Planning for Growth
Growth Scenario Engagement

SUMMARY REPORT

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Prepared by Global Research Ltd
For
Absolutely Positively Wellington City Council
wellington.govt.nz
Background

This report presents summary findings from 1,372 respondents to Wellington City Council’s Planning for Growth public engagement, which ran between 8 April and 17 May 2019.

Planning for Growth is a project about the people of Wellington and bringing the things its people love and value into the conversation about how the city’s future growth is planned. It builds on the goals from Our City Tomorrow and includes a review of the Wellington Urban Growth Plan as well as the District Plan, both of which impact and shape Wellington’s urban environment.

In the next 30 years, Wellington will be home to 50,000 to 80,000 more people. That will have a big impact on the city. Not just on where people live, but how they live.

Wellingtonians had their say on the pros and cons of four growth scenarios proposed to accommodate anticipated growth. For each scenario, respondents were asked:

- What are some of the things you like about this scenario?
- What would you change or improve in this scenario?

Across the four scenarios, respondents also agreed or disagreed with 22 ‘balance’ or ‘trade-off’ statements.
Findings snapshot

Agreement on the overall balance of the four scenarios:

- **Scenario 1: Inner city focus**
  - 58% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed

- **Scenario 2: Suburban centre focus**
  - 66% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed

- **Scenario 3: New suburb in Ohariu Valley**
  - 24% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed

- **Scenario 4: Greenfield extensions**
  - 29% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed

**Agreement and disagreement with the balance of each scenario**

**Of the 18 trade-off questions, three statements were agreed with most:**

*I support reducing carbon emissions even if it means more investment in public transport and walking and cycling infrastructure* (Scenario 1).

*I support more development around suburban centres and public transport routes, even if it means more investment in existing water, transport and social infrastructure (e.g. libraries, community centres, etc.)* (Scenario 2).

*I support more people walking, cycling, using public transport even if it means more people living in hazard-prone areas* (Scenario 1).
What you supported

YOU SAID

Scenario 1: Inner city focus

“It limits the spread of Wellington into the green spaces and rural land that surround it. It puts the environment first, and that’s what we absolutely have to do from here on in.”

“High to medium density residential development will enable the efficient use of existing infrastructure in this area, and provide for cost effective investment in new infrastructure where required.”

Scenario 2: Suburban centre focus

“I think there’s a real opportunity here to build some very modern well designed town houses/medium density options that could blend well with character buildings that remain and this would create a leading city blending the old with the new.”

“More sprawl is also not the answer, even to natural hazards. It simply makes everything harder to manage, and increases the costs of infrastructure and risks to natural systems.”

Scenario 3: New suburb in Ohariu Valley

“It mitigates the flood and earthquake risks”

“Mix medium density development in existing suburbs with this rural development scenario, giving more lifestyle choices to people who live, work & play in Wellington”

“This scenario would preserve the character of Wellington’s historic suburbs and generally help maintain the overall character of the city, which is what (at least in part) makes it an attractive place to live.”

Scenario 4: Greenfield extensions

“Opportunity for more affordable housing (own or rent). Access to Rent or own houses that are more modern with better insulation with flatter sections.”

WE HEARD

INCREASED HOUSING PROVISION

- Support for intensification of the central city and suburbs in Scenarios 1 and 2, leading to improved affordability and community outcomes
- More housing, improving affordability and availability, considered achievable in Scenario 3 and Scenario 4

REDUCTION OF NATURAL HAZARD RISKS

- Reduced natural hazard risk exposure sought, by spreading growth to more areas, as in Scenario 2
- Reduced exposure to natural hazard risks achievable by moving away from the central city, as in Scenario 3 and Scenario 4

ENVIRONMENTAL OUTCOMES

- Better, efficient, well-utilised public transport and infrastructure is sought
- Avoidance of urban sprawl in the delivery of Scenarios 1 and 2
**Built outcomes**

- Some character protection loss tolerable – if cold, damp, rundown housing stock replaced with high-performing modern options in Scenario 1 and Scenario 2
- Creating a modern suburb containing high quality housing in Scenario 3

**Community benefits**

- Suburban hubs and flourishing communities foreseen, through medium density intensified communities in Scenario 2
- Improved vibrancy, liveability and reduced environmental impacts from increased central city density and reduced urban sprawl in Scenarios 1 and 2
- Lifestyle improvements from living close to work and social opportunities in Scenario 1
What you wanted improved or changed

YOU SAID

Scenario 1: Inner city focus

“Not destroy character areas, esp. Mt Vic (as can be seen from far away and the Waterfront) also not Holloway Road and if possible not Aro Valley. We need funky pockets”

“In Inner City is currently a cars first zone. This would need to change. Definitely more cycling lanes would be needed but also improvements for pedestrians and public transport are needed (e.g. there should be a pedestrian walk from Te Papa to Courtenay, i.e. put a through lane into the convention centre)”

Scenario 2: Suburban centre focus

“Concentrate on keeping suburban historic buildings while developing complementary new suburban buildings”.

