

# Our City Tomorrow

## Workshops overview report

Global Research *for* Wellington City Council

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Absolutely Positively  
**Wellington City Council**  
Me Heke Ki Pōneke



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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This executive summary discusses the overall themes across the six *Our City Tomorrow* workshops. The workshops were independent of each other and different questions and activities were deployed in each. However, some themes arose in multiple workshops.

Frequently, participants described what they currently observe and consider the challenges for Wellington, including what they believe Wellington City Council should focus on, such as transport issues, natural hazard risks, population growth and green space provision.

Potential future outcomes were identified within workshops, reflecting Wellington as a place where people are put first, connections are easily made personally and geographically, and people are included and considered in planning.

While few participants suggested specific ways the city and Council could reach the desired outcome or ideal vision, some mechanisms were identified. These included some specific policies and physical changes/improvements.

### **Key ideas**

Wellington City Council identified several areas of focus for the 2018-2028 long-term plan, including: transport, resilience, arts and culture, sustainable growth, and housing. Many of these areas were also common themes discussed in workshops.

**Transport** was mentioned by many participants. Several challenging transport areas, or areas that could be focussed on and improved in the future, were identified.

- Participants mentioned cycling, walking, public transport, light rail, and vehicle traffic.
- Congestion and space used by vehicles was identified as a challenge. Participants felt space for people was compromised by space for vehicles. This therefore limited public and active transport modes, and made the overall transport system less efficient.
- Connections to outer suburbs was mentioned frequently by participants. People acknowledged that it was challenging to travel from the suburbs into the central city, and to get to key sites such as the airport and hospital.
- Ensuring pedestrian friendly streets and cycle safety were other transport issues identified by participants.

**Natural hazards** were acknowledged by participants across some of the workshops.

- People identified earthquakes, flooding, sea level rise, and climate change as hazards Wellington is particularly vulnerable to.
- Participants identified that they were aware of the challenges that these hazards present, and the ways they affect transport, housing, economic, and other decisions in Wellington.

**Population growth** of Wellington and prospect of where new residents will go was recognised as a key challenge.

- Many participants were aware that the population of Wellington is increasing, and that this growth will put pressure on the transport system, housing, parks and green spaces, community facilities, and amenities.
- Several participants expressed concerns towards development that takes priority over green spaces, parks, gardens, and community areas, and therefore reducing the amount of public space available in Wellington.

**Green space** was commonly mentioned across the workshops.

- While one workshop was partially focussed and directed towards green space discussions, the topic also surfaced in other discussions. Participants mostly stated the importance of providing green spaces and allocating city space to green and natural purposes.

## **Outcomes**

Many participants suggested outcome based ideas, which stated their vision for Wellington. Most of these ideas came without the mechanisms to reach their vision, but highlighted their idea of successful future development.

A “**people-centred city**” was one of the most frequently recurring ideas throughout the six workshops.

- Many participants stated their support for any elements that would promote a city that works for people.
- Elements that challenged this notion, such as car-focussed streets, large buildings and development without public space, and non-diverse design were among suggested elements that participants do not see included in the best outcome for Wellington city.

A more **connected city**, in regard to transport, was a common theme across some workshops.

- Many people stated better transport options, systems and connections.
- A city where travelling from the suburbs to central city, the airport, and hospital is efficient and timely, was suggested by many participants as a key outcome.

A **community focussed city** and planning was identified by many as a key outcome.

- A city that both involves the community, and provides for the community was strongly suggested by many participants.
- It was clearly stated that people want a city where the decisions involve community members more. Participants showed great appreciation for future communication and consultation with the Wellington City Council.

## **Mechanisms (How Wellington gets there)**

Some participants discussed how they think the Council should achieve desired city outcomes.

**Policies and regulations** were the main mechanism that participants suggested.

- Some participants mentioned specific policies or rules that they thought would be helpful in resolving some of Wellington’s challenges and issues. Policies regarding building heights, development standards and sustainable buildings were among the most popular suggestions.
- Participants frequently mentioned different aspects of the building height rules. Some comments referred to the issues of seismic stability. Development standards, and comments suggesting similar policies, stated that standards could be developed to ensure development in Wellington meets the goals of the overall vision and outcomes desired.
- Policies that incentivise sustainable buildings, green spaces and public spaces to be incorporated into development were suggested across some workshops. Participants felt that with the strong conflict between green space and buildings, an incentive scheme could lead to a better city for people.

