

# Our City Tomorrow

**Designing for an Inclusive Wellington:**  
Synthesis and analysis

**Global Research *for* Wellington City Council**

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**Absolutely Positively**  
**Wellington City Council**  
Me Heke Ki Pōneke



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

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Table of Contents .....	1
Overview.....	2
Analysis process.....	2
Summary of key findings .....	3
Activity One .....	4
Summary of section findings .....	4
Synthesis of group comments .....	5
Community and social connections .....	5
Housing .....	5
Transport and mobility .....	6
Information about aging population.....	6
Affordability .....	6
Recreation and amenities .....	6
Natural hazards.....	7
Healthcare.....	7
Other .....	7
Activity Two .....	8
Synthesis and summary of section findings .....	8
Inclusive .....	8
Exclusive.....	8
Image review .....	9
Participants image choices for INCLUSIVE .....	9
Participant image choices for EXCLUSIVE .....	11
Activity Three.....	13
Summary of section findings .....	13
Synthesis of group comments .....	14
Inclusion.....	14
Public spaces.....	14
Development, design and policy.....	14
Social .....	15
Housing .....	15
Age in place.....	15
People .....	15
Other .....	15

## OVERVIEW

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This report contains analysis of the comments received during the Our City Tomorrow: Designing for an Inclusive Wellington workshop 2017.

Three group exercises were completed to identify:

- How the aging population can deal with challenges of; population growth, sea level rise and climate change, and seismic risks.
- Elements of urban design/infrastructure that demonstrate inclusive or exclusive environments.
- Principles that would help make Wellington inclusive, considering: transport and accessibility, public realm – environment and arts, building and housing, infrastructure, and community and wellbeing

This report is broken into three sections based on each of the group exercises. Each section commences with a summary of findings and is followed by a synthesis of all comments received on that section. How the information was collected for each activity is explained with each section.

### ***Analysis process***

All comments were transcribed verbatim from the workshop's prepared sheets. The comments were then entered into specialist qualitative analysis software (NVivo), which assisted analysts in the organising and synthesis of information into appropriate themes and topics. Every comment was read by an analyst and all coding was peer reviewed. The content of the information collected informed the synthesis and presentation of findings, which appear in this report.

For most of the exercises, the data that was collected was in note or bullet point form. Some points were single or a few-word statements. Analysts were required to organise this information into appropriate topics, without over-interpreting the points made. In some instances, when analysts were unsure of the full meaning of comments or when synthesising a broad range of ideas made finding common themes difficult, participants' notes have been presented verbatim. Future workshop analysis will benefit from participants making full points, which clearly explain particular opinions/ideas.

## SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

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The following discussion presents the most commonly made points by participants across all topics. Future challenges facing Wellington were viewed as impacting on the aging population mostly in social ways. Themes of social connectivity, inclusivity and community came through strongly with participants identifying several ways in which these social issues can be addressed. These included community initiatives, housing, and transport.

Given the challenges of population growth, sea level rise, climate change, and seismic risk, the most important aspects for the aging population were:

- **Community, social connections and inclusivity:** Connected communities, spaces that offer social interactions or opportunities, and facilities and infrastructure that is inclusive of all ages.
- **Housing:** Residential areas that support all ages. Affordability consideration for older people on limited income.
- **Transport and mobility:** Ensuring streets and city areas are walkable for all ages. Transport modes support mobility of elderly.

Activity two gave participants the opportunity to identify features within images that they regard as either inclusive or exclusive – participants identified several physical features that serve to make public spaces more inclusive (e.g., the availability of seating options), as well as features which can exclude (e.g., narrow walkways or difficult surfaces).

The most commonly identified images with features that participants viewed as **inclusive** were:

- **Seating:** Dedicated or incidental seating, or seating that doubles as edging
- **Wide pedestrian areas:** More space for people not using vehicles

The most commonly identified images, with features that participants viewed as **exclusive** were:

- **Difficult surfaces:** including slippery, unsealed, steep, or raised surfaces.
- **Unclear wayfinding:** lack of signage and ill-defined paths.

Activity three asked participants to identify key principles that would encourage Wellington to be inclusive. Participants mostly referenced ideas such as social connectedness, sense of community and good public spaces as integral to creating an inclusive Wellington. Findings suggest that a better connected and engaged community would lead to more inclusivity.