“I would ensure that high rise developments are concentrated along arterial routes and in shopping areas so that the remainder of the suburb can maintain it’s character.”

Scenario 3: New suburb in Ohariu Valley

“If we had to build a new suburb, try and make it carbon neutral or something.”

Scenario 4: Greenfield extensions

“Make sure new areas are reasonably dense so that they actually cater for a decent amount of people”

“If this type of expansion is necessary to more people out of high hazard areas then it should be done in a way that will reduce emissions from those who live there.”

WE HEARD

CHARACTER PROTECTION

• A variety of different approaches were supported:
  - Some supported relaxation of character protection in Scenarios 1 and 2
  - Some partially supported relaxing of provisions
  - Some wanted all character protected
  - Some thought there was no need to protect character

• If character houses are replaced, there was a desire for new housing to be sympathetic to the existing character and heritage of neighbouring areas.

NATURAL HAZARD MITIGATION

• Need to ensure less people live in high-risk natural hazard areas without appropriate risk mitigation.
• Ensure quality urban and building design to reduce natural risks

URBAN SPRAWL

• Desire to reduce the negative impacts of urban sprawl and its impacts on rural land and natural environments and creates private vehicle congestion and emissions issues

The overall sentiment was that character protection should be to some degree stricter than what is outlined in Scenarios 1 and 2, although, there was tolerance for relaxing protection if it results in the replacement of cold, damp and rundown houses.
ACTIVE AND PUBLIC TRANSPORT IMPROVEMENTS

- Low-emissions public transport needed prior to development.
- More and better provision of public and active transport infrastructure.

BUILDING HEIGHTS CONSIDERED

- Avoid high central city buildings because of negative human impacts from wind tunneling and de-humanising of the city
- Medium density in suburban areas encouraged
- Tall buildings near heritage areas opposed because of shading and unpleasant visual appearance

RESIDENTIAL BUILDING AND URBAN FORM QUALITY

- High quality building design and standards desired, with some support for regulation
- High quality urban form sought, including public spaces and amenities provided for increased populations in intensified areas.
What you opposed

YOU SAID

Scenario 1: Inner city focus

“There should be no eroding of character suburbs! Council should be protecting Wellington’s heritage suburbs.”

“It’s such a risky scenario with sea level rise and seismic events. I think the inner city is developing just fine”

Scenario 2: Suburban centre focus

“Keep Mt. Vic and Aro Valley the way they are. They’re already too expensive to attract the type of people who would be happy in a townhouse. They’re too special to cover in higher density housing.”

Scenario 3: New suburb in Ohariu Valley

“I don’t think that it works from a community, sustainability, or economical perspective to carry out this scenario. Building up is the key, and we need to strengthen our current suburbs before we make new ones.”

“Don’t do this. We will need that land to feed ourselves. We should improve the infrastructure we have not build new suburbs where people will have to drive to and from. Yuck.”

Scenario 4: Greenfield extensions

“Drop it completely - we have to protect what open land we still have around wellington and many of these rural areas are heritage areas as well!”

WE HEARD

SCENARIO 3 OPPOSED

• The majority of simple statements made in opposition to a single scenario were made on Scenario 3.

CHARACTER AND HERITAGE LOSS

• The essence of what makes Wellington a great city was thought to be lost if character was not protected in Scenarios 1 and 2.

ENVIRONMENTAL DAMAGE

• Opposition to suburbs being developed in places that will increase travel demand, due to flow-on environmental pollution and congestion.
• Greenfield development opposed because of resulting environmental impacts
• The benefits of developing with modern and sustainable planning, design and building approaches supported in all scenarios.

NATURAL HAZARD RISK

• Avoid building in areas that have high natural hazard risk assessment near Wellington’s CBD.
Summary of comments made on the four scenarios

The chart presents the level of interest and the sentiment expressed on each scenario in written comments.

![Chart](chart.png)

**Scenario 1: Inner city focus received:**

- **The most support comments:** 1,981
- **The most improve or change comments:** 1,508
- **Second least oppose comments:** 359

**Scenario 2: Suburban centre focus received:**

- **The second most support comments:** 1,726
- **The second most improve or change comments:** 1,254
- **The least oppose comments:** 212

**Scenario 3: New suburb in Ohariu Valley received:**

- **The least support comments:** 567
- **The least improve or change comments:** 546
- **The most oppose comments:** 900

**Scenario 4: Greenfield extensions received:**

- **The second least support comments:** 587
- **The second least improve or change comments:** 412
- **The second most oppose comments:** 412
Opinions on key topics

This section presents qualitative and quantitative data on the opinions of respondents on five key topics. Relevant information from open-ended questions is included on the left-hand side, while corresponding opinions captured from survey questions are included on the right-hand side.

