



Ngā whare me ngā ratonga hāpori

Community facilities, services, and public health

Background report

March 2026

Absolutely Positively
Wellington City Council
Me Heke Ki Pōneke

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Purpose

This background report provides a clear, evidence-based overview of Wellington City Council's Community facilities, services, and public health activity. It sets out what the Council does, why it does it, how it is funded, how it is performing, and the key issues shaping future choices.

The report is intended to support informed engagement with the Council's role in Community facilities, services, and public health. It provides advisory groups with shared context on Council responsibilities, settings, constraints, and strategic direction, and supports elected members by bringing together relevant information, performance insights, stakeholder views, and emerging challenges to inform deliberations through the Long-term Plan (LTP) 2027–2037 process.

This is not a strategy or a set of recommendations. Rather, it is a foundation document that identifies current settings, pressures, and opportunities, and surfaces the key trade-offs that will need to be considered as the Council refreshes its strategic direction and investment approach for Community facilities, services, and public health within a constrained fiscal environment.

Council Activities

A Council 'activity' is a formal Local Government Act 2002 (LGA 2002) term to refer to Council goods and services. Council activities are grouped for the purposes of the Long-term Plan and budgets – some are relatively stand-alone like transport.

This group of activities includes:

5.2 Community Facilities and Services

- 5.2.1 Libraries
- 5.2.2 Community advocacy
- 5.2.3 Grants (Social and Recreation)
- 5.2.4 Housing
- 5.2.5 Community centres and halls
- 5.2.6 Cemeteries
- 5.2.7 Public Toilets
- 5.2.8 City Safety
- 5.2.9 Emergency Management

5.3 Public Health and Safety

- 5.3.1 Public Health Regulations

What we do as a Council

The Council operates a broad network of facilities, including:

- 12 public libraries that support literacy and learning, provide affordable access to information, support, equipment and resources, free drop-in space, bookable spaces, programmes, events, and skilled staff. We provide access for all to a wide array of books, magazines, DVD, e-books, e-audio, online journals, streaming media and e-music tracks
- 25 community centres (including a central city youth hub) that provide bookable spaces, access to information and resources, free drop-in space, and access to activities
- 131 lease facilities (mainly recreational facilities, but deliver social and wellbeing outcomes), where provision of land and/or buildings enable leaseholders to deliver activities
- 94 public toilets and sports pavilions/beach changing rooms located across the city that provide sanitation services.

Some facilities are identified as Community Emergency Hubs and Emergency Assistance Centres and have extra power and communications capacity, accessibility features, and staffing models critical to citywide response and social recovery performance.

The Council also:

- supports access to social housing by leasing the Council's rental accommodation to the Community Housing Provider Te Toi Mahana (established in 2023) – there are some 3,000 tenants in 1,800 homes managed by Te Toi Mahana.
- facilitates affordable rental options in the city through the Te Kāinga programme, which has focused on converting office blocks into CBD apartments for this purpose
- manages and maintains two cemeteries located at Karori and Mākara, as well as providing cremation services at Karori Cemetery. In addition, the Council partners with Tākai Here partners to support the operation of Opau Urupā in Mākara
- supports social wellbeing in Wellington by working with communities and agencies, allocating \$5.47 million annually in grants through the Tahua Whaihua Hapori - Community Outcomes Fund. The fund supports community-led initiatives that improve safety, wellbeing, resilience and connection in Pōneke. It contributes investment in sports and community facilities, community organisations and youth development organisations, as well as services responding to homelessness, harm prevention and sexual violence prevention. The Council also has other smaller grant funds available to support social wellbeing and environmental initiatives¹
- implements safety and wellbeing initiatives across Wellington, including CCTV monitoring, community patrols, and pilot safety spots

¹ Wellington City Council. *Community support - Funding*.

- provides support for people experiencing homelessness and leads interagency programmes focused on alcohol harm reduction, graffiti management, youth support, sexual violence prevention, and food insecurity
- delivers a robust welfare response and social recovery programme as part of its Civil Defence and Emergency Management (CDEM) responsibilities, coordinating efforts across multiple agencies during major events that impact the city. This includes providing expertise in natural hazard planning to proactively reduce risks, ensuring Wellington is prepared to support its residents and recover effectively from emergencies.

In relation to public health regulations, the council is recognised by the Ministry for Primary Industries as a verifier of food safety systems and maintains a Quality Management System (QMS) to ensure food safety. The Council:

- issues food and alcohol licences
- conducts inspections and hearings.
- responds to environmental and hazardous substance complaints.
- inspects domestic animal facilities.
- issues permits for public trading and events (and issues special alcohol licences for events and conducts extra inspections during events to ensure food safety and compliance).
- enforces compliance for activities such as trade waste.
- issues litter infringements.
- ensures compliance with bylaws and health regulations.
- inspects mouldy rental properties for referral to the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE).

