

12 May 2006

Re: Draft Long Term Council Community Plan 2006/07-2015/16

This submission is from the Wellington Architectural Centre, a group which represents both professional and non-professionals interested in architecture and design, and in the promotion of good design in Wellington.

1) Wellington City Council's long term outcomes

The Architectural Centre supports the council's proposed outcomes to give Wellington a stronger sense of place, to make Wellington more compact and more eventful. We also support the council's aim to make Wellington healthier and more sustainable. We would though encourage the council to balance its interests in making Wellington safer with the importance of making Wellington an edgier city. We do not advocate for, nor think that the majority of Wellington's citizens want, a bland city.

2) Urban development

We support the Council's priorities to improve the quality of the city's urban design, and the idea of a capital precinct. We strongly support moves towards the "development of a framework on public spaces in the city." We also strongly encourage the Council to improve the overall average quality of individual buildings in the city through the resource and building consent processes. The Centre advocates that all proposed new buildings, additions and alterations must be demonstrably better for the public good (e.g. external appearance, sustainability, innovative design, provision of facilities, contribution to heritage etc.) than what is currently on the site. Incentives should be provided to improve or remove buildings which are at a level lower than average quality.

The Architectural Centre supports the plan for the "growth spine," though we caution against the possibilities of gentrification of the parts of the city this growth spine cuts through. Many parts of the city have achieved their character and diversity because they have to date largely escaped the "slickening" of the city which comes with gentrification. We stress that development of the growth spine can only work if the Council takes an active role in providing additional public transport initiatives to support the housing intensification. In our opinion, the present road system can not take more vehicular traffic along the existing spine. The Centre supports the aim to improve residential infill development to prevent greater urban sprawl, and we encourage publication of good examples of infill housing. We note however that all types of infill development (not just residential) should be improved. We suggest the following areas be the prime focus for intensive development: Newtown, Berhampore, and Adelaide Road.

The Architectural Centre also supports the council's plan to fund a major research project to investigate the impact of a major earthquake on the city and we see this as long overdue. We encourage the council taking a lead in earthquake awareness including such strategies as requiring earthquake ratings of buildings to be displayed at building entrances.

3) Transport

The Centre supports the Council's aim to use a Travel Demand Management System, and we support the greater provision of "malls" (pedestrian walk throughs), bus and cycle lanes. We encourage the improvement of the city's passenger transport system



the architectural centre inc.
PO Box 24178 Wellington

through bus priority measures. We suggest that systems such as "Park 'n' Rides" be implemented to reduce the number of private vehicles in the central city to make it safer for cyclists and so encourage greater bicycle use. We caution that the proposed aim to continue to provide car parking in the city centre may be counter to the aim to encourage walking, biking and use of public transport. We are disappointed by the news that the Council is considering replacing trolley buses with diesel-fuelled buses. If trolley buses are to be replaced (which we do not support) another environmentally friendly replacement must be found, not diesel-fuelled buses. We support the aim to invest in the state highway network, and encourage the Council to also invest in noise barriers and motorway art (such as Melbourne has done).

The Architectural Centre commends the Council for investigating ways to resolve the conflict between access to the port and access to the central area, and support the reduction of traffic lanes on Jervois Quay to make this area of the city more pedestrian friendly. The idea for a roundabout on Aotea Quay "linking the motorway and ferry terminal" is long overdue as the current links and access are dangerous, badly planned, and are a wholly unappealing entry to Wellington. We would like to take this opportunity to remind the Council that Architectural Centre ran a competition on the Northern Gateway in 1999, suggesting any ways this area could be improved. We have documentation of this competition if reacquaintance with this material would assist the Council's development of this area.

4) Economic Development

We encourage the Council with its plan to continue to fund Positively Wellington Tourism to promote the region – but also suggest a strategy and funding be put in place to support architectural tourism. This would contribute to the development of a "sense of place" as well as providing a platform for the further development of Wellington's heritage fabric, and the strengthening of Wellington's status as a centre of the creative arts.

5) Environment

The Architectural Centre strongly supports the Council's aim to promote energy efficiency and sustainability, and we consider that the built environment is key in achieving this. We suggest the publishing of energy ratings of buildings, especially Council owned buildings, as well as publishing strategies to improve these ratings. We commend the Council's intention to take a more active role in water and energy conservation and efficiency and the use of renewable energy sources.

