

20 October 2006

**Re: Proposed Wellington Regional Strategy**

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. While we realise the complexities of putting together a Regional Strategy for public consultation we have found this strategy to be too vague. We suggest a greater balance of detail and larger scale directions and less repetition in future documents.

**1) Public Transport and Rooding**

We consider that public transport is key to the success or failure of the Wellington region. We need quality public transport throughout the region into Wellington city and connecting the different regions within Wellington. Bus and train frequency must be increased to ensure the critical use threshold of every ten minutes is met. New public transport must be better than what it replaces. We understand that specific areas of our public transport system (i.e. the trains) have been so run down that deferred maintenance and tired vehicles are causing significant problems which must be rectified as soon as possible. If we need new trains, and are having difficulty sourcing new and secondhand trains, serious consideration must be given to our own ability to manufacture train carriages and engines or parts of train carriages and engines. We also consider that the councils must invest in double track systems where only single tracks currently exist and complete the electrification of the entire network.

Car use has wide implications for really big issues (e.g. health, pollution, climate change, diabetes, obesity, successful community building, and urban design). Transport needs to be holistically addressed and incentives for public transport prioritised over spending on new roads.

There needs to be an assertive strategy for alternative transport to the private car (cycling, walking and public transport). The envisaged plan to increase roading is short-sighted as building new roads has been proven to increase rather than decrease congestion; as one critic of new roads has noted: building new roads to reduce congestion is like buying bigger belts to cure obesity. With global issues such as climate change, and diabetes and obesity epidemics, alternative and public transports systems must be astutely and meaningfully supported. Strategies such as congestion charges need to be part of a holistic plan for reducing our reliance on the car which is high in relation to international comparisons (except the US of course).

Public transport must be realistically planned and maintained. Trains and buses need to be subsidised relative to the cost of running a car because of the wider benefits to the city (e.g. pollution, health of citizens etc.) that public transport supports. We suggest train and bus travel are subsidised to enable it to be 50% of the cost of running a car. In addition public transport needs to be frequent enough (every 10min) to be an attractive option for a majority of people. Light rail is an important investment to make now. Cycling and walking should be prioritised over cars in the inner city. Councils need to immediately implement staged reductions of carparking in the inner cities.

Council should sell petrol vehicles and where needed invest in hybrid or sustainably fuelled vehicles. Councillors and council workers should be provided with bus and train passes for council work requiring travel. This would demonstrate council support for public transport and assist in highlighting areas where public transport is deficient and in



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need of improvement. If the councils think public transport is good enough for the general public they must meaningfully support this.

We consider that these transport issues are critical for the future urban development of Wellington and the health and welfare of Wellington's citizens.

#### Recommendations

- 1) Conduct feasibility studies on our ability to manufacture train carriages and engines or parts of train carriages and engines.
- 2) Invest in double track systems where only single tracks currently exist.
- 3) Stop building new roads under the guise of solving congestion.
- 4) Introduce Congestion charges as part of a holistic strategy for reducing our reliance on the car.
- 5) Subsidise public transport (trains and buses) such that use costs 50% of the cost of running a car.
- 6) Prioritise cycling and walking over cars in the inner city.
- 7) Implement staged reductions of inner city carparking.
- 8) Use public transport for travel related to council business within the Wellington region.

### **2) Environmentally Sustainable Development**

Environmentally Sustainable Development (ESD) is of increasing significance. Climate change and peak oil are issues that cannot simply stay in well-meant printed words of good intentions. These issues need assertive, effective action. We believe that ESD should not be an after-thought or an additional consideration in development but a base fundamental. There should no option to build an environmentally unsustainable development. Councils must lead the way by example in this area. We strongly suggest that all council funded developments be required to achieve a New Zealand Green Building Council 5 star rating. If the councils do not demonstrate their support for such long-term thinking in design why should other developers invest in ESD?

#### Recommendations

- 1) Develop and implement ESD strategies
- 2) Require ESD for all development
- 3) Achieve a New Zealand Green Building Council 5 star rating for all council funded developments

### **3) Affordable Housing**

Wellington needs a meaningful strategy for affordable housing. There is a need for affordable housing to ensure diversity of population and, more importantly, to ensure continued occupation. Higher socio-economic sectors often have several residences and often do not continually occupy these creating security issues associated with absentee ownership. We especially need affordable housing in inner city Wellington and on the waterfront. Councils may need to provide subsidies to achieve this. A good example of affordable housing is in the Coin St development in London. We also note that many countries (e.g. the Netherlands) require that a certain % of all residential developments are reserved for affordable housing. We strongly recommend that the council implement such a requirement to make Wellington a diverse and safe region, and to avoid "rich ghettos" over-occupying all high profile sites.

