
WELLINGTON CIVIC TRUST



www.wellingtoncivictrust.org

FROM THE CHAIR

Dear Trust Members,

Our last Newsletter for the year is an opportunity for me, on behalf of your Board, to thank you for your support over the past year, and to wish you all a very fulfilling Christmas and New Year. It has been a full year for the Trust. The previous year's Social Housing Conference proceedings became the basis for Council policy in this area. A Northern Gateway Forum opened up lively debate about a framework for the development of Wellington's northern entry, an area of great potential if developed with sound urban design principles. Then, finally there is the Hilton hearing which has consumed a lot of time and all of our reserves. We could not have stayed the distance without knowing we represented your concerns, and without having from many members, generous financial support. A big thanks. Time will tell whether our case in defence of the Waterfront Framework principles will win the day. A decision may come before Christmas, but is more likely in the new year. We trust it endorses the importance of the Framework that so many citizens helped to shape.

Please tell your friends about the Trust-we need to grow in membership and influence as this City grows.. We look forward to your continuing support, and please join us, with your friends, on the 16 February for the tour of Waterfront apartments and buildings,

Seddon
(Chair)

Hilton Hotel on the Outer T

The hearing before the Environment Court of Wellington Investment Ltd's application to build a five storey hotel on the Outer T is now over. The applicant's lawyer was given until 23 November to submit his concluding submissions to the Court. Now there is nothing left to do but wait for the decision and that might not be available until early in 2008.

Wellington Civic Trust joined with Waterfront Watch in an appeal against the decision by the Wellington Regional Council to allow the hotel to be built on the Outer T. Taking a case to the Environment Court is a very expensive proposition and, despite the Ministry for Environment providing a \$30,000 grant to help with costs, in the end this was less than a third of the costs that had to be met by the two organisations. The extra costs arose from the case taking significantly longer than our lawyers originally estimated, and as a consequence the costs exceeded the estimated budget by over \$40,000. We are extremely grateful to all of our members who donated money to the cause (some of you very substantial amounts). Without these donations we would not have been able to run the case. Our coffers are now empty and there are still bills to pay. If any of you have been meaning to make a donation but haven't yet got around to it, now is the time. Next year the Trust Board will be undertaking a series of fund-raising events to build up our equity again.

In the meantime, you might like to consider giving a 2008 subscription to the Civic Trust or a copy of the book on the first 25 years of the Trust (For Love of this City) as Christmas presents to family and friends. (See the notice on how to order these items). This will help the Trust, enhance the lives of people who have not yet engaged with the Trust and will also help reduce the stress on you of deciding what to buy – a win-win-win situation!

Opinion Piece from the Dominion Post 16/11/07

TIME FOR COUNCIL TO HONOUR PLEDGE

Dianne Buchan was a member of the Leadership Group which drafted the Waterfront Framework. She also chaired the Waterfront Community Consultative Committee, the forerunner of the Leadership Group. For the past six years she has been the Chair of the Wellington Civic Trust and is currently Deputy Chair of the Trust.

Wellington will shortly hear the Environment Court's decision on whether a five-storey hotel is to be built on the Outer T of Queens Wharf on the waterfront. But there is much more at stake than a hotel or no hotel on prime public land: what is on trial in the court of public opinion is the Waterfront Framework and the reliance we can place on our Mayor and Councillors to honour their decision to adopt and apply the Waterfront Framework to its decision-making.

The Framework (a booklet of 50 odd pages) sets out the public's aspirations for the waterfront and is basically the Council's master plan for the waterfront. It was adopted in 2001 (after more than 10 years of public consultation), by both Wellington City Council and Wellington Waterfront Ltd, to guide future development on the waterfront. It has been incorporated into the City Council's district plan, which imposes a high expectation on the Council to comply with it. But has it?

To go back a step, public outrage at what was then proposed for our waterfront boiled over in a tumultuous public meeting in September 2000. As a result, the Council under Mayor Mark Blumsky started again.