We encourage the Council to invest (possibly in conjunction with other councils) in both the research and development of energy-efficient multi-storey buildings (e.g. CH2 Melbourne) and to investigate ways for retrofitting of buildings to reduce energy-use, and to encourage the re-use of buildings. We also suggest that the Council invest in specific schemes (such as well-designed solar-powered street lamps) as a first step towards reducing the city's long-term energy demands.

6) Cultural Wellbeing

The Architectural Centre supports the intention to strengthen Wellington's "sense of place." We see architecture (both our past and current architectural heritage (Maori and Pakeha)), as having an important role in facilitating "sense of place." We also point to the importance to recognise other cultural groups (e.g. the Chinese, Indian, and Pacific Nations communities) and their contributions to the city's built environment. In this regard we see it as important to protect significant examples of both past and current examples of architecture and the built environment, and we note that, in particular, better protection of significant interiors of buildings is needed. It is likewise critical to ensure a high level of architecture contributes to our contemporary cityscape, through increasing the standard of architecture through city-sponsored debate about architecture and design, and through a rigorous building consent process which calls on

both professional expertise and public transparency. We support increases to the incentive fund to help building owners upgrade heritage buildings, and the implementation of a penalty for damage to heritage buildings which is proportional to the market value of the building and its site.

We support the proposed plan for the Hancock Gallery with the provision that a replacement cinema and lecture theatre is build for the City Gallery. This would provide an opportunity to provide a larger multi-function venue with a 200-250 seat capacity which would fill a gap in the venues currently available for arts and community events in the city. The City Gallery theatre is currently a very useful space, and it would be sorely missed if it were not to be replaced. The new Hancock Gallery and the proposal for Shed 11 to become a Portrait and Photography Gallery will be highly complementary venues and we strongly support them.

The Architectural Centre would also like to take this opportunity to thank the council for its support of Wellington Architecture Week, and we look forward to continued support. We express our congratulations to the Council for the success of the Arts Centre in Able Smith Street which has been a productive contribution to this area of the city.

7) Social and Recreation

The Centre supports the Council's provision of housing to assist those unable to access state housing. The Council should also provide 10% affordable housing on the waterfront – to ensure occupancy and diversity. London's Coin Street Community Housing Project on the South Bank is a good practice example including social housing inconjunction with more expensive housing. We encourage such a stance on the waterfront. We likewise support the council's suggestion that 5% of council housing be let at market rates to increase the diversity of those living in council accommodation.

However we do not offer the same level of support to the proposed eight court indoor sports centre at Cobham Drive. There is little in the way of public transport to the Cobham Drive site, and unless the proposed Pod monorail is to go that far, we foresee bad car parking problems in the area, and a likely clogging of this main arterial route. We would instead suggest that the Council explores using the proposed space by the Stadium, where the sports centre could utilise the existing excellent transport infrastructure and be more central to the wider Wellington region. The extra expense should be assessed against the savings in public and private transport to arrive at the sports centre, over the 50 year lifespan of the building.

The Architectural Centre believes that Wellington has a very small amount of well designed quality public spaces and desperately needs more, especially in Te Aro, in areas east of Taranaki St. We want the city to be visionary, and be proactive rather than reactive in the planning for and of these spaces. The city needs a plan of where parks and public spaces can and should be, rather than the apparent system of taking snippets of land for parks as they arise. We are intrigued by the proposal to integrate the "planning of building and spaces, and the networks that connect them, at all scales across the city," and to develop "concept plans for development of specific areas of the city ... [and] new plans for public spaces in the city centre ...". We look forward to more detail regarding these being available for public consultation. We would also appreciate the opportunity to provide input into the proposed upgrade of Cobblestone Park, as well as the proposals to upgrade the street furniture and Civic Square. We support the move towards active, occupied edges to buildings, and would support moves to lessen car parking at the ground floor of central city buildings.

8) Governance

The Architectural Centre supports and appreciates the Council's aim for transparent governance and for increased participation in decision-making processes. We appreciate our ability to comment on proposals related to architecture, design and the built environment and would like the Architectural Centre to be considered as a member

of the "civic network" of advisory input groups. We note that it is important to distinguish between the role of public participation and professional expertise, and point to both the waterfront development and Waitangi Park as models for getting the balance right between public consultation and participation and the role of professional advice.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this draft Long Term Council Community Plan.

Yours sincerely

Christine McCarthy
President
The Architectural Centre