Budget

You can find more information in the LTP 2024 Amendment.²

Percentage of total Council spend:

Opex – 14.1%

Capex – 7.6%

Operating Expenditure

Activity Component Name	Income/ Expense	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	2031/32	2032/33	2033/34
5.2.1 Libraries	Expense	36,338	43,714	45,723	47,754	49,116	50,191	50,715	51,928	51,999	52,295
	Income	(387)	(286)	(305)	(312)	(319)	(325)	(331)	(337)	(343)	(350)
5.2.2 Community Advocacy	Expense	4,445	5,665	5,782	5,735	5,840	5,418	5,514	5,614	5,705	5,848
	Income	(137)	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2
5.2.3 Grants (Social and Recreation)	Expense	5,858	5,503	5,504	5,505	5,506	5,507	5,507	5,508	5,509	5,510
5.2.4 Housing	Expense	39,311	51,889	53,476	59,244	66,605	76,214	83,407	87,384	92,082	96,137
	Income	(19,822)	(19,832)	(20,663)	(21,117)	(21,561)	(21,992)	(22,410)	(22,836)	(23,270)	(23,688)
5.2.5 Community centres and halls	Expense	7,207	9,454	8,253	9,117	9,468	9,913	9,575	9,929	10,314	11,000
	Income	(318)	(324)	(331)	(338)	(346)	(352)	(359)	(366)	(373)	(380)
5.2.6 Cemeteries	Expense	2,437	2,553	2,706	2,803	2,952	3,097	3,202	3,294	3,338	3,442
	Income	(1,151)	(1,188)	(1,202)	(1,228)	(1,254)	(1,279)	(1,303)	(1,328)	(1,353)	(1,378)
5.2.7 Public toilets	Expense	5,594	5,931	6,300	6,335	6,596	6,913	7,212	7,518	7,752	8,011
5.2.8 City safety	Expense	3,665	4,629	4,729	4,860	4,957	5,048	5,008	5,222	5,293	5,421
	Income	(234)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
5.2.9 WREMO	Expense	3,614	3,833	4,015	4,107	4,211	4,331	4,436	4,538	4,632	4,737
	Income	(200)	(204)	(209)	(213)	(217)	(221)	(226)	(230)	(234)	(238)
Total		86,222	111,339	113,780	122,251	131,557	142,463	149,949	155,841	161,052	166,369

² Wellington City Council. *Long-term Plan 2024-34*.

Operating Expenditure

Activity Component Name	Income/ Expense	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	2031/32	2032/33	2033/34
5.3.1 Public Health Regulations	Expense	8,529	10,070	9,681	9,900	10,077	10,342	10,556	10,775	10,956	11,231
	Income	(5,047)	(5,148)	(5,261)	(5,377)	(5,489)	(5,599)	(5,706)	(5,814)	(5,924)	(6,031)
Total		3,482	4,922	4,420	4,523	4,587	4,743	4,850	4,961	5,032	5,200

Capital Expenditure

Activity Component Name	2024/25 Published budget	2024/25 Amendment budget	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	2031/32	2032/33	2033/34
5.2.1 Libraries	6,767	4,614	8,229	3,398	3,359	4,182	3,861	3,738	3,727	3,946	3,769
5.2.4 Housing	48,873	15,549	46,088	59,998	69,988	79,580	77,312	57,199	67,197	53,809	33,546
5.2.5 Community centres and halls	4,340	1,813	1,396	812	3,790	4,249	4,182	33,535	28,787	20,994	24,925
5.2.6 Cemeteries	439	339	1,019	2,415	2,441	1,236	685	522	449	632	363
5.2.7 Public toilets	1,418	871	1,690	2,067	1,882	2,330	1,243	802	807	1,266	868
5.2.8 City safety	2,245	1,448	918	124	127	130	132	135	145	147	150
5.2.9 WREMO	86	86	88	90	92	94	96	97	104	106	108
Total	64,169	24,720	59,428	68,905	81,679	91,801	87,511	96,028	101,216	80,901	63,728

Te Matapihi Central Library opens in the first quarter of 2026

There is no capital expenditure for Public Health.

