

1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of this plan

The purpose of the Northern Reserves Management Plan (NRMP) is to provide Wellington City Council with a clear framework for day to day management and decision making for the Council-owned reserves and open spaces in the northern area (northern reserves) for the next 10 years. Objectives and policies give guidance for the development, management, protection, operation and public use of the northern reserves.

A primary objective of the NRMP is to ensure that the local and wider connections, recreational and ecological, are well integrated as development proceeds. The extent, location, form, and connectedness of open space at the local as well as the wider landscape scale are key determinants of visual amenity values as well as the wider landscapes character and quality.

Specifically it will:

- ensure reserves are managed and maintained in a consistent manner by providing common objectives and policies
- ensure appropriate protection and management for important natural, recreation, historical and cultural values on Council owned reserve land and open space
- provide prioritised strategic management initiatives
- provide a framework to achieve connectivity and sustainability in and between the northern reserves

1.2 Northern Reserves

The northern area is defined as the north-western corridor from Ngauranga Gorge to the south of Porirua. It is bounded by Spicers, Ohariu and Totara Ridges in the west and the Horokiwi Ridge and harbour escarpment in the east. This plan covers the management and planning of Council-owned reserves and open spaces within the northern area.

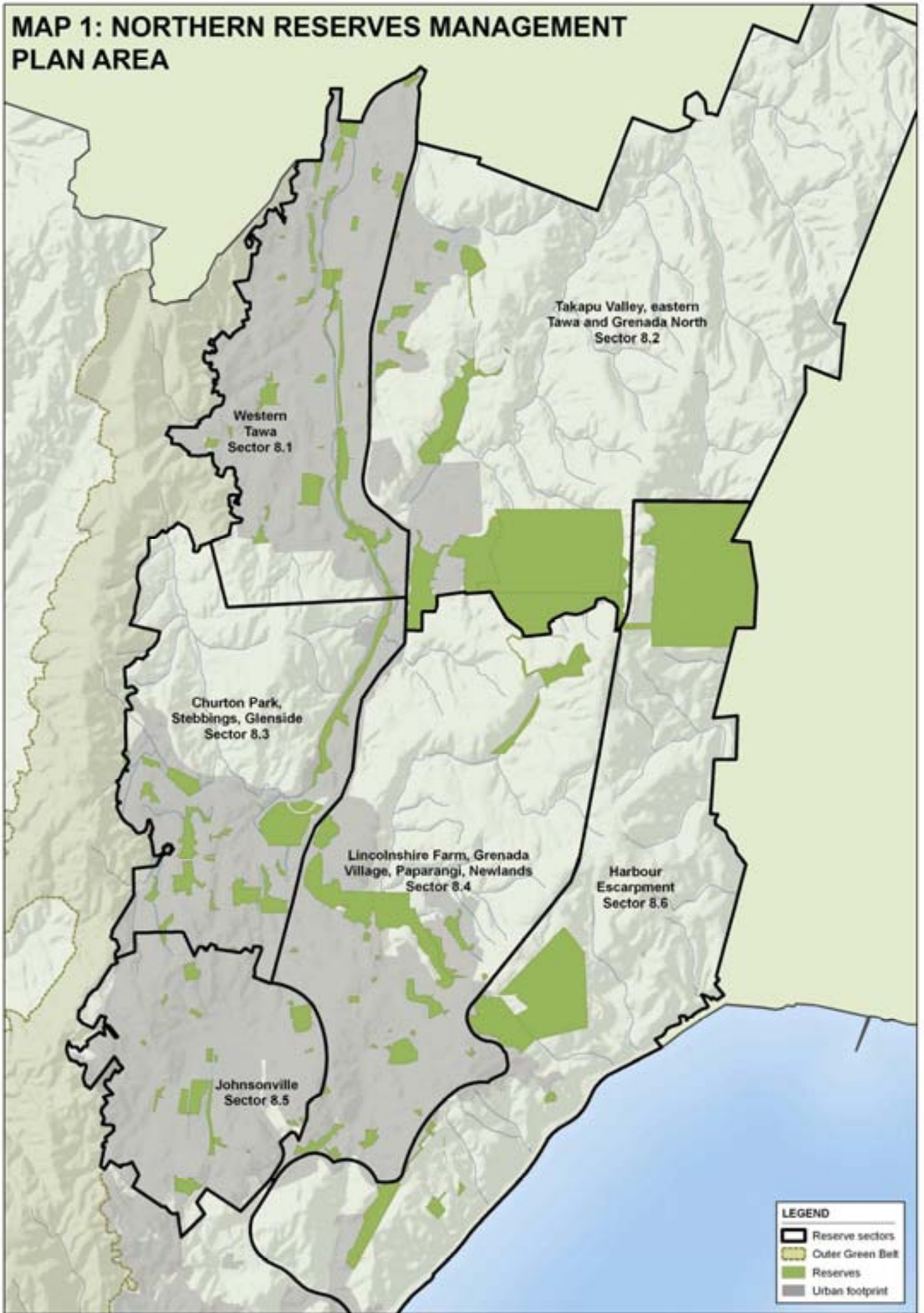
The northern reserves are not a single entity but rather a number of different reserves from large rural character blocks, important landscape and ecological areas, local parks, esplanade strips and accessways. There are 106 reserves and Council-owned open spaces in the area spread throughout 12 suburbs – Tawa, Takapu Valley, Grenada North, Glenside, Grenada Village, Churton Park, Paparangi, Woodridge, Horokiwi, Newlands, Johnsonville and Ngauranga.

