

THE INTERNATIONAL AWARDS FOR LIVEABLE COMMUNITIES 2012 WHOLE CITY AWARD APPLICATION WELLINGTON



Absolutely

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WELLINGTON CITY COUNCIL

Wellington

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Wellington, New Zealand's capital, is a city of just over 200,000. The world's southernmost capital, it is relatively isolated, geographically. Despite its size and geographical isolation – or perhaps because of it – Wellington has an exceptionally high quality of life, as reported by its residents. This is the number one reason people choose to live here. Wellington is also a popular tourist destination and in 2011 was named the Coolest Little Capital in the World by travel guide publisher Lonely Planet.

So what makes Wellington so special?



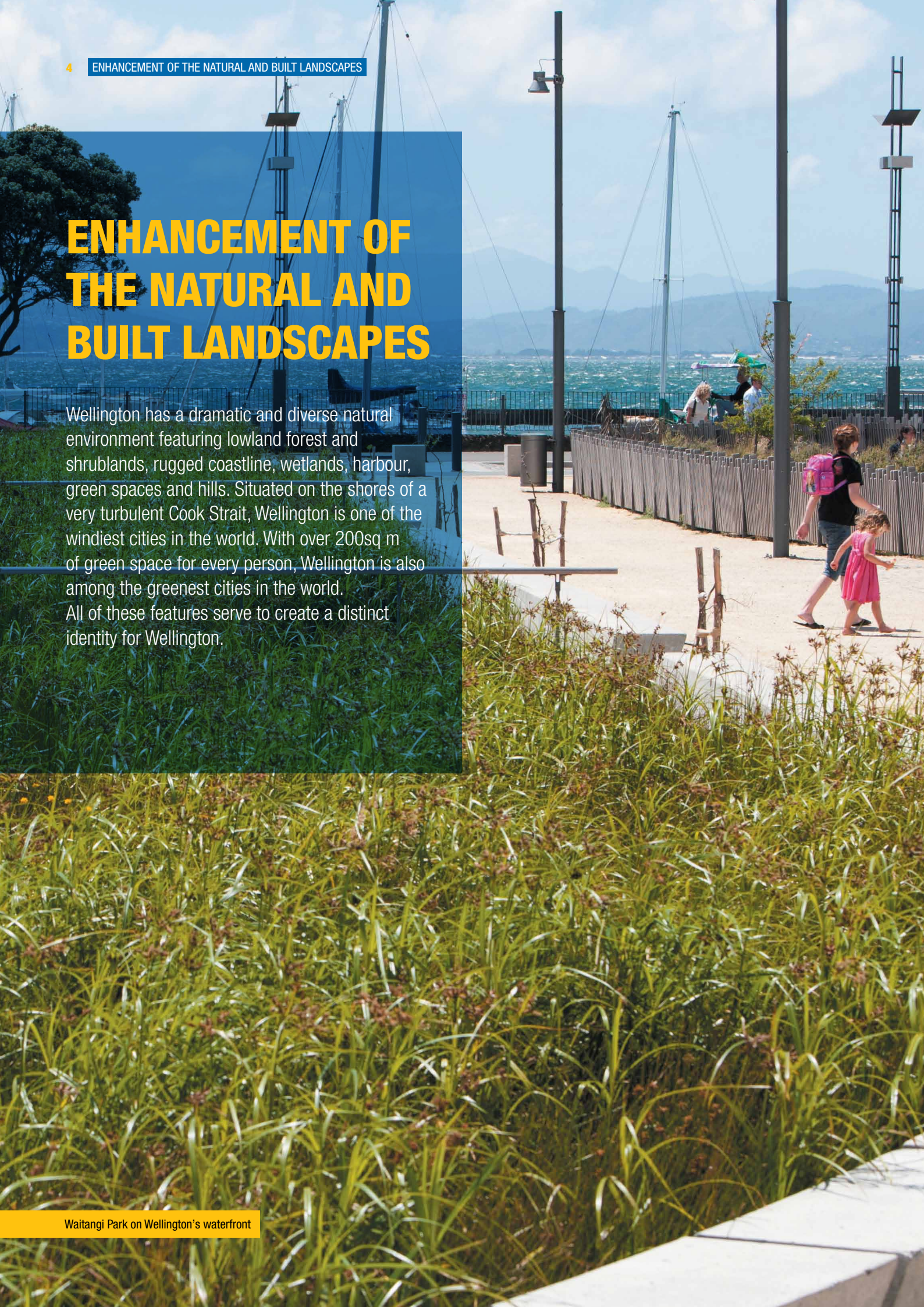
WELLINGTON

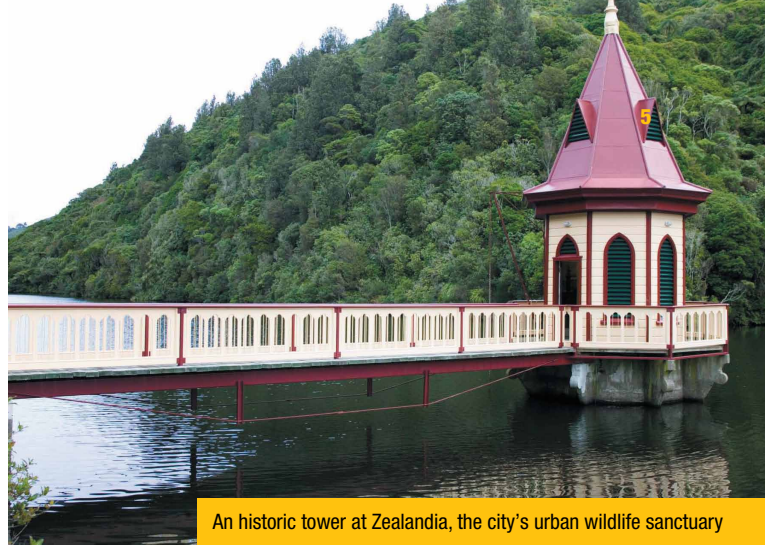
SNAPSHOT OF WELLINGTON

People	The city is home to 200,008 people and makes up 40% of the region's total population.
Urban form	The city has an estimated 665 people per square kilometre.
Diversity	27% of the population were born overseas.
Recreation	Three-quarters of Wellingtonians spend more than 2 ¹ / ₂ hours a week in physical activity.
Knowledge	33% of Wellington adults have a bachelor degree or higher level qualification.
Workforce	Unemployment currently sits at 6.5% in line with the national average.
Income	Wellingtonians earn an average of \$1240 per week – the highest for any city in the country.

