

Planning for Growth Submission

Wellington City Council

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We would like to appear in person to support our submission

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Te Rūnanga Taiohi o te Kaunihera o Pōneke

Introduction

1. The Wellington City Youth Council (Youth Council) welcomes the opportunity to submit on the Planning for Growth proposals.
2. Youth Council has focused on providing reasons for and against each scenario from a youth perspective, we have not attempted to focus solely on one of the scenarios.

Overview of submission

3. The submission by Youth Council on Planning for Growth will follow the following format:
 - Scenario one (pros, cons)
 - Scenario two (pros, cons)
 - Scenario three (pros, cons)
 - Scenario four (pros, cons)
4. After analysing the pros and cons of each of the scenarios, Youth Council came to the conclusion that scenario two was the option that members supported the most.

Scenario One

Pros

5. Youth Council feels that the benefits of scenario one share some same values to those that resonate deeply with the younger generation of today as we plan for growth. Primarily that of a living status including but not limited to - sustainable living, communal living, and adjacent living (e.g. CBD).
6. With climate change being the centre of attention in many conversations we have today, scenario one provides a great opportunity to contain and even reduce the amount of carbon emissions we produce as a city, as the scenario

encourages eco-friendly modes of transport such as walking and cycling, promoting healthier and happier lives. Youth Council also sees these benefits as a great opportunity to better use the many benefits we currently have in the wider city, as they will be in close proximity, which we should cherish.

7. Youth Council feels that the benefits that scenario one provide will be much appreciated by employees who struggle to get to work on a daily basis. The scenario proves to be greatly beneficial for not only the employees but also the vast amount of businesses who will thrive from the population increase in Wellington's core. With growth, also comes the abundance of jobs that will become available and easily accessible, providing Wellington with economic benefits as well.
8. Finally Youth Council sees the importance of public transport within Wellington, and it's current system, although not pleasing everyone, public transport itself will be complemented with a more frequent use, as it all becomes central and most likely easier for people to get around within the CBD.

Cons

9. Youth Council believes that scenario one risks placing too much emphasis on building in the centre of the city where hazard risks are high. Focusing solely on growth in this high-risk area is worrying due to sea level rise and earthquake risk, and we believe that it would be wiser to achieve a balance of people living in this area and developing in the inner suburbs as outlined in scenario two.
10. The lack of diversity of housing this scenario offers means that it is unlikely to cater for a wide range of housing needs, and may be deemed inappropriate for certain groups. Building a wider range of high and medium density housing as well as investing in public spaces such as parks is an approach the Youth Council believes will cater to a wider range of people, especially those with young children.
11. Youth Council believes that scenario one is unlikely to get buy-in from people who don't want density in Wellington as it doesn't cater to a wider range of

options. People who are still fixated on the Kiwi dream of a quarter acre are unlikely to warm to this scenario.

12. Finally, removing the character area to this extent is likely to taint the vibe that Wellingtonians cherish and is unlikely to be popular, Youth Council believes that the balance scenario two provides of preserving these areas to a greater extent than scenario one whilst still being practical and making the most of the space is preferable.

Scenario Two

Pros

13. Youth Council believes that the benefits of scenario two offer the most promise for Wellington City Youth Council when planning for growth. The main benefits of scenario two are its commitment to sustainable growth, its ability to facilitate diverse and mixed-use urban form, and its potential to promote strong communities.
14. Scenario two reflects Wellington's current growth trends where growth has been heavily concentrated in central areas. Youth Council believes that it makes sense to build where current trends indicate people are already focused on moving to.
15. Considering Wellington City Council's commitments to playing its part in mitigating climate change, scenario two offers a sustainable pathway that aligns with this goal. Youth Council believes it is crucial that Wellington has a public transport system which is easily accessible, affordable, and has a high uptake. Although Wellington City Council has a limited role in the provision of these services, public transport is hugely affected by the shape and sprawl of a city. Compact cities promote investment and usage of public transport. The suburbs in scenario two already have existing public transport connections, which is both a good place to start, and a great opportunity to vastly improve these connections. Youth Council ran a youth forum after the implementation of the new bus network in 2018 and was not surprised to find a consensus that

these bus services did not meet the needs of young people. Rather than stretching transportation resources further and building more suburbs further out, we must concentrate on improving the public transport connections that already exist in the inner suburbs. We know that transportation energy composes the bulk of Wellington's greenhouse gas emissions, and if the Wellington City Council is serious about doing its bit in the global climate change effort, a compact city is key.