The Council set up what they called a "Leadership Group" to develop what eventually became the current Framework. Four citizens' representatives, two Maori representatives and three councillors were appointed to the Group. A paid, independent facilitator and senior city council staff ensured the group had all the information it needed to make sound decisions on Wellington's behalf.

Over the next seven months, the Leadership Group met 23 times in public forums, considered 76 written and 64 verbal submissions (including submissions from Lambton Harbour Management Ltd and Centre Port), considered more than 32 technical reports from advisors, gave two public presentations, each attended by over 100 members of the public, and commissioned market research to test the preliminary findings. Hundreds of householders who had asked to be informed about the deliberations were sent regular newsletters. Between 15 and 50 members of the public attended every meeting of the Group.

In April 2001 the Group presented the Framework, to widespread acclaim. A month later, Council undertook to “enshrine the waterfront framework in the District Plan.” (WCC Waterfront Newsletter Issue No. 9)

The Leadership Group felt very strongly about the Outer T, recognising it as a site calling for special treatment. They described the site as “special and unique” and “a focus for the waterfront and for vessels entering the inner harbour”. They recommended that “a structure that reflects this ‘iconic’ nature should be located on the Outer T.”

The Leadership Group felt so strongly about this site that it was considered too important to leave to the normal processes to decide what should be built there. For this site - and this site only - the Group stipulated “a competition should be held to explore options for the outer T. The competition brief will require all proposals to respect the general principles of the framework including public access and the importance of the view out to the harbour”. The Framework also noted the importance of taking an integrated approach – treating the T as one whole site, rather than treating each arm of the T separately.

The word “structure” was carefully selected. The Group did not want to constrain the nature of what might be put on this site. It could be a statue, an arch, a small or large building. The critical thing was that the most appropriate development be selected through a design competition.

Unfortunately, in 1998, the waterfront management company had issued a developer’s licence to Wellington Investments Ltd (WIL), to come up with a proposal for the Outer T. This licence has twice been renewed, with the Council’s blessing, totally undermining what has been agreed since, with the Framework. The proposal presented by WIL was none other than the Hilton Hotel and it is that proposal which is now before the Environment Court. It is before the Court because of the many environmental problems identified by Wellington Civic Trust, Waterfront Watch and other submitters to the original case and to the Appeal, that the proposal creates for the site.

Despite knowing of the existence of the WIL licence, in April 2001 the Councillors formally adopted the Framework, and the moral obligations it created to the people of Wellington. The City Council agreed to “defer the competition” while they continued negotiations with WIL over the use of the site. Both the Wellington City Council and Greater Wellington Regional Council (which also has jurisdiction over Queen’s Wharf) subsequently gave consent to the construction of the hotel).

In effect, the Councils have dug a great big hole for themselves. The Waterfront Framework sets out the public’s aspirations for this site. But by giving consent to the Hilton Hotel, the Regional and City Councils have departed from the Framework and in so doing have betrayed the public’s trust. The City Councillors have not honoured their undertaking to treat this iconic site as special and unique. They have not honoured their undertaking to hold a design competition.

The case to be decided in the Environment Court is on legal issues. The case outside the Court will be decided on moral issues. What faith can we as citizens place in the undertakings our Mayor and Councillors have made to us on the Waterfront Framework? I call on the Regional and City Councils and Wellington Waterfront Ltd to uphold the democratic process and the integrity of the city’s district plan. Honour the Waterfront Framework in deeds not just words.
Dianne Buchan

Tour of special places – special fundraising event February 16th.

A wonderful opportunity is planned from 1pm-5pm on Saturday the 16th of February for the members and friends of the Civic Trust to raise funds towards our legal costs. A tour is being organised of very special buildings and private apartments in downtown Wellington. This should take 3-4 hours and can be completed on foot. We are planning to start in Oriental Bay and work around to the Kate Sheppard Apartments at the bottom of Molesworth Street.

Some of the highlights of the tour will be (subject to confirmation) apartments in the Herd Street Post Office Building, Museum Hotel, Odlins Building (including the Stock Exchange) the Queen's Wharf Apartments and the Kate Sheppard Apartments. We are also seeking access to an interesting private home and a very exciting new commercial building.