ENHANCEMENT OF THE NATURAL AND BUILT LANDSCAPES

Wellington has a dramatic and diverse natural environment featuring lowland forest and shrublands, rugged coastline, wetlands, harbour, green spaces and hills. Situated on the shores of a very turbulent Cook Strait, Wellington is one of the windiest cities in the world. With over 200sq m of green space for every person, Wellington is also among the greenest cities in the world. All of these features serve to create a distinct identity for Wellington.





An historic tower at Zealandia, the city's urban wildlife sanctuary

Dynamic and compact

The city's topography, a valley ringed by hills with a coastal edge, contains the city's core. City planners are dedicated to maintaining this dynamic and compact city. Wellington's energy and compact nature form part of the city's appeal and provide for an outstanding quality of life. Wellington is walkable, accessible and vibrant. Its thriving business district, Parliamentary precinct, universities and cultural institutions, lively retail area and spaces for relaxing, all sit within 2.1 sq km. They are fed in turn by coastal and hillside villages and suburbs.

Pedestrian city

The Wellington waterfront is just one example of our dedication to public access and pedestrians in a city where you can go nearly everywhere on foot. Car parking used to occupy much of the waterfront, but the area has undergone extensive development to transform it into one of the city's highlights. The promenade is well used by walkers, cyclists and people on their way to work. Waterfront spaces are also used for events and play. Research shows that the recent waterfront developments reflect the values that the community attaches to the area, such as ease of access, sense of place, ownership and Māori heritage.¹ The waterfront is now seen as vibrant, diverse, exciting and cutting-edge – a stark contrast to how it was perceived a decade ago. Wellington also has a vast network of 300 kilometres of walkways along hills and coast and through the city that take in scenic views and heritage sites.

Universally accessible

Wellington aims to be an inclusive, universally accessible city where all residents and visitors can fully participate in community and civic life. Our *Open Space Access Plan (2004)* provides for walking and cycling tracks to suit a range of user interests, skills, abilities and fitness levels. We are now developing an *Accessible Wellington Action Plan*, setting out goals and measurable criteria, to achieve universal design and access for everyone. This includes people with disabilities as well as parents with children in prams and older people with an age-related decrease in mobility or sensory abilities.

¹ *Wellington's Waterfront: Are We on the Right Track? (2011)*

Green spaces

Wellington has long recognised the visual, social and economic benefits of green space. The Town Belt, 425 hectares of open space set aside by city officials in 1839 and protected since, surrounds the inner city. It provides recreation space for residents and visitors as well as fulfilling an aesthetic, heritage and ecological role. Just a short walk from downtown Wellington is the Wellington Botanic Garden, 25 hectares of unique landscape, protected native forest, and specialised plant collections.

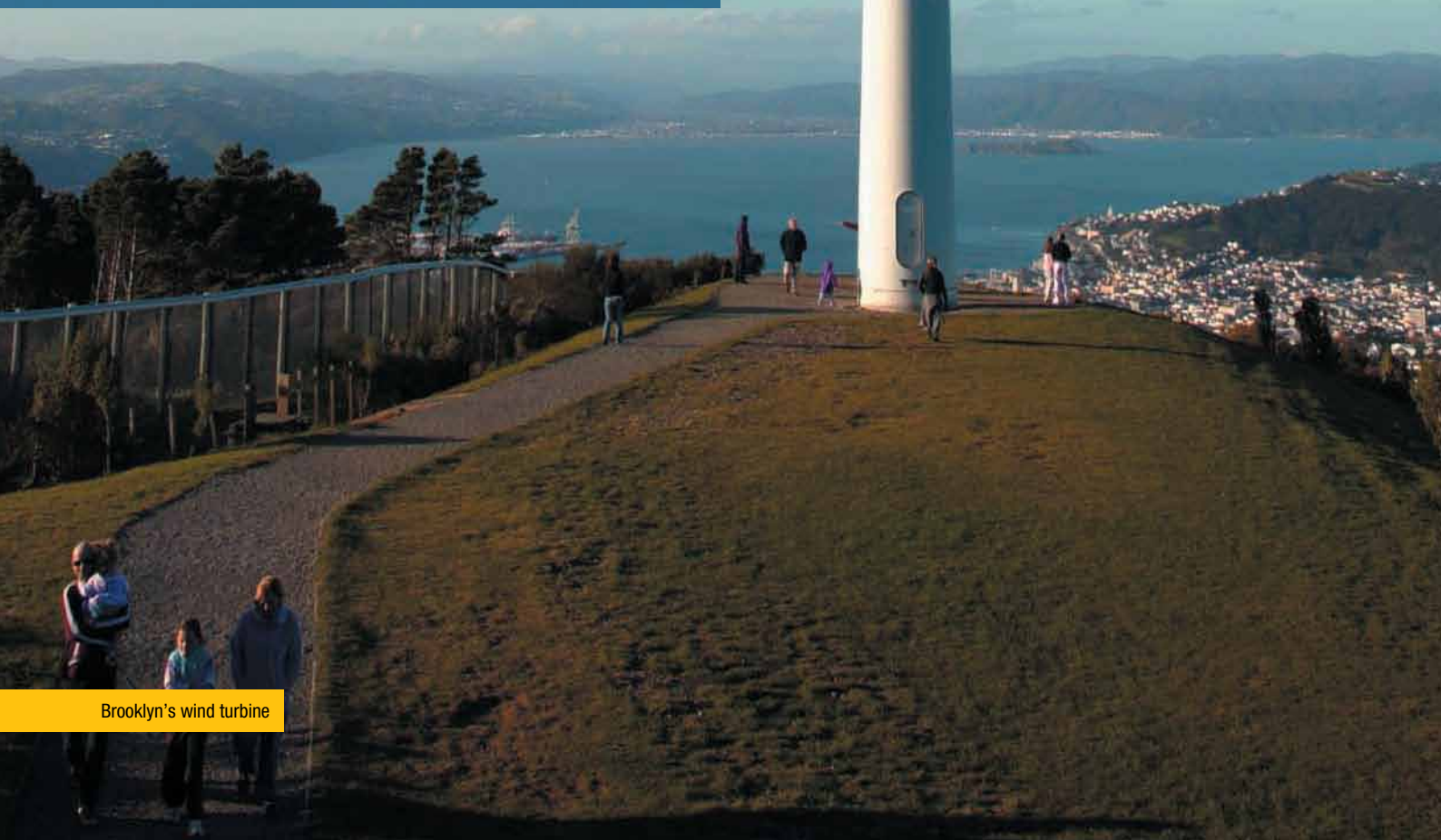
Throughout the city numerous green parks have been set aside for recreation and relaxation. The City has a number of plans, including *The District Plan (2000)*, *Central City Framework (2011)* and *Spatial Structure Plan (2011)*, that protect and further enhance the city's environment, for example, by promoting green roofs, walls, and ecological corridors across the central city and increasing the number of green parks.