Nearly half of these are local parks, a quarter are ecological areas, 13 sportsfields, 4 community parks and one cemetery.

There are some areas that are reserve within the northern area but are excluded from this plan:

- the Outer Green Belt has its own management plan (Wellington's Outer Green Belt Management Plan - OGBMP)

MAP 1: NORTHERN RESERVES MANAGEMENT PLAN AREA



In addition note the following:

- the plan will not provide specific management direction for private land but may provide advocacy recommendations.
- an analysis of sportsfield use and future demand is being undertaken as part of a review of the Sportsfield Asset Management Plan. A summary of the findings are included in this plan.
- The plan will include areas of legal road that are not covered by the formed carriageway (known as road reserve) of the following roads: Takapu Road, Main Road Tawa.

1.3 Structure of the Northern Reserves Management Plan

In order to provide a framework to achieve connectivity and sustainability in the northern reserves, this Plan is principally structured around five key themes:

1. Landscape
2. Ecology
3. Recreation
4. Tracks and access
5. Culture and History

While the Plan is structured around themes, the area is divided into sectors for the purposes of implementation and ease of understanding for local communities. These sectors are:

1. Western Tawa
2. Takapu Valley, eastern Tawa, Grenada North
3. Churton Park, Stebbings, Glenside
4. Lincolnshire Farm, Grenada Village, Paparangi, Newlands,
5. Johnsonville
6. Harbour Escarpment

1.4 Vision

The northern reserves will provide for the reserve requirements of the local communities and contribute to the wider open space and reserve needs of Wellington where appropriate.

1.4.1 Landscape

- Protect the natural character of reserve areas to maintain the unique landscape of the northern areas.
- Protect and enhance corridors of vegetation to provide coherence and unifying themes across the landscape.

1.4.2 Ecology

- Ensure the protection of streams, natural water courses, forest remnants and other important ecosystems so that:

- the reserve network comprises representative examples of the existing indigenous biodiversity of the northern area
 - the biodiversity of the northern area is protected, enhanced and functions as a well connected system.
 - pest plants and animals are controlled efficiently and effectively.
 - changes and influences to the health of streams, forest remnants and other important ecosystems are monitored and acted upon appropriately.
 - landowners are motivated, inspired and educated to protect biodiversity on their own land.
- Restore and enhance streams, forest remnants and other important ecosystems so that:
 - there is continuous riparian cover alongside all streams that run through reserves.
 - restoration is carried out to improve ecological connectivity and to enhance existing ecosystems.
 - communities are motivated, inspired and educated to get involved in conserving and enhancing biodiversity.

1.4.3 Recreation

- Provide outdoor recreational opportunities and experiences that are environmentally and socially sustainable and accessible to communities.
- Ensure the provision of recreational opportunities and experiences keeps pace with population growth in the north.

1.4.4 Tracks and access

- Develop a quality primary network accessing major destination points in the northern area, and linking with an equitable distribution of secondary and local track networks and recreational facilities.
- Ensure that the network provides for a range of user interest, skill, abilities and fitness levels.