Community Facilities & Services Funding Sources

Subactivity	User Fees	Rates Contribution
Libraries	0-10%	90-100%
Community Advocacy	0%	100% (Residential targeted)
Grants (Social & Recreation)	0%	100%
Housing	100%	0%
Community Centres & Halls	0-10%	90-100% (Residential targeted)
Cemeteries	40-50%	50-60%
Public Toilets	0%	100%
City Safety	0%	100%
WREMO (Emergency Mgmt)	0%	100%

Public Health Funding Sources

Subactivity	User Fees	Rates Contribution
Public Health Regulation	60-70%	30-40%

Source: 2024 LTP Volume 2

Why is this activity important?

Community facilities and services are central to the Council's social outcome, "A city of health and thriving whānau where people feel safe and connected, that takes an equity approach to caring for its people, and that provides awesome, vibrant and diverse places to meet and play" (Long-term plan 2024). Community facilities are essential social infrastructure that provide welcoming spaces for people to connect, participate, learn, create, and support their overall wellbeing. Through programmes, services, and accessible facilities, the Council helps foster physical, mental, social, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing. These spaces play a vital role in supporting Wellingtonians' health, strengthening community connections, and advancing the city's vision of Pōneke as a creative, thriving place where people and nature flourish.

Public health and safety services contribute to the social outcome and the economic outcome, supporting the outcome of an "innovative and business friendly city (...) with efficient and fit for purpose regulatory processes. Robust public health consenting and compliance activities uphold high standards in food safety, alcohol licensing, and environmental protection. By ensuring these critical safeguards are in place as required by law, the Council creates an environment where people can live and work with confidence, knowing their wellbeing is prioritised.

The burial and cremation services provided by Council reduce public health and environmental risks and ensure we meet our legislative and policy obligations. Through cremation and burial services, and the provision of facilities such as chapels, the Council supports the family and friends of deceased people with respectful, professional assistance, designed to meet a range of bereavement needs. Our cemeteries and their related facilities are an integral part of the social fabric of Wellington.

Current Direction

Direction from Legislation and National Regulation

Local authorities have broad legislated roles in public health, safety and wellbeing: The LGA 2002 a statutory mandate for councils to promote; social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being (the four well-beings) (LGA 2002 section 10 refers) – and the provisions of the LGA 2002 prescribes how Councils are to develop and describe their approach.

The Local Government (Systems Improvement) Amendment Bill seeks to refocus council responsibilities on core infrastructure and services and remove the four well-beings. In a proposed new section, “Core services to be considered in performing role” (proposed new section 11A of the LGA 2002) several Council activities are listed, and these include civil defence emergency management, libraries, museums, reserves, and other community and recreational facilities. Subject to final amendments to the LGA 2002, the role of the Council in delivering some programmes and services may need to be assessed – this would be an incremental process, as any changes to services or levels of service would remain subject to democratic decision-making processes.

The LGA 2002 also provides the framework for setting local authority bylaws and provides the mechanism for prosecutions for non-compliance (relevant to several activity areas including public health).

The Health Act 1956 obligates councils to “improve, promote and protect public health” within their district, and covers specific topics and powers, for example, addressing health nuisances (defined in the Act), appointment of officers, bylaw-making powers.

Local authorities also have multiple prescribed regulatory roles and functions, some key examples:

- The Sale and Supply of Alcohol Act 2012 requires territorial authorities to ensure alcohol is sold and supplied responsibly, and to minimise harm from excessive drinking.
- The Food Act 2014 sets out the purpose, application, principles and risk-based measures for food safety and suitability.
- The Gambling Act 2003 requires councils to and administer a policy on Class 4 gaming machines (location and number) and TAB venues.
- The Litter Act 1979 establishes legal frameworks for managing litter and s penalties.
- Under the Dog Control Act 1996 the Council is responsible for all aspects of dog control in the city, including requirements for registration, leashing and dog welfare.
- The Impound Act 1955 requires the management of public pounds.
- The Burial and Cremation Act 1964 provides a framework for the management of cemeteries and operation of crematoria, as well as a process for certification of cause of death.

Councils must also help plan for and respond to emergencies (natural disasters, pandemics, etc.) to ensure community wellbeing and safety during crises. The Civil Defence Emergency Management Act 2002 requires councils to participate in regional Civil Defence Emergency Management Groups.