Protecting the city's natural heritage and biodiversity

Wellington is dedicated to protecting and restoring the city's natural ecology. Major sections of the surrounding hills are protected under legislation (the Reserves Act). The City has recently classified or reclassified more than 50 percent of its parks and reserves to give them greater protection under the Reserves Act. Wellington's Otari Native Botanic Garden and Wilton's Bush Reserve is the only public botanic garden in New Zealand dedicated solely to native plants. Eighty percent of New Zealand's plants are endemic; Otari grows around half of these, making an important contribution to the preservation of the world's natural heritage. Wellington also hosts Zealandia, the world's first fully fenced urban wildlife sanctuary, which provides a safe haven for some of New Zealand's most endangered native animals and birds. Zealandia aims to preserve native wildlife by turning back the clock to the way things were before humans arrived. Sanctuaries have been achieved in remote island areas in New Zealand, but this is a first for a space less than 10 minutes from the centre of a busy city. The success of Zealandia has benefited the wider city environment with an increasing number of native birds returning to the city.

ENVIRONMENTAL BEST PRACTICES

As capital city of clean green New Zealand, Wellington has an important role to play as an environmental leader. Internationally, Wellington is a signatory to the Mexico City Pact (2010), and a member of the Carbon War Room – initiatives to tackle climate change. At home, the City is committed to working towards an environmentally sustainable future with its long-term vision for Wellington as an eco-city. We acknowledge that our air, climate, water, land, soil and minerals, and plant and animal life are under pressure through the effects of human activity, and we are working on a holistic approach to the management and sustainable development of Wellington's natural environment.



Brooklyn's wind turbine

Responding to climate change

Wellington needs to prepare for the impacts of a changing climate. The City reduced greenhouse gas emissions by 25 percent between 2003 and 2009. Our efforts in this area were recognised in 2011 with New Zealand's Ministry for the Environment Green Ribbon Award for its *Climate Change Action Plan*. The plan sets further ambitious targets for the city, including becoming carbon neutral, through a mix of mitigation and adaptation projects, some of which are detailed below.