1.4.5 Culture and history

- Recognise, protect and interpret the historical and cultural site features and values of the northern reserves.
- Facilitate and enable the exercise of tino rangatiratanga and kaitiakitanga by Wellington's tangata whenua and other Maori.

1.4.6 Administration

- Manage the northern reserves in a manner that reflects their reserve purpose or proposed purpose, site values and the vision and objectives for the northern reserves while providing for opportunities for the enjoyment of suitable areas for appropriate activities.

1.5 Strategic fit

In 2005 the Council adopted seven strategies to guide all its activities and business. Of these the Environment and Social and Recreation Strategies are of most relevance to this plan.

1.5.1 Environment Strategy

The Northern Reserves Management Plan sits primarily under this strategy and the following outcomes guide this management plan:

- *More liveable*: Wellington's natural environment will be accessible to all for a wide range of social and recreational opportunities that do not compromise environmental values
- *Stronger sense of place*: Wellington will recognise and protect significant features of its coastal and terrestrial landscape and natural heritage
- *More actively engaged*: Wellington will pursue a collaborative participatory approach towards environmental kaitiakitanga (guardianship) by sharing information within the community and establishing partnerships to achieve environmental goals
- *Better connected*: Wellington will have a network of green spaces and corridors linking the coastline, Town Belt and Outer Green Belt
- *Healthier*: Wellington will protect and restore its land – and water based ecosystems to sustain their natural processes, and to provide habitats for a range of indigenous and non-indigenous plants and animals
- *More competitive*: Wellington's high quality natural environment will attract more visitors, residents and businesses.

1.5.2 Social and Recreation Strategy

The overall goal of this strategy is to build safe, active and healthy communities for a better quality of life. Of particular relevance to this plan is the aim to promote participation in recreation and sport through the continued provision of facilities including playgrounds and sportsfields.

1.6 Key guiding plans

There are two key guiding documents that provide the context for the Northern Reserves Management Plan.

1.6.1 Capital Spaces (1998)

The need for a comprehensive plan for the city's open space resulted in the publication of *Capital Spaces – Open Space Strategy for Wellington, Te Whanganui-a-Tara*. Before the development of the NRMP, *Capital Spaces* provided the most detailed description of what the northern reserves vision was about.

Capital Spaces provides directions for an integrated approach to managing the natural and recreational environment, including recognition of important landscape values.