Topics are each presented on a single page and are in the following order:

- Character
- Natural hazards
- The protection of rural areas
- Transport
- Infrastructure

In text boxes, the following descriptions are used to represent the number of comments on particular topics:

- A very large number = 150+ comments
- A large number = 100 – 149 comments
- A sizeable number = 75 – 99 comments
- A substantial number = 50 – 74 comments
- A considerable number = 25 – 49 comments
- A moderate number = 15 – 24 comments
- Several comments = 8 – 14 comments
- A small number = 4 – 7 comments
- A few = 3 comments
- A couple = 2 comments
CHARACTER

Summary:
While careful culling of old, cold, damp heritage housing is supported to accommodate intensification and resident wellbeing, others support retaining all heritage because it is a key part of Wellington’s unique feel.

A very large number of respondents supported higher density in the central city, which, if implemented is likely to impact pre-1930 character protection.

“Wellington cannot continue growing outwards and needs to go up.”

A considerable number of respondents reported that some character loss as a result of Scenario 1 was tolerable. The majority of these respondents described character houses as cold, damp, and rundown, and they felt that better, modern, and liveable housing was preferable for resident wellbeing.

However, there was also strong support for the retention of character, which was mostly voiced in response to Scenario 2. A very large number of respondents wanted the character of suburbs maintained. Character buildings contribute to Wellington’s unique feel and were described as an important and iconic aspect of the cityscape of Wellington.

“I like nothing about this scenario [Scenario 2]. A whole block in Newtown has been infilled already. It is not successful and ugly... People don’t live here for the Apartment blocks.”

Although the rundown nature of some of these homes was noted, there was broad support for retaining a character feel, even if that was partially comprised of sympathetic urban regeneration which complements existing character. Densification and protection of character were not viewed as being mutually exclusive, and as such, people had faith that both could positively co-exist.

“Character can be maintained WHILE building higher buildings.”

A considerable number of people felt that Scenario 2 already offered a good balance between increased density and character retention.

A large number of respondents supported Scenarios 3 and 4 for the reduced impact on character buildings that development outside the city would have.
Natural hazards were a concern for respondents regardless of their preferred scenario. A substantial number of people opposed Scenario 1 due to perceived increased inner city risk. Building height restrictions were a solution, proposed by a very large number of people who preferred a less dense inner city.

“Placing highrises in inundation zones that are earthquake prone is short-sighted.”

Spreading development to suburban areas – proposed in Scenario 2 – was considered prudent management of natural hazard risks. People envisaged that contained, discreet suburbs would be more easily managed than dense inner city populations, when a natural hazard event occurs. Even so, a sizeable number of people wanted Scenario 2 to deliver better hazard mitigation measures to protect residents.

A considerable number of people supported Scenario 3 because it presents a more resilient option than other scenarios. Scenario 4 was supported by a substantial number of people for the same reason.

“I like that these areas [Scenario 3] are less affected by sea-level rise and liquefaction.”

People were eager to intensify housing in areas less prone to the negative effects of natural hazards. Although hazards were mostly discussed generically, earthquakes, tsunami, sea-level rise, and flooding were identified most frequently. Climate change related hazards also featured prominently in comments.

Across all scenarios, people wanted to see the threats posed by hazards reduced.

“People living in less-disaster prone areas is super important. We’re going to have to open more space eventually so let’s do sooner rather than later.”

A small majority agreed that higher buildings should accommodate more people in the inner city, even if this is a hazard prone area.

Two-thirds agreed that more suburban development should reduce intensification in hazard-prone areas (i.e., the inner city). This represents a contradiction when viewed alongside the support for higher buildings, and represents the complexity of issues.

The majority of respondents disagreed with trading off living in low-hazard-risk areas with increased car travel.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agreement</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agreement with higher central buildings, even if more people living in hazard-prone areas</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>(632)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreement with rural areas protected, even if more people are living in hazard-prone areas</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>(557)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less development in areas of high hazard risk, even if more intense development within existing suburbs</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>(862)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreement with people living in low hazard areas, even if more people drive and produce carbon emissions</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>(362)</td>
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Rural areas protected
Rural areas protected

Summary:
Rural land was valued, and its preservation supported.

People valued rural land on the edges of Wellington, and wanted it preserved for food production, the continued use by those who live there, and as a place for Wellingtonians to visit and recreate.

Scenario 1 was often praised as an alternative to urban sprawl. A large number of people supported it because it will protect rural land from residential development. Scenario 1 was viewed positively for its retention of rural land and/or green space.

