

21 April 2015

Freepost Wellington City Council
Wellington Urban Growth Plan
Wellington City Council
P.O. Box 2199
Wellington 6140
info@wcc.govt.nz

Re: WCC Wellington Urban Growth Plan

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 many of the proposals constituting the Wellington Urban Growth Plan.

The Growth Spine and Medium- and High-Density Residential Developments

1. The Architectural Centre supports high-quality medium- and high-density residential developments, including infill housing.
2. We strongly support the Growth Spine, which targets more intensive housing and mixed-use developments in close proximity to public transport (pp. 7, 32). We especially support this to achieve a compact city. We also wonder if investigation into potential residential sites in the port area is being pursued (p. 33).
3. There are a number of references to "potential changes to the roads around the Basin Reserve" (p. 41). New residential and mixed-use developments in Kent/Cambridge Tce and Adelaide Rd do not need any resolution at the Basin prior to their commencement.
4. We also wonder if there is a role for high quality prefabrication as part of the council's commitment to increasing the city's housing stock. Would a high-quality medium-density, multi-unit prefab factory be a better investment for the city, than the proposed film museum?
5. We are conscious that in order to ensure that medium- and high-density residential developments are successful, potential buyers will need to be able to buy these houses. Many banks will not lend money for company share properties. We encourage the council to discuss what financial support is plausible in such developments to ensure that an administrative hurdle does not prevent wide spread uptake of new housing.
6. We encourage the council to implement a minimum % of affordable housing in new residential developments (i.e. 20%).
7. We also support council provision of social support services for any private development providing social housing.
8. We support the council's commitment to continuing the good work it has done upgrading the city's social housing. (p. 58).



the architectural centre inc.
PO Box 24178 Wellington

9. We oppose greenfield development (pp. 7, 19, 28, 32). Extending development north on greenfield sites does not support a compact city. While developers of such sites will fund initial infrastructure provision, rate payers will pay the cost of maintenance and longer-term replacement, and home owners will pay the costs of living further from centres of employment and the CBD.

Climate Change and Sustainability

10. We support work to manage the consequences of sea-level rises, and the potential need for managed retreat to be considered.
11. We encourage the council to lobby government to establish a regulatory context to compel green standards for buildings (green roofs, solar power, smaller footprints etc.), including water-efficient design. We support the council's aim to remove the regulatory barriers for renewable energy generation.
12. We support energy- and water-efficient buildings, and water sensitive urban design (p. 11), including solar heating/photovoltaics, rainwater collection and grey water systems.
13. We caution against promoting electric vehicles, given that they do not increase road efficiency or congestion, and involve embodied energy, which needs to be considered on top of operating energy emissions.

Transport

14. We find the rhetoric around transportation issues confusing. The aspiration for "balanced and integrated" transport choices, when contextualised with the persistent commitment to increasing road space and road efficiency for cars is contradictory. The current situation is one of imbalance. The council's assertion that there is a prioritisation which locates the private car as last on the list (p. 52) does not match the actions promoted. There needs to be a significant change to realise this stated prioritisation, and reach a situation approximating transportation balance.

Transport: Cycling

15. We strongly support the development of a cycle network (p. 49), and recommend building the network from the CBD outward.
16. We note the promotion of cycling infrastructure and cycle parking (pp. 49, 53) (which we support) in the context of a cycle network. We suggest the introduction of cycle priority streets, and the addition of these to the established road hierarchy map (p. 52). Such routes could be signalled through a different coloured road surface to car-priority streets.
17. We support the completion of the Great Harbour Way (p. 49)

Transport: Public Transport

18. We support the council's intention to improve and increase the use of public transport.
19. The plan states a desire to increase PT use. We note that it appears that PT thinking assumes people operate and think as single units, especially w.r.t. the relative costs of different transport options. As social beings we often make transport decisions based on travelling as couples or a group, both of which are far cheaper to transport in private cars, than on PT.

20. The section on improving PT appears to have omitted a commitment to improving bus frequency, which is a key factor in encouraging increased PT use.
21. We note the expressed commitment to installing more bus shelters. We stress a key issue is the installation of better bus shelters.

Transport: Private Cars

22. We support the reduction of car commuting, especially single-occupant vehicles. Similarly we support discouraging the provision of commuter car parking in the CBD (p. 53).
23. We strongly support the council facilitating car share schemes, especially in relation to new medium- and high-density residential developments.
24. In addition to technologies related to car parking (e.g. car parking apps etc) (p. 53), there is research regarding the potential of integrated co-operative intelligent transportation systems and vehicle-to-infrastructure and vehicle-to-vehicle communications to "improve fuel consumption, reduce traffic congestion ... and the total trip time" (Katasaros et al., "Application of vehicular communications" *Wireless Communications and Mobile Computing* 2011:1657). We suggest the council keep an eye on this developing area of research, as it may provide ways to increase the efficiency of commuter traffic enabling more space for other modes.
25. We are yet to be convinced regarding the RoNS programme (p. 52), especially the proposals internal to the inner city; beyond the Wellington Motorway. It seems to us that the critical transportation to/from the airport is the moving of people, and that relying most on cars to achieve this is inefficient from both a transport perspective (i.e. low occupancy vehicle use) and a land use perspective (e.g. car parking required to support this). We still consider LRT as the best way to provide high quality transport to/from the airport/CBD.

Transport: Other issues

26. In this regard we note the observation that Wellington airport freight is "high-value, low-weight" (p. 44), and it seems to us that such freight is likely to be particularly vulnerable to advances in 3D printing due to its lower mass. The transportation impacts (c.f. that of post and e-mail) and 3D printing technologies could be explored and researched in the WCC's proposed Tech Hub, as something that New Zealand should take advantage of to reduce freight carbon footprints, and increase delivery time (electronic transportation being so much faster than ship or plane), and so our economic productivity.
27. We support the council researching the roles that motorbikes and taxis might contribute to reducing car ownership in Wellington. We see the development of cycling, pedestrian, motorbike, and taxi transport models (p. 52) as important to future decision-making.

Earthquake Strengthening

28. We support council initiatives to better assist earthquake strengthening of Wellington's buildings, especially heritage buildings. This is important from a re-use, sustainability aspect in addition to any heritage issues, and the economic benefits of construction and heritage tourism etc. We also note that the city is continually producing new heritage, and any work to ensure high quality building and design is a very important function of the council.

Urban Fabric

29. We support the proposed strategic land acquisition plan (p. 35) to identify potential inner-city parks and sites for other community-wide needs. We do caution about a crude understanding of urban space though. In New Zealand, we often have a bulldozing mentality - especially in relation to building transport infrastructure - which, when compared to denser overseas cities (esp in Europe), is crass, and lacks the imagination and nuance of fitting (squeezing?) in new infrastructure around existing structures, and adapting, and adding new layers to, the built environment.
30. There is discussion regarding suburban main streets, which we agree are important local shopping places. We do note however that islands of big box retailing set in seas of carparking have substantially impacted on suburban main streets, as have increasingly larger supermarkets. A strategy regarding big boxes and encouraging less car-dependent shopping would be a productive initiative from council. Such a piece of work would identify issues, and be supported by proper research regarding the effect of big box retailing on our city, and local businesses.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the WCC Wellington Urban Growth Plan. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully



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