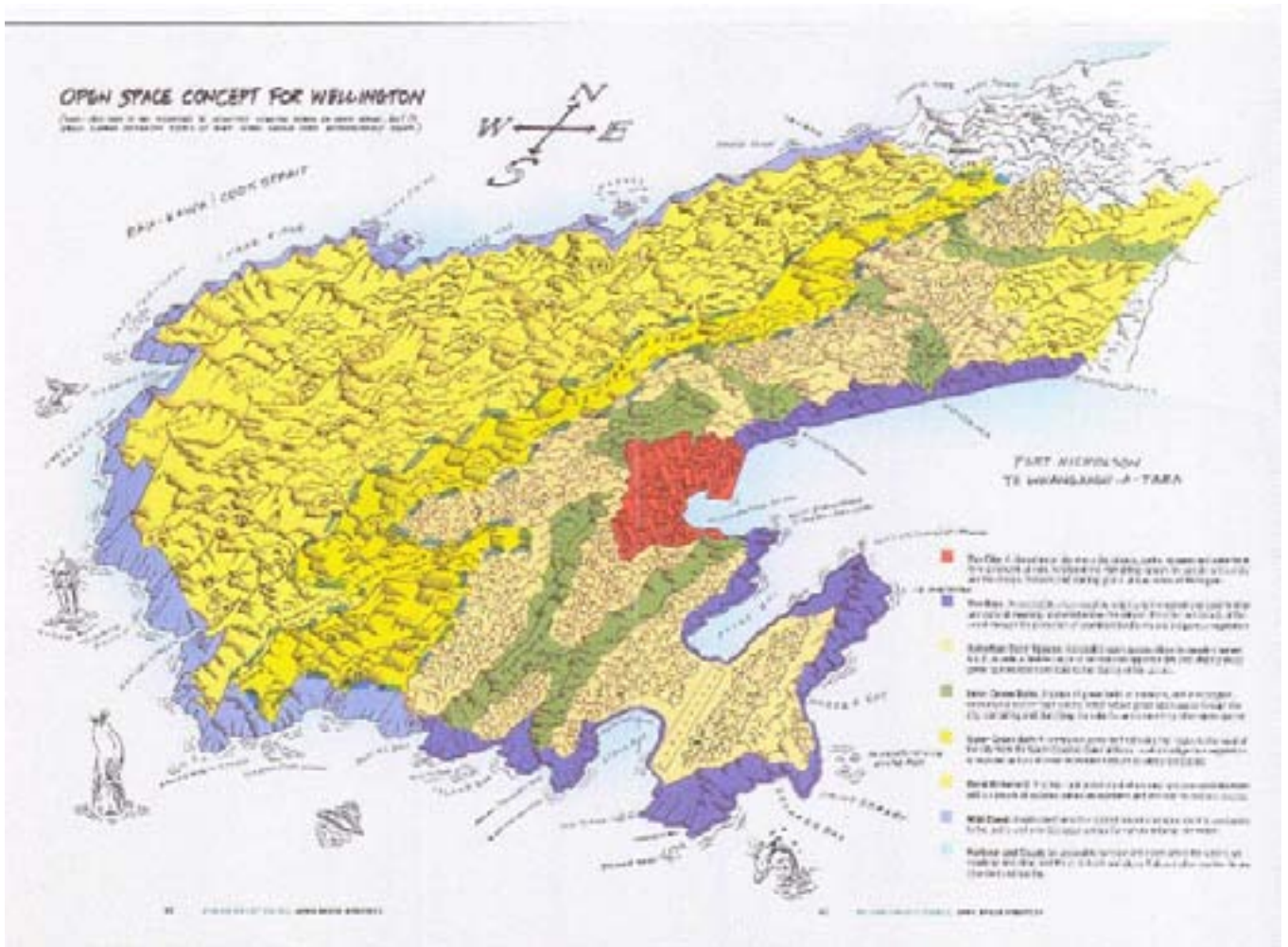


Figure 1. Open Space Concept for Wellington (Capital Spaces, 1998)

Guiding principles include:

- enhancing natural succession
- developing better recreational networks and ecological corridors
- protecting threatened species
- reducing fire hazards
- protecting the coast and streams
- the role of open space in managing the city's urban form
- responding to increasing urban density
- taking opportunities for improving the open space network
- promoting outdoor recreation and healthy lifestyles
- balancing recreation and the natural environment.

Capital Spaces also established an open space concept that reflects spatially the different characteristic landscapes of the city - from the harbour to the rural hinterland. This 'spectrum' of proposed open spaces includes the following main categories:

- the city
- the bays
- suburban open spaces
- inner green belts
- outer green belt
- rural hinterland
- wild coast
- harbour and coast.

Although not referred to specifically as the “Northern Area”, *Capital Spaces* identifies the northern reaches of Wellington primarily as a conglomerate of suburban open spaces and rural hinterland. They are described as:

Suburban open spaces: Accessible open spaces close to people’s homes which provide a flexible range of recreational opportunities and which provide green spaces that contribute to the identity of the suburb.

Rural hinterland: a scenic rural environment where rural land users are interwoven with a network of restored natural ecosystems and informal recreational accesses

This Plan further explores the issues and opportunities for the northern reserves area that are conceptualised in *Capital Spaces* and develops objectives, policies and actions for their implementation.

1.6.2 The Northern Growth Management Framework (2003)

The Northern Growth Management Framework (NGMF) provides a strategy for the future development of the northern part of Wellington city. It provides the communities, landowners, developers and Wellington City Council a set of goals and an agreed process for planning urban expansion.

Wellington City Council decided during its Strategic Review in 2000/01 to create a growth management plan for the northern area. The immediate pressure for new urban development in the Wellington region is in the northern areas, from Johnsonville through to the Kapiti Coast.

The vision for the north is that Wellington’s northern suburbs will continue to develop as an integrated, liveable, diverse, sustainable and prosperous community. This means that the protection of significant landscape, ecological and natural features of the area is a foundation of sustainable urban living.

The northern area may be defined as the north-western corridor on both sides of State Highway 1 north of the Ngauranga Gorge and south of Porirua. It is bounded by the Spicers, Ohariu and Totara ridges in the west and the Horokiwi ridge and western harbour hills in the east.