Suggested principles that would help make Wellington inclusive were grouped around a few key themes:

- **General inclusiveness** was desired generally, with acknowledgement that the issues are complex. Multiple suggestions were made regarding how inclusiveness might occur.
- **Public places** were identified as key spaces to foster inclusiveness.
- **Process:** participation at many levels was identified as a way to promote inclusiveness.

## ACTIVITY ONE

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Workshop question: *Given the challenges below, what does it mean for the aging population in our city?*

- *Population growth*
- *Sea level rise and climate change*
- *Seismic risks*

### Summary of section findings

- The importance of **community, social connections and inclusivity** for older people in the city was one of the key findings from this section.
  - Several people identified the need for community facilities, diverse and multi-generational living, open public/social spaces, and inclusive services and facilities.
- **Housing** was another frequently mentioned topic.
  - The challenge of apartment living and perceptions around that concept was suggested by a few participants. Comments indicated people perceive owning a home as a greater experience than apartment living and therefore was a challenge to getting people moving into intensified residential property in the central city.
  - Affordability of housing was also mentioned by a few participants. A challenge for older people is limited income.
- **Transport** is an important aspect for older people. Ensuring mobility and pedestrian friendly streetscapes was identified by participants.
- Understanding, and gathering **information about the aging population** was suggested by in several comments. Some of these comments implied they were concerned about the assumptions being made about the older population. They also suggested better defining an 'aging person'.
- **Affordability, recreation and healthcare** were some of the other topics mentioned by participants. These aspects were identified as important, as well as needing to be accessible and inclusive for older people.
- **Natural hazards** were identified as high risk to older people.
  - Participants suggested they often must deal with the hazards alone, and have a limited fixed income to use for repairs and emergency response.
  - One participant mentioned the insight older people could provide with their experience of risks.

## Synthesis of group comments

Participants recorded responses to the workshop question on large posters, or post-it notes, for this activity. Comments are organised into themes and discussed in order of most discussed to least discussed. Quotes are centred and italicised.

### ***Community and social connections***

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#### **13 comments**

Several participants discussed the importance of social connectedness and community values.

Comments suggested a number of aspects of community that they felt were important for the aging population, including:

- Multi-generational
- Sense of community increases safety
- Connected communities
- Community services provided within close proximity
- Community facilities match growth of population

*Community: In high rises where is the community. Does not exist like on other suburbs. Community makes people feel safe, this is missing from the central city. Connection reduces social isolation as well.*

*How to build local community cross-generational, sharing knowledge, skills capacity*

Some participants also referred to the importance of social connections, and inclusivity.

*Connected community more than accommodation. Dander is in looking at accessibility outside of community. "lose community and you lose your soul".*

A couple of comments suggested isolation as high risk for the older population, meaning sense of community and social connections are significant for positive well-being.

*Communities: social isolation (risk); intergenerational activity; mobile population; opportunity to create high rises communities.*

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### ***Housing***

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#### **7 comments**

Housing was discussed by several participants. Comments ranged across a number of topics including:

- Affordability
- Perceptions and attitudes towards home ownership
- Opportunity to create high rise communities
- Challenges from perceptions of apartment living

*Connectivity to place = lacking in building apts*

*Affordable rental model vs home ownership model. Perception that you need to own a home.*

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## Transport and mobility

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### 6 comments

Mobility and transport were frequently stated in a number of comments. This is an important aspect of city design for older people.

*Mobility, affordability, community: need to be considered together.*

*Transport: opportunities to pedestrianise; transport challenges; mobility challenges- need space near them for recreation etc.; bigger focus on wayfinding.*

A couple of participants also suggested flat access and pathways.

*Transport, level footpaths*

*Wellington geography- flat access.*

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## Information about aging population

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### 5 comments

Several participants highlighted the need to understand the aging population in order to better provide for them.

*Important not to assume all older people are the same*

*Is there need to research whether there is a move of older people "back" into the city. Looking at other cities Kyoto, Toyama. Italian cities.*

A few comments specifically referred to the need to define what an aging person is.

*What is an aging person? Healthy, living longer, active, expectations increase. Perceptions of what it is means to be old, "seniors".*

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## Affordability

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### 4 comments

Four participants generally stated the affordability for older people living in the city. Comments referred to general affordability, housing and transport affordability.

*Has to be affordable aged groups experience a loss of income as they stop working. Central city has to be affordable in order to be useable.*

*Mobility, affordability, community: need to be considered together.*

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## Recreation and amenities

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### 4 comments

Participants discussed the need for recreational facilities. Comments referred to activities and amenities that are attractive for older people, age-appropriate recreation, and recreational space within close proximity.