#### Recommendations

- 1) Require 10% of all residential development to be affordable housing.
- 2) Provide affordable housing in Wellington's inner city and on the waterfront.

### **4) Open Spaces and Urban Design**

Open spaces are not just needed in the outer city edges. Likewise successful urban open spaces can also be non-green spaces, utilising the hard surfaces of the city. Wellington needs good urban parks where well-designed spaces with urban materials are used. Successful examples of urban open spaces, such as Midland Park and Waitangi Park, need to put forward as models for new open spaces, while unsuccessful

examples, such as the redesign of Glover Park, need to be rectified. Glover Park, for instance, would be more productively developed as much needed, high-quality, inner-city affordable housing. In Wellington City, strategic plans to acquire sites with good potential for public open space is needed. We strongly encourage the council to list the Swan Lane carpark as an open space in the District Plan, and to buy this to provide a well-located and sunny urban surfaced park.

It is great all Wellington council are to sign up to the Urban Design protocol. Councils must actively lead by example in urban design.

#### Recommendations

- 1) Use Glover Park for high quality affordable housing
- 2) Acquire Swan Lane carpark for an urban non-green park
- 3) Develop a strategy for identifying and acquiring potential sites for inner city open spaces
- 4) Actively lead by example in urban design

#### **5) Big Box development**

Big Box development kills local small business. It undermines good urban design values and local employment. Big Box retailing should be discouraged. If you are serious about urban design issues and creating a liveable vibrant city don't allow big box development. The detrimental effect of big-box retailing needs close scrutiny and planned strategies to minimise their potential to erode consolidation and centre development strategies (currently scheduled for 2008) should be rescheduled for 2007.

#### Recommendations

- 1) Outlaw Big box development

#### **6) Subdivisions**

Wellington must intensify development within a confined area. Good design will allow infill development and a high quality of living. Undesirable infill development proposed for short-term financial gain must be stopped on application for building consent. Land needs to be kept for farming, and space in the city reserved for allotments and gardens. City open spaces must be planned to simultaneously allow for greater intensification of land use (e.g. high density residential) and allotments and private gardens.

#### Recommendations

- 1) Only allow well-designed high quality infill development
- 2) Plan for urban open spaces and green spaces

#### **7) Change Areas**

Waikanae - this area needs to be contained. We strongly discourage the councils from allowing new development in the Kapiti Coast until the well-known infrastructure problems in this area are addressed. When the current problems with sewage, transport, and water supply have been remedied, future development should be limited to the footprint of existing development, encouraging more sustainable and more intensive development. Kapiti is currently ecologically unsustainable and allowing new development would be ethically irresponsible of councils.

#### Recommendations

- 1) Impose a moratorium on development on the Kapiti Coast until infrastructure issues have been rectified
- 2) Restrict future development in Waikanae to the existing development footprint

#### Granada to Gracefield

There are significant difficulties with anticipated development of this area. The area is too far away from transport connections. To support such development suggests that the councils are insincere in their statements about reducing car-use, reducing congestion, addressing peak-oil and climate change issues, and encouraging increased use of public transport. The proposed east-west link will encourage more car-use and

eventually cause wider congestion problems. In addition, there is a need (and one could argue an ethical obligation for council), to intensify brownfield sites before using greenfield sites.

Recommendations

- 1) Discourage suburban/pseudo-urban development in this area
- 2) Impose a moratorium on greenfield sites across the Wellington region, to be reviewed once brownfield sites have been intensively developed.

Johnsonville to the airport - the growth spine

The "growth spine" promulgated by the WCC is a concept that deserves to be supported by all the other councils, as well as all parts of the WCC itself. For this region, we strongly support the rejuvenation of the Johnsonville train line and light rail.

Recommendations

- 1) Invest in a light rail link between Johnsonville and the airport along the growth spine route

**8) Conclusion**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Wellington Regional Strategy. Many key issues for the strategy are inter-linked and climate change, peak oil, diabetes and obesity epidemics mean that council support for good infill development close to excellent public transport routes is critical. Both quality and speed of strategy is now important, and we strongly support the council's intentions to achieve a sustainable, healthy and vibrant Wellington region.

Yours sincerely

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