Regional settings

The Wellington Regional Economic Development Plan provides strategic direction for economic initiatives, prioritising initiatives that create decent jobs for our growing population and improve quality of life in the region. It emphasises inclusive development and support for thriving Māori and Pasifika communities.³

The Wairarapa-Wellington-Horowhenua Future Development Strategy describes how to deliver well-functioning urban environments and how to provide enough development capacity in the next 30 years to at least meet expected demand.⁴ It outlines where future housing development should occur, including broad locations for homes and the social and physical infrastructure needed to support them, with the following objectives:

- Ensure well-functioning urban environments for all residents
- Provide sufficient development capacity to meet demand over the next 30 years
- Plan for future housing locations and the social/physical infrastructure required to support
- Support community wellbeing and resilience by considering demographic changes and ensuring facilities are robust

Our service network must withstand and rapidly recover from regionally significant hazards, such as large earthquakes, local-source tsunamis, severe weather and flooding, landslip, and extended utility outages. Investment decisions should evidence how they reduce consequence and time to restore services.

Wellington City Council settings

The Council's work in community facilities and services is shaped by a suite of strategies and plans, each designed to address different aspects of wellbeing in Wellington.

- **The Social Wellbeing Framework 2021** is a tool for understanding how the Council can enhance social wellbeing for all residents.
- **The Rainbow Action Plan 2025–2027** identifies priority areas, such as safety, housing, facilities, and services, to support the inclusion and wellbeing of rainbow communities.

³ Wellington Regional Leadership Committee. (2024). *Wellington Regional Economic Development Plan 2022-2032*. Version 2. WellingtonNZ.

⁴ Wellington Regional Leadership Committee. (2024). *Wairarapa-Wellington-Horowhenua Future development strategy 2024-2054*. Greater Wellington Regional Council.

- **The Strategy for Children and Young People 2021** focuses specifically on supporting the wellbeing of young Wellingtonians, helping them to thrive and lead fulfilling lives.
- **The Housing Strategy and Action Plan** sets out a ten-year vision to ensure all Wellingtonians are well housed, with access to safe, warm, dry, and affordable homes.
- **The City Safety and Wellbeing Plan** outlines targeted interventions, partnerships and regulatory measures to address crime, anti-social behaviour and public perceptions of safety while ensuring a compassionate response to homelessness.
- **Te Anamata ā-Kai o Tō Tātou Tāone - Our City's Food Future** supports an integrated, coordinated approach to sustainable, equitable, healthy and resilient food systems in Wellington.
- **The Alcohol Management Strategy 2013** supports the Council's alcohol policy by looking at how we can reduce alcohol-related harm while maintaining a dynamic and vibrant city.
- **Te Awe Māpara – Communities Facilities Plan** sets the Council's 30-year strategic direction for our network of 277 community facilities. The plan's mission, "thriving and accessible community facilities where people connect, have fun and belong" is supported by five outcomes, a future approach and prioritised actions.
- **The Cemeteries Management Plan** for Tawa, Karori and Mākara 2021 aims to ensure we can meet the short and long-term cemetery needs of our growing city.

The Council also has special purpose bylaws, policies and actions plans, for example, Public Places Bylaw, Animal Bylaw, Smokefree Action Plan, Positive Ageing Policy.



Community facilities, services, and public health: Key indicators

Residents Monitoring Survey statistics

Trend markers indicate trends as they appear **over the past few years**, and may differ from annual reporting.

All statistics sourced from the Residents Monitoring Survey 2025 unless otherwise specified. For more information on the full trends, see the Residents Monitoring Survey report.

Key for interpreting trend markers

- relatively stable
- ↗ variable
- ↓ small or incremental decrease
- ↓↓ large or rapid decrease
- ↑ small or incremental increase
- ↑↑ large or rapid increase

No marker = trend data not available

Community facilities and services

Community facilities and services in Wellington play a vital role in daily life, contributing to residents' sense of belonging and overall wellbeing. The greatest population growth in Wellington is projected among those aged 30–49 years and over 70 years. Population growth and an increase in older age groups will drive demand for facilities such as libraries and community centres.⁵

Population growth also shapes the demand for cemetery services – which will need to be accommodated by cemetery services. The number of annual burials and cremations needed is projected to rise from approximately 900 per year in 2018 to between 1,400 and 1,600 per year by 2043.

Indicators

80% ↑

of Wellingtonians visited a library in the past year (Resident's Monitoring Survey 2025), maintaining improvements on the stagnation that has existed since 2019 (-72%). In 2023/24 there were over 1.25 million visits, and 2 million books and resources issued (WCC media release)

85% ↓

of those who used a library were satisfied – representing a drop since 2024 (90%), but relatively in line with previous years

29% ↑

of Wellingtonians visited a community centre in the past year, a steady increase since 2022 (22%). For disabled people* usage was much higher at 46%

23% →

of Wellingtonians visited a community hall in the past year – community hall usage has hovered around 19% to 26% over the past decade of tracking

82% →

of those who has used a community centre or hall (combined) were satisfied in 2024/2025 – unchanged from the previous year

69%

around 69% of the population visit public toilets, which is similar to other TAs (Community facilities needs analysis summary report, 2023)

*Disabled people = people with one or more activity limitation (have a lot of difficulty with, or cannot do activity at all) as per the Washington Group Short Set.