**Higher density housing and mixed-use buildings** were frequently mentioned as mechanisms to resolve some of Wellington’s urban issues.

- Participants suggested intensified residential dwellings would lead to several positive outcomes including: greater social connections, more vibrant spaces, and better transport systems.
- Mixed use buildings were suggested as ways of keeping spaces lively during different times of the day and encouraging more vibrant areas for residents, businesses and communities.

**Facilitation and leadership from the Council** was expressed as an expectation from some participants.

- Comments suggested that it is the Council's responsibility to ensure their vision and ideal outcomes are met. While the desire for more community engagement was expressed, the perception remains that the Council should facilitate and run the majority of the processes required within the city.

## INTRODUCTION

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This report summarises the six workshops analysed for Wellington City Council's *Our City Tomorrow* engagement project. The workshops focussed on a range of different topics, as well as suburbs/areas of Wellington. Key themes arose within each report, as well as some resurfacing topics across many workshops (discussed in the executive summary).

*Our City Tomorrow* was an engagement process run by the Wellington City Council to help inform the long-term plan. The *Our City Tomorrow* project was a forum for Wellingtonians to discuss the challenges and opportunities facing the city. A particular focus was placed on the issues regarding population growth, climate change, and earthquakes. Wellington City Council outlined this context for the initiative.

- The population of Wellington is set to increase between 50,000 and 80,000 residents by 2043. Currently most of this growth is located in the central city. The challenge for the future is managing this growth sustainably and effectively.
- Climate change and the coastal environment of Wellington makes it vulnerable to severe weather events and sea level rise.
- The recent experience of the 7.8 magnitude Kaikoura earthquake highlights a need to further improve the city's resilience.

Wellington City Council asked the public how the Council should spend their time, energy and resources in the future, combating the challenges presented. The six workshops focussed on varying topics and areas.

### **Workshop structure**

**Workshop One** involved eighty central city stakeholders. Stakeholders included; residents, investors, retail operators, property owners, Housing, NZTA, Wellington Water, urban planning, engineers, ecologists, community social experts, economists, and Council staff with responsibilities for community, ecology, transport, water, park management, city planning, and the district plan. This workshop involved participants identifying elements of the urban landscape they would keep or start in Wellington, and those they would stop or prevent. It also involved identifying challenges, preferred experiences and principles of Wellington city.

**Workshop Two** asked participants to come up with ideas for different areas of Wellington. The areas were predefined by the workshop facilitators, and included; City Gateway, Citywide, Creative Heart, Pipitea, Pukeahau, and Waitangi. Participants used posters and post-it notes to represent their ideas and suggestions for Wellington based on the activities they participated in.

**Workshop Three** involved two case study activities. The case studies were based in different areas of Wellington (Pipitea and Waitangi) and proposed a number of deliveries relating to housing and urban design of the area. Participants were asked to provide feedback on these proposed scenarios. The second activity asked participants to reflect on the workshop and discuss the tools, barriers and key people to be involved, from their ideas for future development.

**The Design and Development workshop** focussed on planning principles. Participants identified the challenges and tensions that face their sector, the priority areas of the city, in terms of both location and focus, and evaluation of the current planning and policy approach which encourages 40% of growth into the central city.

**The Designing for an Inclusive Wellington workshop** aimed to identify the challenges and improvements that could be made to be a city that is more inclusive for all. Participants identified

challenges of the ageing population, elements of urban design that may promote inclusivity or exclusivity, and principles that would improve accessibility and inclusivity in Wellington.

***The Integrating Sustainable Food and Green Space workshop*** explored many aspects of the two topics of urban food systems, and green space. Participants engaged with six different activities covering how the wider city challenges access to urban food systems and green spaces, the frequency they engage with elements of either the urban food system or green spaces, food production systems and green spaces that suit Wellington, and the role of Council, community, and the private sector.

The six workshops covered a wide range of topics and included participants from various backgrounds. While there were a lot of unique findings, themes and topics discussed by participants across all workshops were, on the whole, similar. Key themes have been discussed in the executive summary.

## WORKSHOP SUMMARIES

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Each workshop asked participants various questions, through a range of group and individual tasks. Specific findings for each workshop are discussed below.

### Workshop One

The key themes of Workshop One showed a strong desire for better transport options and infrastructure, public spaces with strong visual amenity, and resilience and sustainability.