*mobility challenges- need space near them for recreation etc.; bigger focus on wayfinding.*

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## Natural hazards

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### 3 comments

Two of the comments that referred to natural hazards specifically discussed the high risk of earthquakes and their impacts on older people.

*Seismic: earthquakes distressing for those living alone; cost of earthquake repairs on fixed income; ability to get insurance on fixed incomes.*

One participant suggested using experience from older people in managing risks. This comment implies elderly have helpful insight from experience to share with the wider community and to build resilience.

*Utilise experience of people in risks*

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## Healthcare

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### 2 comments

Participants discussed the need for healthcare services that are age appropriate and close to home.

*Services: Health services closer to home; social and community services squeezed out of central city; need health and social services to match growth.*

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## Other

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### 5 comments

A broad range of other topics or suggestions were discussed by participants. These other comments are included verbatim.

*Council can't afford not to deal with this issue. Working towards for the future.*

*The central city is not the place you come to age. Currently to work, study, contribute. History is to retire out of Wellington e.g., Kapiti Coast.*

*Refugees social isolation (no safe place, language, culture)*

*Working life is also an important contributor. Support how?  
Encourage economy to support beyond 9-5 life. Transit.  
Flexibility working.*

*Connections to safe city*

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## ACTIVITY TWO

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Workshop question: **Review the photos of Wellington provided. Which of the photos demonstrate an environment that is inclusive and which one exclusive? Stick the photos on two separate posters and justify your decision.**

### Synthesis and summary of section findings

#### **Inclusive**

The most frequently identified inclusive features were seating and wide pedestrian areas.

- **Seating**, benches, or “good seating” was pointed out or annotated on various images as inclusive. In addition, images with seating as a prominent feature were placed on *Inclusive* posters. In one case it was noted that for seating to be utilised, access to it must also be provided (by level path, for example).
- **Wide paths**, or broad/clear pedestrian areas were identified in as many images as seating. Spaces for people to travel through on foot were marked as inclusive if they were clearly defined, flat (or with a gentle gradient), or free from obstructions.
- **Wayfinding guides**, such as signage, and clearly marked steps were noted three times. Hand rails (by stairs) were marked in two images as inclusive.
- **Other** features identified in photos included open/communal space, and a welcoming feel. Two accessibility features were identified: kneeling buses, and wheelchair accessible toilets.

#### **Exclusive**

The most frequently identified exclusive features were surfaces that could make moving through them difficult.

- **Surfaces** were the feature most considered exclusive. This included slippery surfaces (paved/uncovered), surfaces that were unsealed, surfaces with steep gradients, or surfaces with raised sections or multiple levels.
- **Wayfinding** issues were noted three times as having the potential to exclude groups of people, one explicitly where there was a lack of signage was noted as exclusive.
- **Other** features included: no shelter at a place where people might need to wait (for taxis etc.); the general unwelcoming look of one image. Note that several images were placed on the *Exclusive* poster with no specific features marked or annotated (see below).

## Image review

Participants were asked to place photographs on two separate posters (inclusive, or exclusive) and to justify their decision. Note that some groups annotated images, or marked features in images as either inclusive or exclusive. Others simply placed the image under one heading or the other.

The left column shows all images included under inclusive/exclusive headings, the right column shows annotations (in quotation marks) or features marked on each image (if any).

### ***Participants image choices for INCLUSIVE***



-*"Can kneel on request"*



-*"Wide is good"*

-*"Width"*



-*"Good seating"*



-*Bench seating*

-*Stair hand rails*



-*"Clear pathway through"*

-*"Seating good"*

-*"Grading +"*

-*"Welcome, open"*



-*"Communal space" (grassy area)*





- “Lower speed accessible”
- “Inclusive”



- “Wide spaces for walking”
- “Seating options”



- “White lines on steps”
- “Hand rail good”
- “Good wheelchair toilets”



- “Good signage”



- “Inclusive way finding”
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## Participant image choices for EXCLUSIVE

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-“Exclusive- slippery when wet”

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-“Need better signage”

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-“Exclusive- steps/steep ramps way in”

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-“Hard to get down”

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-“Not clear wayfinding”

-“Might be slippery”

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-“Slippery surface”

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-“Raised grass not accessible”

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-“Hard to get from seat to path”

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-“Jagged step edging”

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-“No shelter”

-“Not welcome, distance, not stay”

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-“Not wheelchair friendly path”

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*-“Levels and bean bags not accessible”*



## ACTIVITY THREE

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Workshop question: ***Based on the work you've done until now, collectively define principles that would help make Wellington inclusive. Consider:***

- ***Transport and accessibility***
- ***Public realm – environment and arts***
- ***Buildings and housing***
- ***Infrastructure***
- ***Community and wellbeing***

### Summary of section findings

Inclusive principles raised by workshop participants were predominately focussed on age, Wellington's aging population, and the ways in which this group can be accommodated.