Wellbeing

Recent trends suggest that Wellington residents' overall wellbeing is influenced by a combination of economic conditions, personal health, and access to essential services, with some experiencing increased challenges related to financial stability and basic needs. During emergencies, a higher number of residents require supported sheltering, food safety advice, medication continuity, mobility support, and outreach.

⁵ Wellington City Council. (2023). *Te Awe Māpara – Community Facilities Plan*.

Housing

Housing affordability remains a significant challenge in Wellington, with many renters facing high housing cost burdens and home ownership rates lagging behind national averages. Whilst Wellington city is currently more affordable than New Zealand overall (average mortgage payment to income ratio in the city is 34.7%, vs 38.9% nationally)⁶, this may be influenced by Wellington's relatively high average incomes. Prior to the recent rental price drop, Wellington had one of the highest annual housing costs in New Zealand, second only to Auckland.⁷ The demand for public housing, particularly for smaller units, continues to outpace supply, and Māori and Pacific residents experience particularly low levels of home ownership – in August 2025, 656 people were waiting for public housing in Wellington City, with 73% needing one-bedroom accommodation.⁸

Indicators

81% ↓↓

rated their quality of life positively – a drop from 89% in the 2022 survey (Quality of Life survey 2024)

31%

felt their quality of life had increased compared to the previous 12 months, whilst 27% felt it had decreased (Quality of Life survey 2024)

-2.8% ↓↓

change in number of employed Wellington city residents for the YTD December 2025 (Infometrics)

28%

Of Wellingtonians say they would not be able to pay an unexpected bill of \$2000 within a week without going into debt (Quality of Life survey 2024)

Rising homelessness

The Downtown Community Ministry (DCM) in Wellington recorded 328 people as homeless in January to March 2025, a 5 percent increase on the year prior. Of these 141 people were recorded as rough sleeping, up 24 percent from the year before. In 2024, central government introduced a 'tightened gateway' for emergency housing, revising eligibility and introducing a new responsibilities framework⁹. This has made it harder for some people to access emergency housing. Councils across the motu have also raised concerns that the threshold for mental health assessments is too high and that Corrections releases people into 'no fixed abode'.

⁶ Infometrics. (2026). *Regional economic profile: Housing affordability*.

⁷ Stats NZ. (2024). *Household income and housing-cost statistics: Year ended June 2024*.

⁸ Te Tūāpapa Kura Kāinga Ministry of Housing and Urban Development. (2025). *Local Housing Statistics*. Retrieved December 2025.

⁹ Office of the Associate Minister of Housing (Social Housing). (2024). *Social Security (Emergency Housing) Amendment Regulations 2024*. Cabinet Business Committee paper.

City safety perceptions

Public perceptions of safety in the city have declined in recent years¹⁰. Key social issues noted in the Quality-of-Life survey include people sleeping rough in public places and vehicles, people begging in public places, and antisocial behaviour caused by alcohol or drugs¹¹, and these same themes are consistently noted in the Resident's Monitoring Survey as top reasons for why people feel unsafe.

Indicators

82% ↓

feel safe in the CBD during the day

41% →

feel safe in the CBD after dark

88% →

feel safe in their own neighbourhood after dark (no change since 2019 when tracking began)

97% →

feel safe in their own home after dark (no change since 2019 when tracking began)

44%

have felt unsafe in a public place due to another person's drinking, and this was higher for disabled, Māori, young people, women, central ward residents, and rainbow young people, (Alcohol attitudes and behaviours survey, 2024)

Alcohol licensing and food safety

Tourism and hospitality are in recovery mode, supported by scheduled events, however the sector continues to face challenges from high operating costs – sectors and the economy are discussed in the report on Economic Development. Licensing and food safety needs to be responsive to meet regulatory roles in public safety and be mindful of business needs. In 2024/25, the Council introduced two new performance measures for food safety and alcohol licensing. The results reflect process improvements.

- 96.3% of new alcohol licence premises were inspected within the target timeframe (up from 67%), exceeding the 90% goal.
- 80.93% of food businesses were inspected within the required timeframe (up from 34%), just above the 80% target.