The northern area is a vital hub for the region as a whole. It is central to the larger Wellington urban area, and is well-connected with road and rail links. New developments could help improve the connections and facilities available to people in existing residential and industrial areas.

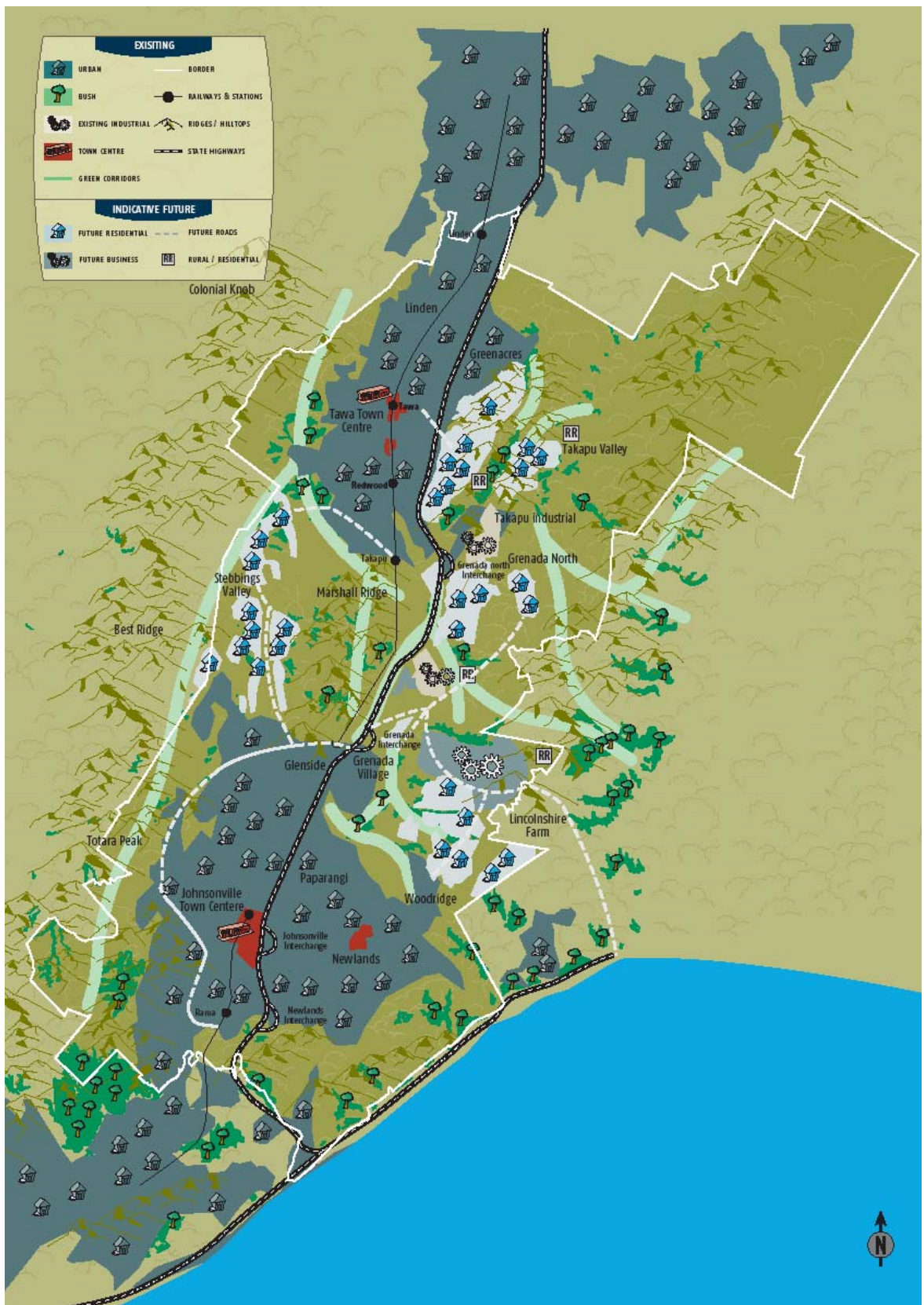


Figure 2. Northern Growth Management Framework

Undeveloped and rural areas contain noteworthy streams, gullies, remnant vegetation, ridgelines and hilltops that merit protection and careful management.