Renewable energy

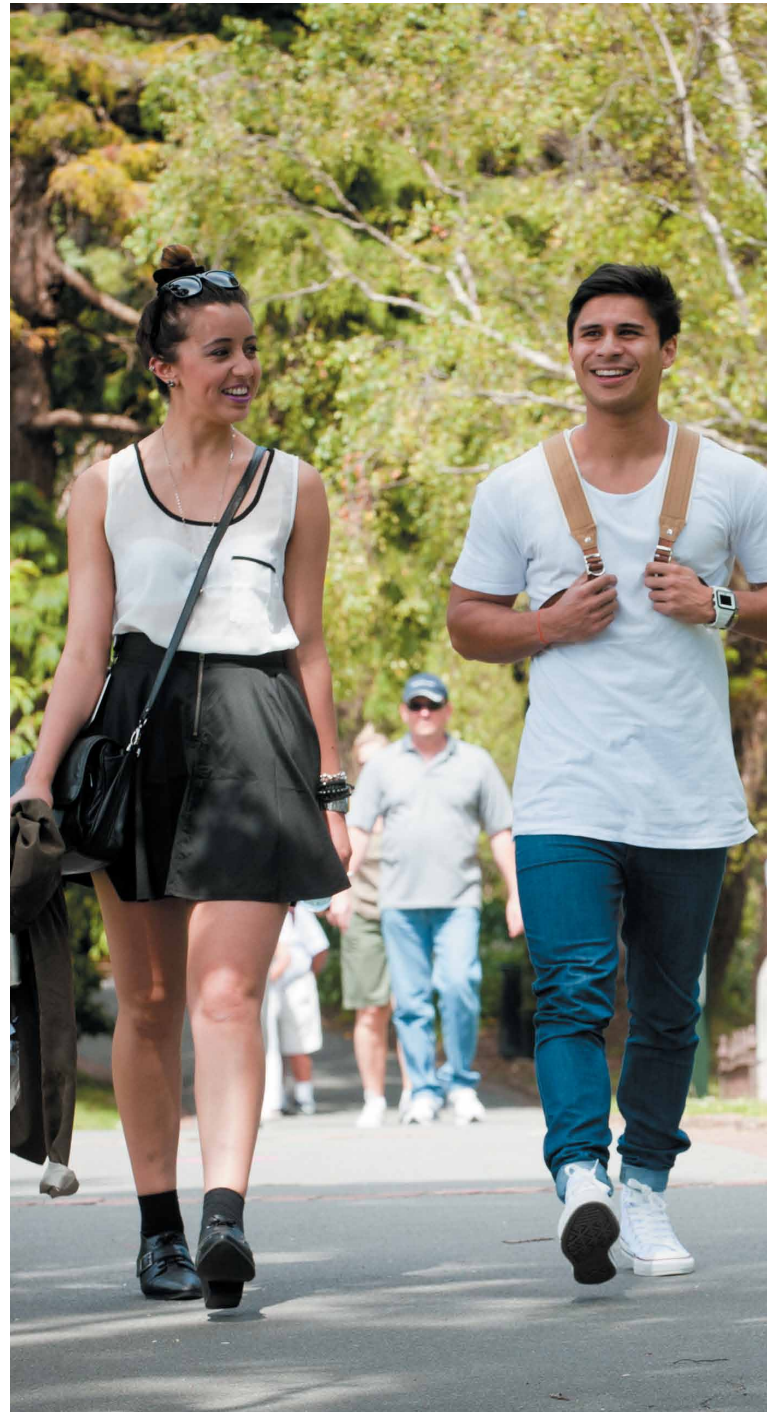
We recognise the importance of renewable energy. Wellington's first wind farm, fully commissioned in 2009, produces around 140MW – enough to power 94 percent of Wellington's domestic use.² Two more wind farms have since received consent, adding a further 72MW of electricity. A landfill gas to energy plant (1MW generator) at Wellington's Southern Landfill provides the local grid with enough electricity to power around 1000 average Wellington homes. A pilot project is also being undertaken by two Wellington companies, Power Projects Limited and Industrial Research Limited, to harness tidal energy and supply power from a wave energy device moored 25 metres deep and three kilometres off Wellington's south coast in Cook Strait.

Environmentally friendly transport

Wellington has the highest number of commuter walking trips by population of any city in New Zealand and, at nearly 20 percent of all commuter trips, is one of the highest in the developed world. The city has a strong public transport focus – in 2010/11, 31 percent of Wellington city residents aged over 15 took the bus, 6 percent took the train, 26 percent walked and 4 percent cycled into the central city on weekdays.³ The City's *Urban Development Strategy* encourages this by supporting the development of housing and commercial activities along key public transport routes within the central city and suburbs. Wellington City is also the first local authority in New Zealand to operate electric vehicles off the production line.

² Based on 75,193 households in Wellington in 2011.

³ Wellington City Council 2010/11 Annual Report.



Protecting the elements

Recent air quality measurements showed that levels of PM10, nitrogen dioxide and carbon monoxide were all well within New Zealand environmental standards. The city also has a low carbon footprint – one-third the national average at 6.2 tonnes per person of greenhouse gas emissions – and is meeting self-imposed targets by stabilising 2010 emission rates at 2001 levels. The City seeks to improve on this and reduce Council emissions by 40 percent (on 2003 levels) and community emissions by 30 percent (on 2001 levels) by 2020. To help achieve this, the City is in the process of registering more than 1200 hectares of reserve land into the Government's Permanent Forest Sink. Additionally, we plant around 100,000 trees and shrubs annually in our reserves and green belts, on stream banks, coastal areas and alongside roads.

Despite an increasing population, water use by Wellingtonians is decreasing, helped by greater use of water-efficient technologies, increased active leak detection on the public network and increased public awareness of water conservation issues. Water use is dropping consistently each year, from 173,792 litres per person for the year 2006/07 to 143,708 in 2010/11.