Newly formed animal services

Dog ownership by city residents increased significantly during the Covid-19 pandemic and has only recently reached saturation point and starting to 'bottom out' (suggesting everyone who wanted a dog has now got one). While the population of Wellington continues to grow, dog ownership grows with it, but not at the same rate as in previous years. The city currently has around 15,000 registered dogs, and with an estimated population of around 209,000, equating to approximately one dog (registered) to every 14 people. This is significantly lower than the national average of 1 dog per 6 people (as reported by Animal and Plant Health NZ). A newly formed approach to the Council's animal services was launched in March 2025, bringing together new processes, technologies and an in-house team to better serve Wellington, and improve visibility and responsiveness. Previously, dog control (dog compliance and enforcement) activities within Wellington City were contracted out to Hutt City Council Animal Services.

¹⁰ Wellington City Council. (June 2025). *Resident's monitoring survey*.

¹¹ Ipsos. (2025). *Quality of Life Survey 2024: topline report*. Prepared on behalf of Auckland Council, Wellington City Council Christchurch City Council, and Dunedin City Council.

Stakeholder views about community facilities and services, and public health

Many residents want visible improvements in safety, homelessness response, and affordability (rates and user fees). Residents also expect the Council to balance fiscal responsibility with continued investment in services that foster connection, wellbeing, and a sense of belonging.

Survey data from the RMS 2025 shows high satisfaction with facilities like libraries and community centres and 89% say Wellington is a great place to live.

A more negative trend is a decline in civic sentiment among Wellingtonians. Only 45% of respondents now feel pride in how the city looks and feels, a drop of 10% since 2023, and just 29% agree that the city centre is lively and attractive, down significantly from 88% in 2017. Access to Council information is also an issue, with only 48% finding it easy, and older residents reporting particular difficulty. Residents are calling for a better balance between vibrancy and everyday needs, reflecting a desire for both enhanced amenities and attention to the fundamentals of city life.

Submissions on the 2024-34 LTP highlighted:

- the importance of maintaining and upgrading libraries, recreation centres, and other community hubs to ensure they remain accessible and fit for purpose.
- the need for facilities to cater to diverse communities, including improvements for people with disabilities and spaces that reflect cultural diversity.
- interest in incorporating environmentally sustainable design and energy efficiency into upgrades and new builds for community facilities.
- whether proposed investments in facilities were balanced against other pressing needs, suggesting a phased approach or prioritisation of high-use venues.
- calls for increased provision of social and affordable housing to address growing housing insecurity.
- the importance of upgrading existing housing stock to meet modern standards, including insulation, heating, and safety features.
- support for Council working with central government and community organisations to deliver housing solutions.
- that new housing developments should be well-connected to public transport and community services to avoid isolation
- frustration with unreliable infrastructure and downtown cleanliness
- pride in Wellington's potential
- concerns about antisocial or aggressive behaviour downtown and calls for stronger social support and safety responses.

Tākai Here partners and hapori Māori

Feedback from Tākai Here partners and hapori Māori consistently emphasises the importance of genuine partnership, cultural recognition, and social programmes that reflect te ao Māori and a holistic approach to wellbeing. Tākai Here partner representatives encourage the Council to be open to new ways of doing things based on mātauranga Māori, and to measure success not just in ecological terms but for cultural wellbeing too.

Accessibility and inclusion

The Accessibility Advisory Group and the Takatāpui Rainbow Advisory Council strongly advocate for embedding accessibility and inclusion into all Council work.

The Accessibility Advisory Group also asks for accessible online platforms and plain language in Council communications. There is a call for a strategic approach to accessibility, improved engagement with the disability community, better accessibility in housing, and more accessible public spaces and events. “It’s not enough to just meet minimum standards, the Council should be aiming for best practice so everyone can participate fully,” said a participant in an advisory group workshop.

The Takatāpui Rainbow Communities Advisory Group (TRCAG) emphasises the importance of safe public spaces and inclusive design in community facilities, advocating for gender-neutral amenities and greater visibility of rainbow communities in planning, while also expressing concern about discrimination and the lack of secure housing options for LGBTQIA+ people.

The Pacific Communities Advisory Group (PCAG) has expressed concerns about the risk of displacement due to gentrification and emphasises the need for multi-generational housing options that cater to the unique needs of Pacific families. PCAG also calls for more welcoming, family-friendly community facilities with improved accessibility, noting that pools are highly valued within the community, but that cost remains a significant barrier to access. To address these challenges, the group suggests introducing flexible pool hours and family-oriented programmes, ensuring these public spaces are more inclusive and accessible for all generations.

The Ethnic Communities Advisory Group (ECAG) has highlighted concerns regarding insufficient engagement with ethnic minorities on matters of city safety and inclusion. They recommend implementing anti-racism training and regularly publishing data on racially motivated incidents to enhance transparency and accountability. In terms of housing, ECAG advocates for culturally appropriate housing solutions and calls for structured dialogue with ethnic and faith communities to address issues of displacement and housing affordability.