Figure 2 shows the northern area with its existing residential settlement, town centres, road and rail links and significant features. It also indicates areas for future growth.¹

Current projections by the Greater Wellington Regional Council show a likely population increase in the northern suburbs of 5000 in the next 20 years. If current growth rates are maintained, however, this is more likely to reach 10,000.²

Several inter-linking themes underpin the Framework's vision. The themes are supported by values and principles. All are based on the premise of building on existing communities, which is the key growth strategy.

- Liveability: supporting existing communities and ensuring a quality urban form for a quality lifestyle
- Sustainability: managing growth in a sustainable way and responding to our environment
- Accessibility: making it easy to access services and amenities – for work, pleasure, support
- Connectivity: integrating the movement network and enhancing linkages within and between communities and to the city and region
- Prosperity: providing a climate for commercial enterprises and local businesses to thrive

The aim is to manage urban growth to ensure the city's development is sustainable. That means managing urban expansion and urban form to reduce the costs on the community and the environment. This can be achieved by making sure that any expansion of urban areas supports existing centres and makes efficient use of infrastructure, while building up open space areas to set clear distinctions between urban, rural and natural zones.

1.7 Other relevant policies and plans

Other plans that provide guidance in the development of this plan are:

1.7.1 Outer Green Belt Management Plan (2004)

The Outer Green Belt Management Plan ensures the protection of a coherent and essentially natural western ridgeline, and provides for public recreation. The long-term strategy is to provide public access from the

¹ Northern Growth Management Framework 2003

² Northern Growth Management Framework 2003

south coast to Porirua City and Colonial Knob, and eventually north on the national Te Araroa Walkway. It has the following principles:

- *Landscape and landform: To recognise and protect natural landscape and landform characteristics of the ridge system on the western side of the city.*
- *Indigenous ecosystems and important ecological features: To recognise and protect indigenous ecosystems and important ecological features, and in particular the streams and significant areas of indigenous vegetation from which a more continuous band of vegetation will grow.*
- *Recreational places and linkages: To identify and protect important existing or potential recreational sites and linkages (entrance points, tracks, routes and destinations).*
- *Cultural and historic places: To recognise and protect important cultural and historic places and features identified within the Outer Green Belt.*
- *Urban environment edge: To provide a western edge to the urban environment and a buffer of mainly open lands between the city's urban areas and the rural areas of Makara and Ohariu valleys.*
- *Continuity and integrity: To achieve continuity and integrity in the definition and management of the Outer Green Belt.*

1.7.2 Open Space Access Plan (2004)

This plan sets out the Council's strategic vision for tracks in the city's parks, reserves and open spaces. The plan's vision is to *strengthen and improve the open space access network by:*

- *providing outstanding opportunities for recreation and tourism within the open spaces of Wellington*
- *ensuring that tracks provide for a range of user interests, skills, abilities and fitness levels within each area*
- *achieving a quality primary network accessing major destination points in Wellington and adjoining districts, and linking with an equitable distribution of secondary and local track networks and recreational facilities.*

Ten major track initiatives are proposed in the plan. Of relevance to the northern area are:

- The Northern network – a track network for the northern suburbs
- the Harbour Escarpment walk – from Waihinahina Park to Ngauranga Gorge
- upgrading the primary track network
- rationalising secondary links and local networks.

1.7.3 Playground Policy (2002)

This policy defines how the Council will provide playgrounds to the community in an equitable manner recognising the needs of communities and suburbs and taking into account constraints of topography and funding. The objective of the Playgrounds Policy is therefore:

The provision of a range of safe, enjoyable and stimulating playgrounds across the city in a way that best meets the needs of children, care-givers, communities and the city for access, safety, amenity and maintenance.

Working towards this objective will establish an adequate provision of playgrounds in Wellington, as well as ensuring that excessive provision does not occur.

1.7.4 Biodiversity Action Plan (2007)

The Biodiversity Action Plan coordinates the Council's biodiversity activities and identifies local priorities and actions for biodiversity. Biodiversity activities include pest control, revegetation planting, and partnerships with other organisations and groups.

The outcomes of the plan include:

- identifying the current state of Wellington's biodiversity and the areas/species which require the most protection
- protecting Wellington's indigenous biodiversity on both public and private land
- motivating the community to become more involved in biodiversity conservation
- working closely with other organisations to ensure the conservation of Wellington's biodiversity
- restoring our indigenous biodiversity where possible and ensuring that it's easily accessible for all Wellingtonians
- generating quality information through monitoring and research to enable us to conserve and manage our biodiversity into the future.