Managing waste to reduce its impact on the environment

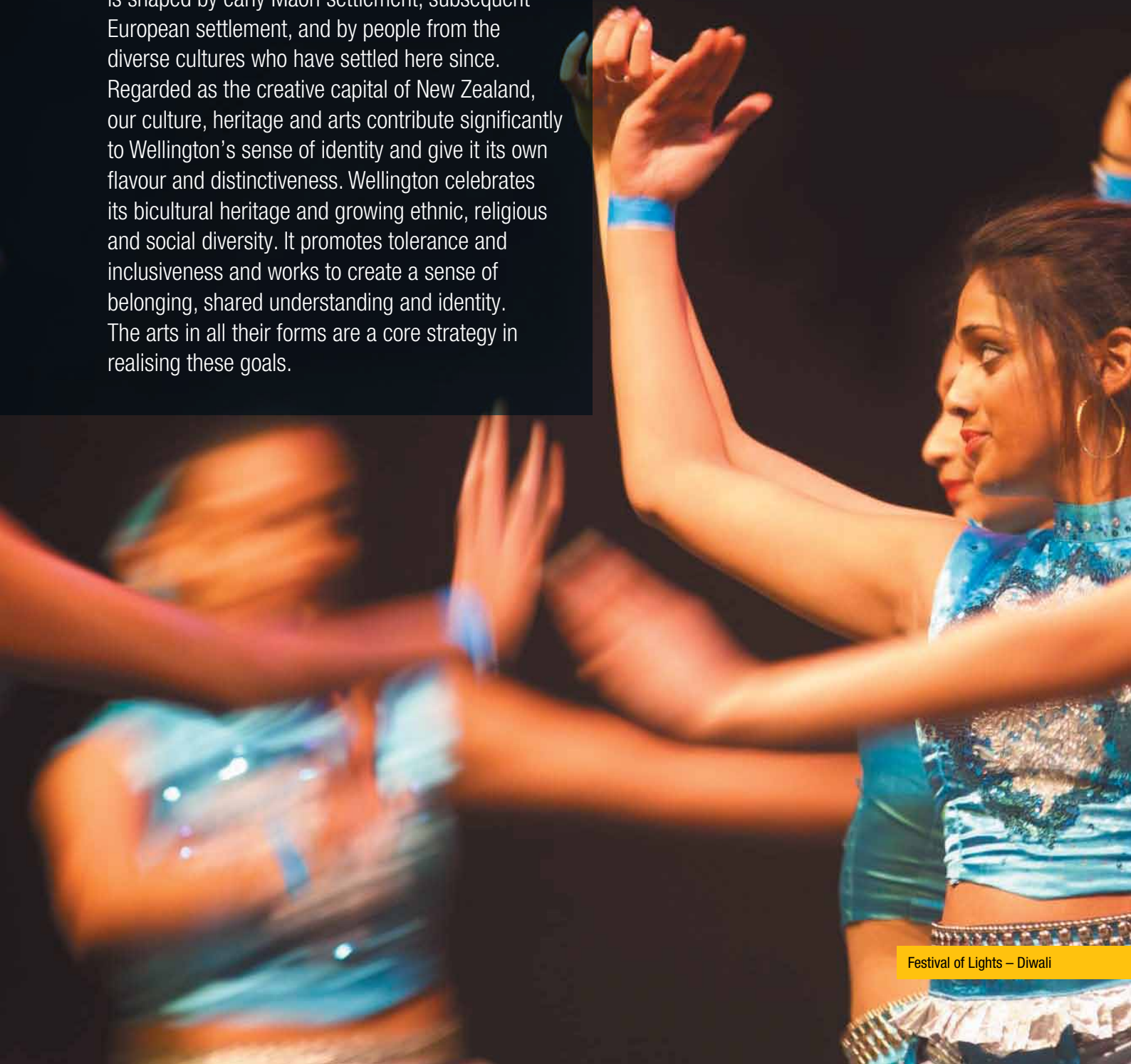
The City's priorities in dealing with waste are to reduce, reuse, recycle, recover, treat and then dispose. One example of this approach is our Kai to Compost programme. Food waste from restaurants and other large organic waste producers is collected and delivered to the City's municipal composting plant where it is blended with biosolids from the wastewater system to produce a high quality recycled product for soil enhancement. Another example is a pyrolysis project, processing one tonne of sewerage sludge per day, which helps to augment methane recovery at the landfill and can potentially reduce waste by 90 percent. Protecting the natural environment, the City runs two wastewater treatment plants, and an advanced sewage pollution elimination project to curb wastewater overflows to natural waters, including a marine reserve off the south coast.



Volunteers plant sand dunes to protect Wellington's south coast

ARTS, CULTURE AND HERITAGE

Wellington is a relatively young city internationally, yet much of what makes us unique lies in our history and indigenous culture. The city's identity is shaped by early Māori settlement, subsequent European settlement, and by people from the diverse cultures who have settled here since. Regarded as the creative capital of New Zealand, our culture, heritage and arts contribute significantly to Wellington's sense of identity and give it its own flavour and distinctiveness. Wellington celebrates its bicultural heritage and growing ethnic, religious and social diversity. It promotes tolerance and inclusiveness and works to create a sense of belonging, shared understanding and identity. The arts in all their forms are a core strategy in realising these goals.



Acknowledging our history

Māori, as the original inhabitants, have a special relationship with the city. In recognition of this, the City works through its cultural advisors/kaiārahi tikanga Māori to develop the relationship with Wellington Māori, and strengthen community capability. One of Wellington's newest waterfront developments is Te Raukura or wharewaka (house of the canoe). The wharewaka houses ceremonial waka (traditional Māori canoes) on public display, and includes a space for hui (gatherings) and functions. The structure's exterior, incorporating Māori design, takes the form of a korowai, or cloak, a Māori symbol of great importance and prestige. Te Aro Pā, a site of Māori settlement until the 1880s, is an example of how historic places of meaning to Māori are preserved. Pā remains were uncovered during construction of a new apartment building. Construction was temporarily halted and a centre added for Wellingtonians to get a rare glimpse into the city's past. By acknowledging sites of historical importance we make visible the role of Māori in the development of the city.

Celebrating diversity

More than a quarter of Wellingtonians were born outside New Zealand. The City hosts a Settlement Support service linking new migrants with information and resources to help them settle well. Festivals throughout the year celebrate the many cultures that make up the city. These include the Hindu Diwali festival, Chinese New Year, Matariki (Māori New Year), and many other community events that promote inclusion and tolerance. Wellington has three sister-city relationships – with Beijing and Xiamen (China) and Sakai (Japan) – that strengthen cultural understanding. The relationships include visits by civic and business delegations, teacher training exchanges, cultural and educational exchanges, and exhibitions.

Culture, of course, is broader than ethnicity and Wellington was host to the 2nd Asia Pacific Outgames – a major international gay and lesbian sport, culture and human rights event. This event was also the Supreme Winner of the 2011 Wellington Airport Regional Community Awards.

