noticed a significant improvement in the quality of applications for new residential development.

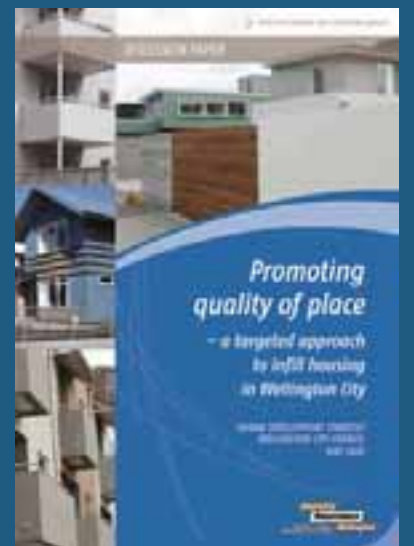
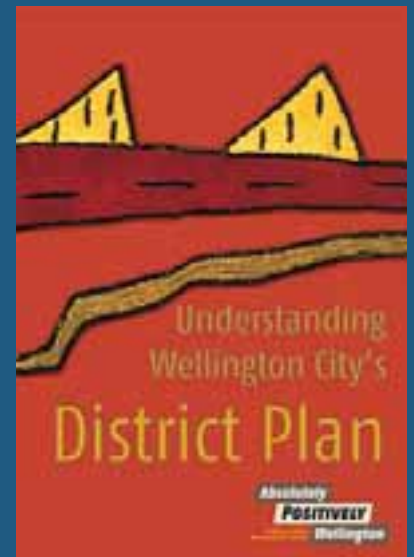
DISCUSSION PAPER 1 – MAY 2007

In conjunction with Plan Change 56, the Council carried out a city-wide consultation process on the discussion paper *Promoting quality of place – a targeted approach to infill housing in Wellington City*.

Building on the compact city approach, the discussion paper put forward the idea of encouraging growth in around our key centres with good public transport and away from areas with significant character or poor infrastructure.

The paper introduced the concepts of:

- Areas of **change** where comprehensive redevelopment of housing would be encouraged, resulting in change to the character of these areas and moderate to significant increases in residential density.
- Areas of **limited infill** where infill housing and moderate intensification would be allowed to occur, as is currently the case, but with a greater focus on the quality of individual development.
- Areas of **stability** where infill housing and intensification (semi-detached housing and town houses) would be tightly controlled or not allowed at all.



1.6. Positive feedback on a targeted approach

Over 260 submissions were received from both individuals and groups on the new approach set out in the discussion paper.

With 83% of the respondents supporting a targeted approach in some form or another, the feedback provides a clear message that there is unease with the existing approach of allowing intensification to occur anywhere in our suburbs.

There was also strong support (73%) for areas of stability. As you would expect, there was less (but still significant) support for areas of change, with 61% supporting the idea of encouraging more intensive development in specific locations.

The feedback provided some very useful comments and ideas about locations best suited to growth and those that perhaps require greater protection. A summary of the feedback is available on the infill review project page on the Wellington City Council's website www.Wellington.govt.nz