

9 July 2013

Freepost 2199
Our Capital Spaces (COPC01)
Wellington City Council
P.O. Box 2199
Wellington 6140

Re: Our Capital Spaces: Draft Open Spaces and Recreation Framework for Wellington: 2013-23

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.

The Architectural Centre supports the general principles of the WCC's Our Capital Spaces: Draft Open Spaces and Recreation Framework for Wellington: 2013-23, and consider that the framework is insufficient in a number of areas. We have the following comments to make:

1. Reduced council investment in parks, and increased Community obligations for park maintenance

The Architectural Centre supports some council/community collaborations regarding joint management and decision-making of open spaces, but strongly believes in the need to retain council ownership. We believe it is important to retain green open spaces for the city to contribute to both a variety of recreation spaces and wilderness for native species.

2. Exercise and Health

The Architectural Centre supports the council's ambitions to increase opportunities for physical activity with the aim of increasing the health of the city's citizens. We consider that reducing car dependence, and increasing walking and cycling as key to this aim. The location of recreational spaces so that they increase daily use, rather than less frequent use is an important component of this strategy. The Centre therefore sees the need for the council to be more strategic in identifying pedestrian commuter corridors to develop as attractive recreation space. Central Park and Oriental Parade are good examples of very different kinds of recreational space which is used daily by commuters, but other such corridors (e.g. Adelaide Rd through the Basin Reserve into town) would benefit from reconsideration as potential recreation spaces supporting (and increasing) pedestrian (and possibly cyclist) commuter traffic. We also support council provision of covered and sheltered recreational space to maximise use during inclement weather.

We encourage the council to identify and support recreational tracks close to high concentrations of workers (e.g. to enable lunchtime recreation), and bus routes (to provide alternative transport options to cars). We contrast this with the location of the ASB centre which is isolated from good public transport, and car-focussed. In addition research which aims to ascertain why certain parks are or aren't used, is, we think, key to a credible council policy in this area. There is no sense that such research underpins this draft policy document, and we consider that this is a significant omission.

There is greater potential for inner city recreational spaces including cycle lanes in the inner city. Currently cycling through the city is difficult and if the council is serious about supporting cycling traffic of all kinds, meaningful inner-city cycling routes need to be identified and developed.



the architectural centre inc.
PO Box 24178 Wellington

3. Accessible tracks

We also consider that catering for a full range of physical abilities is important in the provision of council-funded recreational space. We suggest, for example, the identification accessible views with a range of access routes, rather than aiming for a maximum number of tracks to support Disabled Access. A variety of fitness and ability levels should be reflected in the walking/riding tracks through Wellington's recreational spaces.

4. Protecting and Encouraging Wildlife

The Centre supports the council's aim for recreational space to provide opportunities to protect and support native bird and wildlife. We support the extension of safe wildlife habitat (e.g. in the proximity of the Karori Wildlife Sanctuary), and the creation, development and extension of green/wildlife corridors through the suburbs and into the CBD. We also encourage the council to pro-actively identify significant trees in the District Plan.

5. Recreational Spaces to support Residential Densification.

The draft policy is silent on the need to anticipate an increased inner-city residential population, and needs to include projected inner-city population growth and consequent needs for, and identification of, inner-city parks and recreational spaces to support this increased urban densification. Waitangi Park, and the new Memorial Park will assist this, but we also suggest that the council acquire inner city blocks such as Swan Lane carpark, and perhaps a site on Victoria St to support the Wellington 2040 work. Linking Memorial Park through the Basin to the townbelt is another opportunity for strengthening inner-city green networks, encouraging people to exercise during lunchtimes or to walk to work.

The Centre also supports council initiatives with respect to well-designed inner-city urban spaces as well as green open spaces. We encourage the council to identify and promote public access to building roof tops as recreational spaces. We believe the council needs to be proactive regarding this, including with rooftop spaces which are currently public space (e.g. Waitangi Park apartments in the old Post and Telegraph Building). In addition to physical signage, website, google earth and smart phone apps which identify such less obvious public spaces would encourage useage.

6. A Resilience City

Another area the draft policy does not discuss is the role of open spaces in post-disaster situations. Research has demonstrated the important role of recreational spaces following significant disasters. For example, Allan and Bryant found that following the 1906 San Francisco earthquake, city parks were important sites for temporary housing and those located on hilltops were critical for communicating the impact of the event, and identification of safe parts of the city. A good open spaces policies will identify parts of the city less susceptible to the impacts of disaster, and plan both the spaces and facilities on them to support post-disaster needs.

Thank you for this opportunity to make a submission on the "Draft Open Spaces and Recreation Framework for Wellington 2013-23."

Yours faithfully

Christine McCarthy
President, The Architectural Centre
arch@architecture.org.nz