The waterfront's new wharewaka (canoe house) is home to two ceremonial waka (Māori canoes)



The arts for all

Wellington is home to many of New Zealand's foremost art and cultural institutions, including the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa. Wellington is also home to the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, the Royal New Zealand Ballet and the New Zealand School of Music, and hosts a number of prominent festivals. The New Zealand International Arts Festival and the World of Wearable Art™ showcase local, national and international talent. The City believes in the importance of arts, culture, and heritage in promoting a prosperous and inclusive society. It provides free access for all to learn about and engage with the arts, culture and heritage through institutions such as the City Art Gallery and Toi Pōneke – Wellington Arts Centre, and through a growing range of public art in city spaces. By means of a sponsorship arrangement with the City, there is a free entry day into major Te Papa exhibitions for Wellington residents. The Fringe Festival, held annually in Wellington for 20 years, is a community-based event open to anyone wanting to stage an original piece of art in any form. In 2011 the festival staged 70 visual, music, dance and theatre performances in 30 sites across the city. Wellington's annual Summer City festival provides free or low-cost concerts and activities throughout the summer months. Events such as these have become an essential part of Wellington's identity. The city's increasingly prominent film industry is also shaping community life, not just with the more than 750 businesses that are now connected with the industry, but with the reinvigoration of neighbourhood cinemas and local interest in film and film festivals.

Wellington's success in promoting arts, culture and heritage as a source of community identity, and the promotion of tolerance, inclusivity and a sense of place can be seen in the following results: 95 percent of residents agree Wellington has a culturally rich and diverse arts scene,⁴ and 80 percent of Wellingtonians think that having more people of different cultural backgrounds makes Wellington a better place – the highest percentage of any city in New Zealand.⁵

⁴ Wellington City Council Residents' Monitoring Survey (2012)

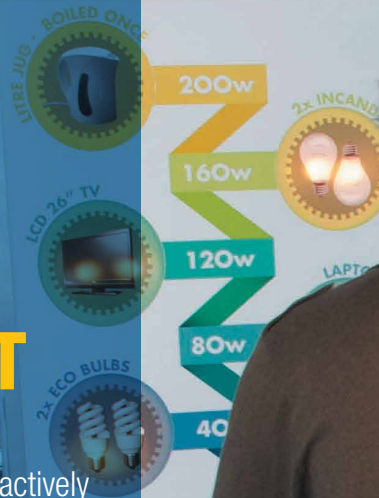
⁵ Quality of Life 2010 (Nielsen)



The World of Wearable Art™ is a stunning blend of art, fashion and theatre. *Hide In My Bone Shadow*, Marjolein van der Wal, Netherlands.

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AND EMPOWERMENT

Wellington City encourages people to be actively engaged in shaping their city. It also seeks a culture of open and honest, no-surprises consultation involving all age groups that is genuine, timely and well-informed. To do this the City has a specialised team dedicated to building relationships with the community and ensuring the best possible outcomes are achieved through consultation and engagement.



An informed community

Keeping the public informed enables them to be involved in decisions in the best interests of the city and its people. The City undertakes a range of measures to ensure people are well informed and can contribute meaningfully to decision-making processes and management of the city. On a daily basis members of the public can interact with the City through its award-winning website and a call centre that operates 24 hours a day. The call centre takes over 300,000 calls a year. The City also uses billboards, posters on public transport, radio messages, and a weekly page in the local newspaper to keep the public informed. A presence at places where people like to spend time, such as festivals, community meetings and events, provides another opportunity to reach people. The City also produces annual plans and reports and promotes three-yearly elections.

A community active in decision-making

It is essential that decisions concerning the running of the city reflect community priorities. That's why before any significant decision is made, the views of affected people are sought and considered. In 2010/2011 the City ran public consultations on 26 initiatives and proposals. In total 3674 submissions were made,

with over 70 percent from first-time submitters. City staff respond personally to every submission made. We also offer individuals the opportunity to influence events through e-petitions, which they can set up online at any time. Community members can speak directly to councillors and the Mayor at regular council meetings that are publicised in advance.

The City values Wellington's cultural diversity and works to create equal access for all Wellington residents. To this end the City has ongoing relationships with different segments of the community to ensure their views are included. Recognising the special position of Māori in the city's history, we foster strong relationships with mana whenua (descendants of Wellington's early Māori settlers), and the wider Māori community. We have also formed strong relationships with groups representing the Pacific Island community, youth, the environment and disability. Through these partnerships we aim to build capacity among groups to enable them to actively engage in City processes and decision-making. Additionally, the City holds forums throughout the year enabling individuals to share views with City staff, councillors, and the Mayor on specific issues. As the result of views expressed at an Ethnic Forum, a free interpreting service was established to improve communication between ethnic communities and the City.



City Housing has won awards for involving tenants and strengthening communities

Committed to innovation

The City is committed to trying new and innovative ways to engage with residents. One of these was the 'Storybox' project used to develop *Wellington 2040: Smart Capital*, the 30-year plan for the city. Shipping containers were fitted out with interactive resources, including touch-screen maps of the city, and located in public spaces to allow members of the community to visualise how the city could be transformed in the coming years and to give their opinions on the future direction of Wellington. The popular sites attracted around 6000 people. The City has also begun using online focus groups to reach the views of greater numbers of people. Participants can contribute from their homes, and are able to reflect on information over a number of days. Feedback is positive with people reporting that they like using the focus groups as a way to have their say.

High level of involvement in community life

Wellingtonians are passionate about the city and take an active role in its day-to-day operations. Many donate their time, energy and skills to a range of services including community organisations, the rural fire service, civil defence and search and rescue, the city's parks and gardens, and events throughout the year. The City encourages volunteer effort and supports a number of citizen-initiated groups who contribute to the city. For example, there are more than 60 ecological restoration groups who care for and protect a large portion of the city's reserves. An example of the success of the volunteer network is the Makara Peak Mountain Bike Park, entirely built and run by volunteers, and awarded the Most Outstanding Park in New Zealand in 2010.