16. Although scenario two offers less density than scenario one, Youth Council prefers scenario two because it promotes diverse and multi-use urban form. We must avoid building housing that is only accessible to people in higher income brackets, because this is inequitable growth. The homogeneous density offered in scenario one has the potential to exacerbate the housing crisis we see today, as it does not offer enough choice. Instead, in the inner suburbs, we can build a mixture of housing types that vary in price and form, facilitating diversity and inclusivity. Youth Council also believes that our growth strategy must promote mixed-use areas, where residential buildings are interspersed with commerce and community hubs. This is important because mixed-use areas create vibrancy. They encourage people to visit at all hours of the day, not just before and after work, and to linger on the streets. This has the added bonus of increasing public safety and trust levels, as more eyes watch the street. Scenario two promotes the diverse and multi-use urban form that Wellington needs to facilitate in order to increase housing accessibility and community vibrancy.
17. Finally, scenario two has the benefit of promoting strong communities. Keeping suburbs compact reduces social isolation. If we concentrate growth then we can also concentrate community investment, ensuring that community centres, parks, and other public places, are appealing and accessible to all. Our inner suburbs already receive some community investment, but as more Wellingtonians make their home in these suburbs we will have the perfect opportunity to improve these services. Rather than stretching our resources to provide sub-par community services for sprawling suburbs, we can concentrate our resources and ensure they are delivered to the highest standard.

Cons

18. The Kiwi Dream of owning a quarter acre section has been slipping from the reach of most New Zealanders over the past decade. With careful planning, this aspirational goal of so many Kiwis can be made accessible again in our capital city. Scenario two, like scenario one, isn't conducive to this achieving this goal because apartments, townhouses, and other forms of medium-high density housing occupy minimal space (nowhere near a quarter acre). This is important because Wellington has land to develop (notably in the Upper Stebbings Valley) which can be used to build houses which are part of the Kiwi dream. This would increase the comparative attractiveness of Wellington properties compared to places like Auckland and Dunedin. If we choose to pursue scenario two, it may be the case that cities with more land to build quarter acre sections (and subsequently build them), like Christchurch, become more attractive to Kiwis compared to Wellington.
19. It is true that families (parents with children) can live in medium-high density housing comfortably. However, some families prefer single-family houses with privacy, and a backyard so that children have room to play and parents can enjoy a more suburban lifestyle. It would be unfortunate if Wellington becomes a city which compromises on building liveable but suboptimal houses for families.
20. It is worth noting that these two issues are important structural issues which are inherent in the types of housing that will exist in scenario two. Many of the negatives with scenario three are either not very consequential or can be greatly mitigated with careful design. For instance, perhaps the most important negative with scenario three, carbon emissions from greater car usage, can be mitigated with quality public transport (e.g. frequent buses, extension of park and ride at Takapu Road).
21. A slightly less important negative with scenario two is how residents in the houses developed will have comparatively less access to parks and open spaces than those in scenario three. However, this harm can be mitigated by Council carefully developing parks and open spaces in the suburbs being developed in.

22. There is also a need to upgrade community facilities which may be comparatively less optimal than the construction of new facilities which would occur in scenario three. This is because new community facilities (in a new suburb) allow for greater experimentation and innovation and are less constrained to things like preferences of people living in the existing communities, land area, and current building designs.

Scenario Three

Pros

23. Youth Council acknowledges that a new greenfield suburb in Ohariu Valley will be able to accommodate 11,500 people, which is a significant proportion of the 50-80,000 that will call Wellington home over the next 30 years, and growth which other scenarios cannot handle exclusively.
24. Developing a new suburb will allow the formation of new communities, especially if time and resources are put in to designing an innovative and sustainable community, centred around good public transport that minimises the use of private transport for those commuting into the CBD for work. This new community will be able to access the already existing road access. Therefore, while some investment will be needed to upgrade the road access to accommodate the significant population growth, there is existing infrastructure which will reduce the cost and time of building new infrastructure.
25. A new suburb will have a greater variety in housing, including lower density housing, which will better accommodate families. Ohariu Valley would also be less affected by sea-level rise and liquefaction.

Cons

26. While Youth Council acknowledges some of the good things that can come from scenario three, we have also identified the effects developing in this area will have on the local environment. These include an increase in carbon emissions,

thus cost for transport to and from the CBD, as well as the urban development cutting into the Outer Green Belt near Ohariu Valley.