1.7.5 Recreation Strategy (2003)

The Recreation Strategy sets out a range of desired outcomes and aims in order to deliver quality recreation and leisure opportunities. Recreation and leisure activities contribute to the wellness and vitality of the city and are provided for across a wide variety of organisations and communities. The Council plays a central role in this provision and will continue to develop formal and informal partnerships with organisations and communities that add to the recreation and leisure opportunities.

The plan is of particular relevance in relation to the Council's provision of sportsfields and in this respect it aims to ensure there is easy and affordable access available all year round.

1.7.6 At the Heart – Wellington Regional Recreation Strategy

Over the past 12 months the Council has been working with other agencies to develop a regional recreation strategy: *At the Heart*. This has been lead by the Wellington Regional Recreation Initiatives Group (WRRIG). This group is made up of the Wellington urban councils (Upper Hutt, Hutt City, Porirua, Wellington, Greater Wellington), Capital and Coast District Health Board and Regional Public Health and Sport Wellington.

The scope of the Regional Recreation Strategy encompasses discretionary physical activity (what you choose to do in your spare time, including sports and active recreation), active transport (walking to work, school or local shops) and daily life physical activity (what you do as you go about your day, for example, housework). The broad scope allows for greater collaboration with a wide range of agencies in the facilitation of physical activity.

At the Heart:

- aims for the most effective and efficient delivery of physical activity, maximising uptake by Wellington urban communities over the next three to five years
- considers regional provision issues such as facilities and services and individual district issues where appropriate
- links with the LTCCPs, Wellington Regional Strategy and Council recreation strategies.

The key objectives considered as part of *At the Heart* are:

- integrated future development of sport and physical recreation community plans through the development of community partnerships of stakeholders and users
- cohesive and collaborative planning that considers issues related to society, the environment, transport and economy
- comprehensive funding strategy that enables implementation of initiatives across the region.

1.7.7 Draft Climate Change Action Plan (2007)

This plan identifies cost-effective initiatives for Council operations and the community that will help the Council achieve its carbon neutral vision, and promote sustainable behaviour. The following actions are of particular relevance to the northern reserve management area:

- development of mandatory sustainable building design guidelines for staff to use during the planning process for new buildings and facilities, upgrades, retrofits and renewals
- apply for carbon credits under the Government's Permanent Forest Sink Initiative.

1.7.8 Wellington City District Plan

This is the Council's principal regulatory document setting out objectives and policies, methods and rules for managing the city environment, land uses and associated activities.

The *Wellington City District Plan (District Plan)* is prepared in accordance with the Resource Management Act 1991 and is based on the principles of sustainability:

Dependency all life in the natural environment

Irreversibility some actions can result in permanent loss of species, landforms and heritage

Diversity is necessary in both natural and urban environments

Efficiency in the use of renewable and non-renewable resources

*Finite resources recognition that all resources are finite
Equity in access to and the use of resources
Precautionary approach should be taken where there is uncertainty and
potential for significant harm.*

Generally the Council has not zoned private land for Open Space or Conservation without the agreement of the landowner (usually this is done where land is agreed to be part of a reserve contribution as part of a residential development).

Where a change of zoning is sought from Rural to Residential, then the Council has the ability to consider any information or opinions in making its decision. As with all consent decisions, these matters can be appealed to the Environment Court, and some of the existing zones and special conditions applying to them, are the result of Environment Court decisions following an appeal.

This Plan will be further information that the Council, the community and landowners can use in considering *District Plan* changes and new land use proposals.

1.8 Status of this plan

1.8.1 Reserve and open space planning in Wellington

The Council is responsible for over 250 individual reserves and open space properties covering a total area of 3376 hectares. Of those that are protected under the Reserves Act 1977, the majority are classified as recreation reserves. A smaller number are scenic, historic or local purpose reserves.

With so many individual reserves and open space properties, the Council has rationalised its approach to reserve management planning by identifying nine major clusters. For each of these clusters, the Council will prepare a management plan that seeks among other things, to set management objectives and policies that reflect the particular values of each area consistent with the Council's *Capital Spaces* plan.