Elements that participants suggested they dislike were congestion, poor infrastructure, poor economic prospects, degradation of the natural environment, and lack of vibrancy and unique elements within the urban landscape.

The common challenges identified across a number of sectors were:

- The effects of population growth and subsequent impacts
- Preparedness for seismic events and other natural hazards
- The impacts of climate change
- Balancing built environment growth, while retaining the natural environment
- Reduction in car use/dependence
- Retaining quality of life
- Transport and other infrastructure provision.

Workshop One also asked participants to identify preferred experiences and principles. Key themes included: city life (including the social, community, and creative elements of the city), active transport, compactness of the city, attachment to the coast and harbour, proximity to nature, and the encouragement of diversity, as part of people-focussed policy and planning.

### Workshop Two

Several common themes were identified from the activities of Workshop Two.

Transport modes, particularly active transport (cycling and walking) and public transport were frequently mentioned. Better connections to other areas via the transport system was expressed as desired by many participants.

Mixed use and higher density buildings were stated by multiple participants to improve vibrancy, social connectedness and increase public space.

Affordability was an important aspect, particularly in regards to housing. Many implied apartment style, high density living may not be affordable for all.

Green space was also desired by many participants. Several participants suggested the CBD as the place to locate more of these spaces. Participants also recognised the threat of natural hazards and suggesting working with nature, rather than against, to mitigate impacts.

### Workshop Three

From the two case studies, a couple of key themes stood out. Firstly, participants were concerned with the cost of implementing the theoretical project. Some people expressed uncertainty regarding how a project, like the one proposed would be paid for.

Policies and rules were discussed by many participants. People identified the importance of effective policies, guidelines and restrictions.

Other comments suggested the recognition of both community and business values in future development, provision of green space and public space, and increased feedback and consultation between the Council and public.

## Design and Development Workshop

Participants mentioned many aspects of planning and Council restrictions that they thought were challenges to future progress, had the opportunity to do better, or could be incorporated within new policy and planning.

Transport options, systems, and connections were frequently mentioned by participants. Comments indicated support for active transport modes, and reducing vehicles and car parking in the central city. Participants suggested efficient and reliable public transport connections as a key aspect of future development and living. Many of these comments were associated with suggestions for new development and living styles, such as mixed use and higher density residential.

Medium or high density residential development was suggested in response to all questions. Most participants discussing intensification, referred to the central city, while some suggested intensification on the fringes or outer suburbs.

Community values were important to participants. A range of topics were mentioned including: community services, facilities, support, connectedness, and diversity.

## Designing for an Inclusive Wellington Workshop

Participants identified the challenges of future development with an ageing population. A number of elements that promote inclusivity in Wellington were suggested. These elements included:

- Sense of community, social connectedness and inclusivity (both in physical infrastructure and social capital).
- Accessible mixed demographic housing.
- Transport and mobility within the city.

One of the key findings from the Designing for an Inclusive Wellington workshop was the suggestion that a better connected and engaged community would lead to more inclusivity.

## Integrating Sustainable Food and Green Spaces Workshop

Urban food systems and green space were stated as important by the participants.

A key challenge to integrating urban food systems and green space is the use of space within the city. Competition between public/green space and private development was identified as a significant barrier to shifting to more sustainable food systems. Ensuring more space is dedicated to green space, or incorporating green elements into existing structures, were the two key solutions suggested by participants. Locally sourced food, community connections through gardening and green space, and alternative water management systems were identified as improving Wellington's resilience to threats such as earthquakes, flooding and rapid population growth.

Participants indicated they most commonly interact with the most convenient and accessible elements of the urban food system. They stated some of the wellbeing benefits of an urban food system, including: community connectedness, education about food, personal pride from growing own produce, and physical health benefits of fresh local food.

The elements of green space that participants interact with most frequently were those that they would encounter during their normal routine, or could access without travelling a great distance.

Participants suggested three key wellbeing benefits of green space, including: physical fitness and health, mental wellbeing and relaxation, and sense of place.

Participants suggested people think the Council should be the facilitator, leading the implementation and development of urban food systems and green space. Some policies from the Council to incentivise and encourage the private sector to be more involved were also suggested. Participants also discussed co-operation between all of the groups involved, stating the high importance of communication, support, and information sharing between key stakeholders.