More than 60 volunteer ecological restoration groups help care for and protect the city's reserves

HEALTHY LIFESTYLES

The New Zealand Quality of Life project rates Wellington consistently high in terms of the residents' quality of life, with 89 percent of Wellingtonians reporting they are satisfied or highly satisfied with their quality of life.⁶ The project, tracking eight cities in New Zealand, covers participants' perceptions of health, crime and safety, social issues in their local area, transport, and community and social networks. Wellington is mindful, however, that vulnerable populations exist, such as migrants and refugees, elderly, those with low-income, mental health consumers, and a small number of homeless. Additionally, physical health and safety are ongoing concerns for any population. Providing for healthy environments and promoting resilience within communities are core features of the approach to health and wellbeing taken by the City. Some of the actions taken are highlighted below.

⁶ Quality of Life 2010 (Nielsen)



Healthy environments, healthy lifestyles

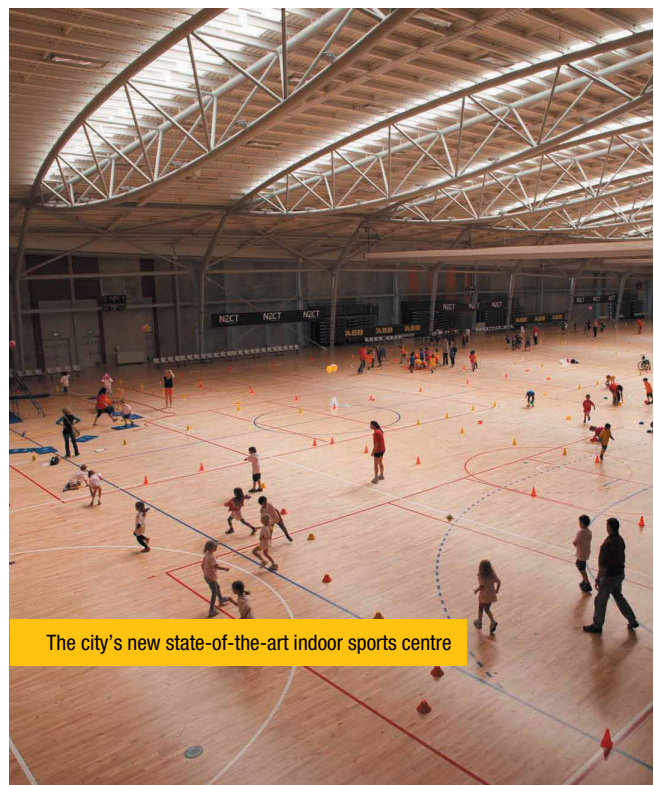
In 2006 and 2012 Wellington was accredited with World Health Organisation (WHO) Safe Community status on the basis of a comprehensive package of initiatives, including City Safety Officers, safe youth venues, and improved late-night transportation options, all aimed at ensuring people feel safe in Wellington at all times. Wellington is the only capital city of any country to have this accreditation.

Ensuring safe and healthy environments for those in need, the City provides more than 2000 housing units representing 8.3 percent of all rental properties in Wellington. These properties can house more than 4000 tenants, many of whom are vulnerable. While other centres in New Zealand are moving away from social housing, Wellington is undertaking a major upgrade of its housing units to improve the health, safety, and security of some of its most vulnerable community members. Improvements include better insulation and heating, double-glazing, smoke and heat detectors, and landscaping and community spaces for building relationships within the tenant community. The Housing Upgrade Project is the largest and most intensive social housing redevelopment project ever undertaken in New Zealand. The City and the New Zealand Government are sharing the \$400 million cost of upgrading 2300 homes. Just four years into the 20-year programme, it has already received six awards for community development, sustainable architecture, project execution, innovation, and involving tenants in the design of the new housing facilities.⁷ The Community Action Programme, which runs alongside the project, has developed 15 communal living and play areas and created 10 community gardens. For non-City Housing tenants, we also provide funding support for a national home insulation and clean heating scheme to assist low-income households and those with health needs.

⁷ 2010 New Zealand Institute of Architecture Awards and 2009, 2012 Australasian Housing Institute Awards

New Zealand has been experiencing sharp increases in food prices. To promote connected, resourceful communities and access to nutritional food, the City supports over 30 community gardens by providing funding, land and resources. The gardens cater for a range of groups, including migrants and socially disadvantaged groups, for example, those with mental health issues. Through their involvement, participants say they feel more connected, and those who have felt isolated have reported this is no longer the case. Importantly, while the City provides essential support for these initiatives, the communities have ownership over them. This is viewed as critical to their success.

Exercise as part of a daily and fun routine is actively promoted and provided for by the City with walkways throughout the city, over 100 playgrounds, seven swimming pools, five recreation centres including a new state-of-the-art indoor community sports facility, sports fields, seven skate parks, and two marinas. Within minutes of the city, people can be in the bush or at the beach. These spaces and the activities they support bring people together, promote a sense of community, improve health and fitness, and increase overall wellbeing. Recognising that cost can sometimes be a barrier to participation in recreation, the City's Leisure Card provides a discount for those on low incomes.



The city's new state-of-the-art indoor sports centre

Targeted support for specific needs

Although small by international comparisons, Wellington has about 200 homeless people. The tough economic climate has put more pressure on our most vulnerable residents, making it harder for them to secure and sustain proper accommodation. Early in 2012, the City organised a workshop for support agencies to discuss how to work together to support vulnerable tenant communities. Participants came from local government, central government and volunteer organisations. The workshop reviewed housing needs and support services, discussed building baseline data, a review of the Homelessness Strategy, and the development of an action plan.