Tickets will be limited and for \$40 single and \$70 a couple this represents value for money and a great outing for you and your friends. You will get to see inside buildings apartments you would never otherwise see.

Full details will be available in January to all those who have registered. Book now to secure a place. For more information please contact: Diana on Diana.shand@xtra.co.nz or 021 471 989

To book your place on the tour phone 3840116 or email Annep@corydon.co.nz

Thai Embassy site (former Thorndon Tavern), Molesworth Street.

Board members have been in contact with both the Thai Embassy and the Mayor about this site, which we noted “is in a prominent position close to important national buildings and is a depressing feature in what should be a quality area of the city”.

We understand from the Thai authorities that the site is still held for future embassy purposes, although the 1970s-era tavern has now been closed up for many years.

The Civic Trust feels that Wellington should not have to put up with this eyesore indefinitely. As the present deteriorating building will have to be demolished eventually, we have suggested that the City Council use its good offices to persuade the Thai authorities to carry out this part of the work immediately, and have the vacant site landscaped. If the two parties were willing to co-operate in creating an attractive corner garden – which would complement the Hungarian Garden opposite, on the corner of Molesworth and Hawkestone Streets, which was an entry in the Civic Trust's 2006 Awards competition – a happy result for everyone, including citizens at large.

Gardens in the sky

Wellington City Council's recent adoption of a carbon neutral vision presents an ideal vehicle for discussing the benefits of modern roof garden technology, writes Board member Callum Strong. We've come along way since the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, and with over 40 years of green roof development in Europe and more recently North America, Canada and South East Asia, we are in an ideal position to integrate proven green roof systems. Mr Strong has been drafting a paper on green roof policy, looking at incentive schemes, subsidies and how they can be integrated into planning laws.

Roof gardens have collective public benefits of reducing stormwater runoff, removing pollutants and carbon emissions from the air and improving biodiversity by creating havens for birds and insects. There are also private benefits of lowering energy usage through insulation, more usable space for building occupants and increasing the lifespan of the roof itself.

With the continued loss of green spaces throughout Wellington city, a projected increase in rainfall due to global warming and an ever increasing urban population which places growing pressure on public spaces and infrastructure now is the time to integrate roof gardens into the fabric of the city. The paper will be submitted to the Council in the near future.



Special Christmas Offer

We are offering members the chance to buy a Special Gift Subscription for 2008 for \$20 Individual or \$30 Family. We are also offering the book "For Love of this City" Published last year on the occasion of the Wellington Civic Trust's 25th Anniversary this book gives a fascinating and detailed account of the people and issues that have formed the basis of the Trust and its work in Wellington over the last 25 years. Copies are available for \$20.

Please contact Anne Phiri or Di Buchan to purchase either of these items on 384 0116 or email annep@corydon.co.nz

Wellington Civic Trust 2007			
Chair:	Seddon Bennington		
Deputy:	Di Buchan		
Secretary:	Alan Smith		
Treasurer:	Di Buchan		
Membership Secretary:	Peter Baillie		
SUB-COMMITTEE RESPONSIBILITIES 2007/8			
Northern Gateway		Traffic and Transport	
Alan Smith (Chair)	Chris Watson	Chris Watson (chair)	Neville Beach
Duncan Joiner	Peter Reilly	Anthony Cross	Diana Shand
Neville Beach	Blair Badcock	Michael Dudding	Alan Smith
Anthony Cross	Di Buchan		
Government Centre/Capital Precinct		Website	
Peter Brooks (Chair)	Alan Smith	Callum Strong	
Duncan Joiner	Blair Badcock		
Michael Dudding			
District Plan Changes and Resource Consents		Newsletter	
Tony Town (Chair)	Others as required.	David Pucher	
Waterfront			
Seddon Beddington (Chair)	Diana Shand		
David Pucher	Callum Strong		
Di Buchan			
Publicity and membership			
Seddon Bennington	Margaret Clark		
Callum Strong	Peter Baillie		