“Compact city, protecting rural and green spaces from development”

Similarly, Scenario 2 was supported for its prioritisation of developing existing residential spaces as opposed to new developments, which will encroach on farm or rural land.

Those who opposed Scenario 3 were vocal about protecting rural areas from urban sprawl. Urban sprawl was viewed as an outdated planning strategy, one which will not enable the region to adequately alleviate housing pressure and will irreversibly damage open spaces adjacent to Wellington. Environmental impacts, particularly caused by vehicle emissions, was viewed as a significant negative impact from this development approach.

“Terrible use of land. Sprawl is so 1950s. [Scenario 3]”

The limited support for developing rural land was most commonly as a last resort, although a minority supported developing rural land which they considered un-productive or of little value/use.

Scenario 4 represented, for some, an opportunity to cater to population growth as well as preserve the rural character of areas. An environmentally sensitive development which protects natural habitat was sought. Increasing housing density within the development was considered one way to minimise urban sprawl and protect rural land.

“we need to protect our green areas, when they are gone they are gone FOREVER.”

Almost two-thirds of respondents, agreed that rural areas should be protected and that this will result in higher buildings in suburban centres.

Slightly fewer (but still the majority) agreed that rural areas should be protected and that for this to occur, denser living in Newtown and/or the CBD should occur.

**Agreed**

| **Agreement with rural areas protected, even if higher buildings in central city and Newtown** | 59% (781) |
| **Agreement with rural areas protected, even if higher buildings around suburban centres** | 64% (823) |
A very large number of people supported less reliance on private vehicles and more development of active and public transport options.

They commonly supported Scenario 1 for its positive transport outcomes. They equated inner city living with reduced private vehicle use and increased use of active and public transport.

“urban density means less transport emissions”

A very large number of people felt that significant investment in transport – particularly improving public and active transport infrastructure – was an important aspect of Scenario 2. They supported this scenario with the proviso that adequate provision of public transport eventuates.

“Hopefully it might reduce the number of people who feel they need cars [Scenario 2]. We need to find ways to encourage more people onto buses, especially regular work commuters into the inner city.”

There was strong opposition to Scenario 3 on the basis that it will increase demand for private vehicle use and that commuters will place undue pressure on roads. Many felt this scenario was unfeasible and in contravention of zero carbon goals. A small proportion had faith in new transport technology to offset negative environmental impact.

Smart transport planning was also sought for Scenario 4. A common observation was that steps will need to be taken to mitigate the negative impacts of increased vehicle use. There was a desire for considered public transport, implemented early in the development process.

There was broad support for better public transport across all scenarios, with the idea that an efficient system would encourage use, the effects of which would have positive environmental benefits.

“more walkable cbd, less car dependant sprawl”

Only one-fifth of respondents agreed that expansion into rural areas should occur even though this would mean increased carbon emissions.

The majority supported reducing carbon emissions and increasing investment in active and public modes, even if this meant more people living in hazard prone areas.

Agreed

- Agreement with more people walking, cycling, using public transport, even if it means more people living in hazard-prone areas
  - 71% (930)

- Agreement with carbon emissions reduced, even if more investment in public transport and walking and cycling infrastructure
  - 88% (1,159)

- More development around suburban centres and public transport routes, even if more investment in existing water, transport and social infrastructure (e.g. libraries, community centres, etc.)
  - 88% (1,161)

- Agreement with expanding the city into rural areas, even if more people will drive and produce carbon emissions
  - 21% (273)
People wanted development to be “done properly”, including high quality, forward thinking infrastructure.

A moderate number of respondents supported amendments to Scenario 1 to include modern, more environmentally sustainable infrastructure. This scenario was thought to have comparatively cheaper infrastructure costs than others.

“A building more resilience into transport and utilities infrastructure in central Wellington area”

A considerable number of comments on Scenario 2 focused on how infrastructure would cope with pressure from an increased population. A broad range of topics were covered including, costs, quality, resilience, and new technologies.

Scenario 3 was considered to have excessive infrastructure costs, and a substantial number of people objected to it on the basis that priority should be given to meeting existing infrastructure needs. However, there was also support for the opportunity Scenario 3 offers to build a new suburb using sound environmental principles and efficient infrastructure.

People considered it more efficient to add infrastructure to an existing development than to start afresh, for this reason a considerable number of people supported Scenario 4.

“Already quite built up areas [Scenario 4]. Infrastructure can be extended at minimal cost.”

Even so, a moderate number of respondents still considered the infrastructure costs associated with Scenario 4 too high.

Scenarios 3 and 4 were supported in some cases because it was assumed that these scenarios would improve infrastructure in the outer suburbs. In many responses, the type of infrastructure referred to was not clearly defined.