- Inclusive principles were supported in general terms, with participants highlighting the process as one way in which to engage a range of age-groups.
- Comments in support of inclusivity discussed inclusive decision-making, and encouraging partnerships with the elderly to ensure appropriate and relevant city and amenity design.
- More specific principles were grouped around the designated activity topics, and included: public spaces; development, design and policy; social issues; housing issues; aging-in-place; people; and, other.
- The importance of public and social spaces that encourage use, and that enable people to interact, were highlighted in comments across many themes.

## Synthesis of group comments

Participants recorded responses to the workshop question on large posters, or post-it notes for this activity. Comments are organised into themes and discussed in order of most discussed to least discussed. Quotes are centred and italicised.

### ***Inclusion***

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#### **13 comments**

When developing inclusive principles, many comments were non-specific in nature, one simply imploring decision-makers to “work on a principle of inclusion”. Inclusive design, inclusive environments, and including a wide range of age groups in city life were typical comments. Other comments focussed on the concepts of partnership and participation in relation to the process of inclusion.

*promote intergenerational activity and living*

*WCC setting benchmark for inclusive design, legislation in building and planning*

*welcoming environments for all*

*co-creation and participation*

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### ***Public spaces***

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#### **8 comments**

Several comments noted general environmental spaces and public spaces. Three of these comments used the phrase “bumping space” as a desirable outcome of effective design of public spaces. Connecting people, and people with the environment, were prominent features of these comments.

*"verandas" in the CBD, seating, bumping, chatting, green spaces*

*Biophilic- connection with green and blue space*

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### ***Development, design and policy***

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#### **7 comments**

Several participants discussed development ideas, design principles, and policies that would demonstrate a more inclusive Wellington. These ideas included:

- Co-designing the city/inclusive decision-making
- Learning from other cities
- Anti-poverty measures
- Reflecting the elderly’s individual desires in design
- Create new partnerships, private places and spaces
- Hyper-local decisions, local ownership, celebrating the hyper local
- Digital infrastructure.

*Principles that would help make Wellington inclusive: WCC setting benchmark for inclusive design, legislation in building and planning*

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## Social

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### 5 comments

Comments referring to social aspects of the city covered a range of topics. These included:

- Addressing social issues
  - Recognising different cultures concepts of need for connection/interdependence
  - Addressing the issue of social isolation
  - Community connections through skills such as gardening and cooking.
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## Housing

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### 3 comments

Two comments about housing stated the importance of addressing it, one specifically referred to involving Housing NZ.

*Principles that would help make Wellington inclusive: get housing NZ and other service providers involved*

*Address social issues: social, housing, design, connections*

Another comment suggested universal design of housing for all generations.

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## Age in place

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### 3 comments

Three participants discussed the concept of 'aging-in-place'. One comment said the opportunity to age-in-place should be given as much as possible, while still assessing the overall implications of it.

One comment argued the concept used as a slogan leads to misunderstanding and confusion. Another participant suggested the definition of the concept could change for succeeding generations.

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## People

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### 3 comments

A few participants stated people focussed principles for an inclusive Wellington.

Participants specifically discussed providing features that are good for old people, and the benefits to the wider population.

*Principles that would help make Wellington inclusive: giving meaning to older people and their knowledge and experience*

*What is going to be good for the aging will potentially be good for younger people too*

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## Other

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### 7 comments

A broad range of other topics and principles were covered in comments. These outlying comments are included verbatim.

*Being aware that 'slogans' (like aging-in-place) can be a source of misunderstanding or exclusion*

*Start with what's good for the most vulnerable*

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*Demographic research*

*Address social issues: Anti-poverty measures*

*Intersectional approach, issues of accountability, inequality, social isolation etc., also relevant to other communities too, don't silo the conversation*

*No community left behind*

*Partnership and participation: sharing best practice, reaching out to share and learn*

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