

6 August 2014

Freepost 3156
WREDA
Greater Wellington Regional Council
PO Box 11646
Wellington 6142
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Dear councillors

Re: Wellington Regional Economic Development Agency (WREDA)

This submission is from the Architectural Centre, an incorporated society dating from 1946, which represents both professionals and non-professionals interested in the promotion of good design.

We support this proposal generally, and consider it to be consistent with our previous submissions related to local government structure, which strongly supported collaborative work across councils. We have the following comments to make:

1. The proposal's statement regarding what the councils consider to be economic performance is:

- more jobs and opportunities for the region's residents
- more resources to invest in new or improved amenities
- stronger communities - greater economic security
- a more vibrant region

The Centre considers that in addition to the above, the councils' definition of economic performance needs to include:

- (a) increasing the median wage in real terms
- (b) increasing the number of citizens in our region earning the living wage or more
- (c) reducing the gap between rich and poor
- (d) increasing the well-being of Wellington's citizens
- (e) how each performance indicator listed is to be measured

2. We encourage a broader notion of economic performance, which:

- (a) is sustainable and resilient
- (b) aims to increase the economic prosperity for all of Wellington's citizens
- (c) aims to reduce wealth gaps, and ensure that all citizens have access to warm, energy-efficient, affordable housing, affordable and accessible public transport, and cultural infrastructure (such as libraries, art galleries, museums, arts events, high quality open space)
- (d) explicitly engages with the Treasury's critical examination of GDP and its ambition to find a better measure of economic wealth which includes a measure of well-being.

3. The Architectural Centre believes that it is important to recognise the contextual factors in economic development and considers that an explicit focus on the following is needed:



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- (a) greater investment in accessible and sustainable transport (including public mass-transport and the facilitation of active transport modes)
- (b) retaining and protecting the urban form and character of Wellington (e.g. the relationship between the CBD and the town belt)
- (c) investment (financial and regulatory) in high-quality, sustainable people-orientated buildings, and civic environments.
- (d) facilitating greater community engagement on issues regarding the built form of our region
- (e) an increased focus on climate change and sustainability (including new industries and initiatives supporting energy-efficiency and renewable energy sources)
- (f) investment in social and affordable housing, and homeless shelters
- (g) consideration of opportunities related to Wellington's cultural, historic and urban identities, specifically in the context of the region's built fabric and new requirements for earthquake strengthening. We consider that both councils need to take leadership roles in this regard (e.g. the strengthening of council properties, lobbying government for tax rebates for strengthening work, decision-making regarding which buildings should be retained, financial and technical support for building owners, prevention of destruction by neglect and deferred maintenance, analysis of heritage building strengthening and economics specific to our region, such as the work undertaken by Place Economics in America, and by English Heritage).

Conclusion

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on this consultation for the councils' WREDA. The Architectural Centre considers that the built environment has a key role to play in Wellington's economic future, including support for new developments, and ensuring a high-quality and livable city to accommodate all of Wellington's citizens' leisure, work and home environments. We believe that cultural aspects of architecture and the arts (including temporary structures related to civic events), as well as looking after the least fortunate in our city (through, for example, social housing initiatives, and a requirement for a percentage (say a minimum of 15-20%) inclusion of affordable housing in residential developments), are important aspects of a comprehensive notion of regional economic development.

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully

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