27. Firstly, being able to accommodate 11,500 people in the new greenfield suburb is clearly a large portion of the predicted 50,000 to 80,000 newcomers to the city within the next three decades. However, with more people means more cars, and more cars means a greater effect on climate change due to an increase in carbon emissions. In a way, developing in suburbs further away from the CBD contradicts what people have said they want - which is “a city that is compact, greener, resilient, inclusive and connected.” Furthermore, it also provides a contrast to Wellington’s ‘First to Zero’ plan that proposes Wellington must cut its carbon emission if we want our children to inherit a great city.
28. Moreover, a new greenfield suburb would cut into the Outer Green Belt near Ohariu Valley. Wellington City Council have acknowledged the importance of this space for its culture and heritage, recreation and access, health and wellbeing of Wellington residents as well as its economic benefits - providing a slice of nature in close proximity to residential areas. Council have been working on making the Outer Green Belt a more accessible place that enables people to be connected with nature and to escape and explore through their Draft Outer Green Belt Management Plan (2019). While Youth Council respect that the proposed suburb development in Ohariu Valley may not cut into the Outer Green Belt extensively, why destroy part an area you’ve worked hard to protect - especially one that holds unique biodiversity.
29. Youth Council also notes the issues with potential focus being taken off the needs of existing suburbs in the construction and maintenance of this new suburb. This might lead to fewer community facilities being maintained to a sufficient degree and innovation occurring in existing suburbs for the benefit of all.
30. Finally, it has been noted that residents do not want the road from the new suburb to link up to Tawa - people don’t want this crossing into their suburb.

Scenario Four

Pros

31. Youth Council recognises the opportunity this scenario brings to developing the city-wide public transport network and improving it to reach further into the suburbs. We note that one of the barriers preventing people from making the switch to public transport is the ‘10 minutes of walking’ either side of the transport. However, Youth Council realises that this scenario may not be the most effective scenario when it comes to the viability of developing a high-quality public transport system as the cost of reaching further with the network (without high density of demand) may be a barrier, this is another reason why the more compact scenarios are prioritised by Youth Council.
32. This scenario means that there will be less of a concentration of residents in the centre city, potentially reducing congestion.
33. Youth Council realises that this scenario may require less of an investment from Council than scenario three, due to existing community facilities. If this scenario were to go ahead, Youth Council would emphasise that investment in high quality facilities in the suburbs should be a focus due to the increasing population in these areas.
34. Scenario three keeps the city slightly more compact than scenario three, which as outlined by Youth Council is something that should be a priority.

Cons

35. Youth Council feels that although there are benefits to scenario four, there are also some downfalls that will affect Wellington as a city. By focusing on the suburbs and low-density housing, we may not develop our city in the best way possible. Some of the issues Youth Council found our outlined below.
36. First, the addition of low-density housing may benefit some, but for creates only one main option of people. For example, those looking for the ‘city life’ that they may expect in Wellington, they may be disappointed by the lack of high-density housing available. The areas of new housing are more extensive for low density housing, and although this may give people the option of living the ‘Kiwi Lifestyle’, it may not be the best use of land. Additionally, these new

communities will not be vibrant in the same way more established suburbs are. This may also mean the resources aren't used in the most effective ways due to the building up of communities.

37. Another reason Youth Council feel this option may not have the greatest benefits to Wellington is that there is no focus on a compact and accessible city. This puts more pressure of public transport (which may struggle to cover such a large area effectively due to cost) and the use of cars or other private vehicles. This requires the infrastructure of the CBD to reduce traffic congestion and hold the vehicles during the day, among other things. Not only will the increase of low-density housing require planning in the city, it will also increase the carbon emissions due to the increasing population relying more of vehicles rather than walking and biking.
38. Finally, scenario four, due to the low-density housing focus, may lead to the loss of the opportunity for higher density where it may be useful. This is both in the short-term with resources allocated differently, but also for the future development and growth of the city. If there is a higher demand for this type of housing in further years, this scenario may hinder the flexibility that the city has to deal with this demand.
39. Youth Council also notes that there may be less of a focus on building new community facilities and therefore fewer people are likely to benefit as this scenario focuses on extending existing suburbs in a low-density manner.

Summary

40. Youth Council believes that scenario two is the best option towards sustainably and sensitively planning for growth in Wellington.
41. Youth Council emphasises the need to plan for a more compact city, for the sustainability of the city in terms of future population growth and ease of transport, noting the detrimental effects long commutes can have on mental health and the environment.

42. Youth Council emphasises the need for a diverse range of housing options, that cater not only to those who want a backyard (such as those in many of the suburbs), but for those who want to live in more compact and central locations, such as the medium and high density housing options proposed in scenario two.
43. Youth Council reiterates the need for a high quality, accessible public transport network. We recognise the limits to achieving this that are present in the case of a less compact city, in terms of cost and low density of demand for certain areas.
44. Youth Council emphasises the need to develop and maintain high-quality facilities and public spaces to foster a sense of community and allow residents in dense areas to have green space.
45. Youth Council places particular emphasis on the environmental impact of each of the scenarios, as well as the impact climate change will have on the City, and encourages the Council to keep this top-of-mind when considering options.