Connected communities, resilient communities

Wellington sits on fault lines and is vulnerable to major earthquakes and tsunami as well as other civil emergencies. The need to be prepared for this has been brought home by the Christchurch and Japan earthquakes in 2010 and 2011. Experience has shown us connected communities are in a better position to withstand challenges. The City supports initiatives for, with and by communities aimed at promoting connectedness, inclusiveness, and preparedness. In 2011 these included events and activities such as neighbourhood picnics, neighbourhood group fitness training, community planting of fruit trees, and earthquake and disaster preparedness sessions. Neighbours Day, where people are encouraged to get to know those who live around them through fun activities, is another example of a City-sponsored initiative to promote community connections and resilience.



'Walkwise' city safety officers

STRATEGIC PLANNING

Wellington has a long history of strong strategic planning dating back to its founding citizens who created the Town Belt, ensuring access for future generations to green space and recreation, and conserving the environmental health of the city. This foresight and planning has helped to create the successful city we enjoy today.



In the 1980s, the city faced challenges brought by public sector reform and deregulation of the nation's economy that was drawing business away from Wellington. We were also seen as boring and full of grey suits. Wellington responded with a deliberate strategy to make the city more vibrant and offer a superior quality of life – goals it has achieved.

Wellington's most recent strategy is *Towards 2040: Smart Capital* – the result of more than two years of extensive research and broad-reaching public consultation. The strategy has identified four goals for Wellington: to be a people-centred city, a connected city, an eco-city, and possess a dynamic central city. These four goals describe a different way of working and living focused on collaboration rather than competition to build Wellington's resilience in the face of future environmental, economic, and social challenges. *Towards 2040* is about positioning the city for the next wave of global trends. It seeks to capitalise on the city's strengths and galvanise the city towards these goals.

Supporting the realisation of the City's vision towards 2040 is the *Long-term Plan*.

This plan sets out 10-year activities including:

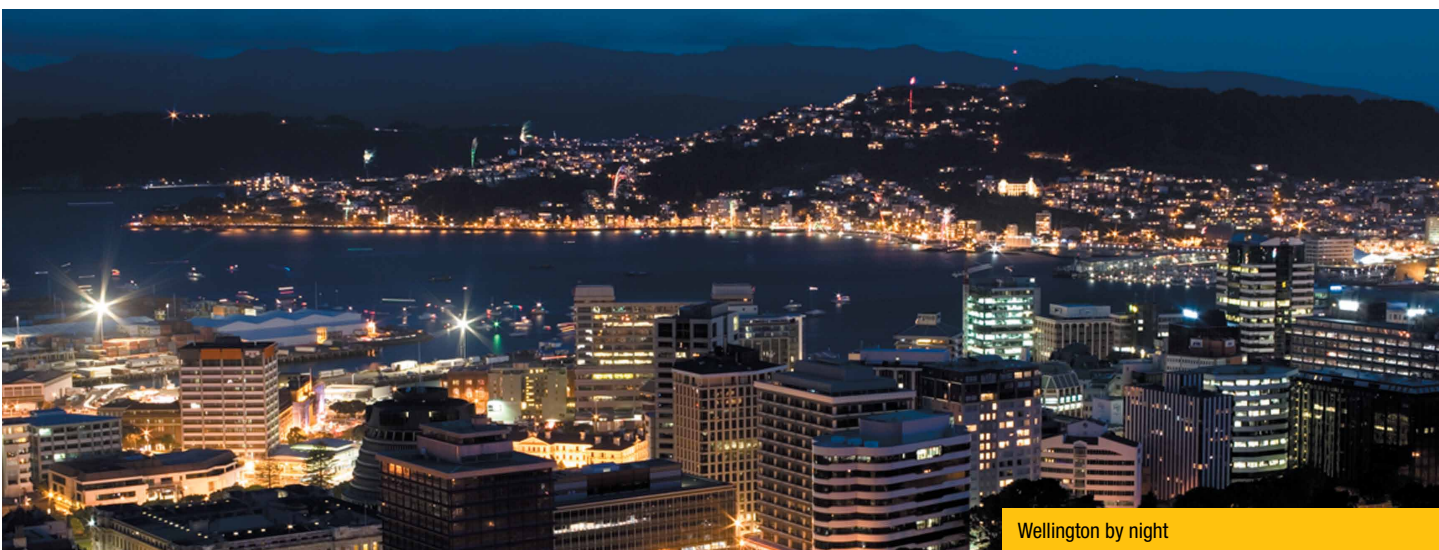
- initiatives to support 10,000 new jobs
- a digital strategy
- events and public spaces to enhance the City's appeal

- limits on property tax to sustainable and affordable levels.

The plan is reviewed and refined every three years. The City also has an *Annual Plan* that responds to immediate circumstances while ensuring activities remain aligned with its long-term goals and reports on progress each year.

At a micro level, the City is guided by its service-level policies, plans, and strategies. These ensure that operations on a day-to-day basis are consistent with the values and vision of the City. These cover everything from the management of water and waste, through to cultural wellbeing and international relations. Regular review of these policies, plans and strategies ensures that they remain relevant and in line with community priorities and international best practice.

Wellington makes every effort to be transparent and accessible, and to involve the community in decision-making. People are encouraged to actively engage in the development of the city's plans and strategies and have opportunities for input. As evidence of the City's success in this area, in 2010, 57 percent felt that decisions made were in the best interests of the city, the second-equal highest of main centres in New Zealand.⁸ Sixty-nine percent of residents felt they had some or a lot of influence on Council decisions, the highest of main centres in New Zealand.⁹



Wellington by night

⁸ Quality of Life 2010 (Nielsen)

⁹ Quality of Life 2010 (Nielsen)

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