1.8.2 The Reserves Act 1977

This cluster plan approach is broadly consistent with the Reserves Act 1977 and its interpretation in the Reserves Act Guide 1999 which makes a number of points about omnibus plans and what they can and cannot do. In particular:

“Provided the requirements of s.41 of the Act are otherwise met, a management plan may cover more than one reserve.

Such a multiple-reserve management plan may cover all reserves of a single class (for example: all recreation reserves) or cover reserves of different classes for which the Council is the administering body.

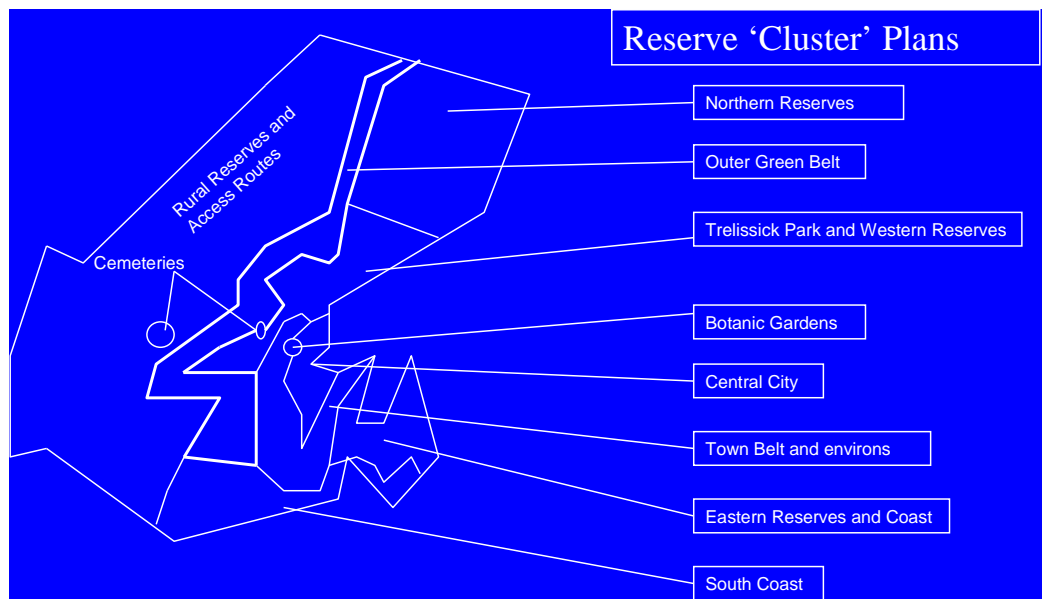


Figure 3. Reserve Cluster Plans

In the latter instance, the provisions in the plan relating to reserves of any particular class must be consistent with the statutory requirements related to that class of reserve (s.41(3)). For example, any goals or objectives in the plan which relate to recreation reserves must be consistent with the purposes defined in s.17. Those for scenic reserves must be consistent with s.19.

The reserves covered by the plan (and their boundaries) must be sufficiently described for a member of the public to recognise them individually. This can be done, for example, by mapping them in adequate detail in the plan. Legal descriptions and references to land status documentation (ie: how the land became a reserve) should be included.

The plan must provide details of the classification of each reserve, and a reference to the authority for the classification (source document) is essential. The purposes for which a reserve must be managed derive from its classification.

The guide further states:

The Council can prepare an advance draft of a plan covering an unclassified reserve(s) for which it is the administering body, provided this does not pre-empt the classification process.

The Council cannot, however, invite public submissions on the draft plan until all the reserves which it covers are classified and the draft plan is consistent with those classifications.

And:

Any land of the Council which is not subject to the Reserves Act 1977 can be included in a multi-reserve plan if the Council wishes. It will need to be

distinguished from the reserves and appropriately provided for (the Council cannot be bound by the terms of the Act for those areas.).

1.8.3 Relationship with Tangata Whenua

Wellington City Council recognises the importance of the mana whenua relationship and has a formal memoranda of understanding with Wellington Tenth Trust and Ngati Toa Rangatira.

Under the memoranda of understanding, each party recognises the authority of the other to exercise their responsibilities – kawanatanga (governance) by the Wellington City Council and rangatiratanga (customary authority) and kaitiakitanga (guardianship) by tangata whenua.

Actions taken under this plan will reflect these principles and are intended to provide opportunities for discussion and to develop partnerships.