The Takatāpui Rainbow Advisory Council recommends more rainbow-friendly spaces, inclusive signage, and visible representation. “We want to see more spaces where everyone feels welcome, regardless of who they are,” one Takatāpui Rainbow Advisory Council member shared.

Youth Council feedback echoes safety concerns, especially around urban design and calls for accessible youth facilities, better communication, and more meaningful engagement with young people in decision-making. “Young people want to be heard and to see real change as a result of their input,” a Youth Council member commented. They advocate for flexible, multi-purpose youth-friendly spaces that foster social connection and creativity, emphasises the importance of affordable and safe housing for young people close to transport and education, and calls for community facilities to demonstrate environmental leadership through energy efficiency and waste reduction.

Climate change and community facilities

Submissions to the 2024-34 LTP

- Many submitters stressed that upgrades or new builds for community facilities should incorporate climate resilience measures. This includes designing for flood protection, energy efficiency, and sustainable materials.
- There was strong support for facilities contributing to the city’s emissions reduction targets, for example through renewable energy use, green building standards, and waste minimisation practices.
- Respondents suggested that community hubs should serve as safe, energy-efficient spaces during extreme weather events, reinforcing their role in climate adaptation.
- Some feedback indicated that investment decisions should prioritise projects that deliver both community benefits and measurable climate outcomes.

Alcohol licensing

Advisory groups have advocated for clear, accessible information about alcohol licensing, including easy-to-read forms and guidance for applicants. Feedback has emphasised the need to ensure that licensing information is available in accessible formats and languages for inclusion. The LTP 2024-34 Priorities Engagement Report also highlights nightlife safety concerns which are closely linked to alcohol licensing. There is a need to balance vibrant nightlife with safety and responsible alcohol management.

Food safety

Advisory group feedback has highlighted the need for accessible complaint processes for food premises. This includes ensuring that disabled people, non-English speakers and others can easily report food safety issues. Information on Council systems and processes should be provided in accessible formats with support available for those who need assistance navigating these. There is also an expectation that all public health communications, such as food safety guidance, are accessible to all community members. Advisory groups have recommended using plain language, translated materials, and accessible digital platforms in all of the Council’s communications.

Dog control

The Accessibility Advisory Group (AAG) has provided specific feedback on the design of dog exercise areas. This includes accessible routes to dog parks, accessible apps for

locating exercise areas (with features for visually impaired users), and fencing for safety. The group also highlighted the importance of accessible signage and facilities for all users, including people with disabilities, parents with strollers and the elderly. Advisory group feedback has also called for more accessible public information about dog control policies and processes, and for engagement with diverse communities when reviewing animal bylaws.

Feedback from the Environmental Reference Group stressed the need to balance dog access with environmental protection, and to provide facilities (e.g., waste bins, water bowls, fenced areas) in parks and reserves. There is also a call for better enforcement and education to ensure safe, inclusive use of public spaces. This was also highlighted in the LTP 2024-34 Priorities Engagement Report, where comments reflect a need for clear rules and enforcement to ensure dogs do not negatively impact community activities or vulnerable groups.



Key issues and opportunities

This section provides information on some of the strategic issues for this activity group. They include: uneven distribution and accessibility of community facilities and rising operational costs of operating and maintain community facilities, the need to ensure adequate cemetery capacity, declining public safety and increasing social challenges, housing affordability and homelessness, regulatory change, administrative complexity, and digital transformation and opportunities to strengthen emergency management. Together, these issues highlight the necessity for strategic planning and investment to meet the diverse and evolving needs of Wellington's communities.

Addressing gaps, overlaps and condition of community facilities network within financial constraints

Te Awe Māpara, the Council's Community Facilities Plan (adopted November 2023) was informed by engagement findings and analysis across all facility types, and while facilities are valued for their role in improving the health and wellbeing of Wellingtonians, the following challenges were highlighted:

- **Substantial but not fit-for-purpose provision:** Excluding public toilets, there is approximately one facility per 1,000 people, covering around 245,000 sqm of space. While overall provision is substantial, the majority of facilities are standalone, small, and single purpose, limiting flexibility to respond to changing and diverse community needs.
- **Uneven distribution and duplication:** Facilities are not evenly spread across the city, resulting in overlapping catchments and duplicated services. This means demand is spread across facilities and can lead to some communities being underserved while others have underused resources.
- **Ageing and outdated assets:** The average age of facilities is about 60 years. This older age contributes to their poor condition, rising maintenance costs, and designs that do not meet current needs and range of uses.
- **Limited accessibility and inclusion:** Nearly half of facilities, have poor accessibility in and through the spaces. There are also significant gaps in providing for everyone's diverse needs, such as low-sensory spaces, accessible and all-gender toilets and changing, and parking, which prevent full participation by all residents.
- **Poor visibility of Māori culture:** Most facilities do not reflect te ao Māori cultural narratives, histories or te reo facility names or signage, which inhibits a strong sense of identity, safety and belonging of our people at community facilities.
- **Climate change and resilience:** Facilities face growing risks from climate change, particularly those in coastal areas. Without proactive adaptation planning, there is a risk of higher costs, service disruptions, and compromised community resilience.
- **Financial sustainability:** Operating and maintenance costs for facilities have increased by 45 percent over the past seven years. With an ageing facilities network and increasingly diverse community needs, continuing with the status quo is not sustainable. These rising costs require a more strategic approach to how we

deliver, manage, and invest in facilities, using the Te Awe Māpara framework to prioritise investment based on robust evidence of community need.

To respond to the challenges we face, Te Awe Māpara sets out a robust approach to maximising investment in, and the benefits of, community facilities. It establishes a consistent, evidence-based decision-making process that ensures community needs are clearly understood, and all options are thoroughly assessed before changes or investments are made.

The approach includes prioritisation criteria to assess alignment with the plan's mission and outcomes, and to evaluate the benefits of proposed investment. It also emphasises strengthening partnerships with mana whenua, communities, and other organisations delivering community facilities; improving collaboration across the network; enhancing functionality, accessibility, and inclusivity; integrating climate adaptation into asset management; and increasing facility use.

Together, these elements ensure the network remains inclusive, culturally vibrant, financially sustainable, and resilient in the face of changing community needs and external pressures.

Declining perceptions of public safety and worsening social challenges in Wellington

Social challenges are contributing to the lower perceptions of safety

Recent survey data indicates that public perceptions of safety in Wellington have notably declined, particularly in the CBD after dark, where only 41% of residents feel safe compared to 82% during the day. Similar trends are observed in other New Zealand cities.¹² Social challenges such as rough sleeping, begging, and antisocial behaviour linked to substance use contribute to this sense of insecurity. This presents a significant strategic challenge for the Council: how to improve both the actual and perceived safety of public spaces while addressing the underlying causes of social disorder. These issues also contribute to declining city vibrancy and economic activity.

Through the City Safety Plan, approved by Councillors in 2025, the Council has taken a proactive, multi-faceted approach to public safety and social support. A visible safety presence in the CBD, including a comprehensive CCTV network that is shared with agencies and police, and strong partnerships with police and health providers plays a crucial role in deterring crime and responding to incidents. Opportunities exist to seek external funding and apply new technology, such as smart lighting, sensors, and digital tools, to further enhance public safety for Wellingtonians.

Annually, over \$5 million in grants are distributed to the community sector, with 55% allocated to safety and wellbeing initiatives and 45% to community resilience initiatives.

¹² Quality of Life Survey 2024.

Grant funding criteria have been reviewed and updated through the Tahua Whaihua Hapori framework, and a transition plan for future funding is in place. Initiatives such as Te Anamata ā-Kai¹³ also support a resilient local food economy.

The Council has built extensive relationships within the community, leveraging on-the-ground engagement and local insights to better tailor support services. Public trust in Council-run services and facilities, such as libraries and community centres, remains high and reflects our ongoing commitment to quality and accessibility.

While progress is being made, opportunities exist to further strengthen the Council's impact. Despite our strong strategic vision and staff commitment, there is a need for clearer prioritisation. Limited resources mean that current goals may be too broad to deliver effectively across all areas.

- Continued leadership and focused decision making may help refine priorities and ensure efforts are directed where they will have most impact.
- Raising public awareness about the full range of social support services and facilities available, including those delivered in partnership with other organisations, could increase participation and improve social outcomes.
- Enhancing transparency in Council decision-making may also help bridge the gap between community expectations and funding realities, fostering higher public confidence and engagement.
- Developing a clear, coordinated strategy for how facilities like libraries and community centres can facilitate deeper community engagement would position us to better address both safety concerns and social wellbeing.



¹³ Wellington City Council. (2023). *Te anamata ā-kai o tō tatou tāone - Our city's food future*.

Responding to Housing Affordability and Homelessness

Home ownership rates in Wellington remain low, especially for Māori, where ownership is just 26% compared to the city average of 58.6%. The shortage of public housing is acute, with 656 people on the waiting list (most needing one-bedroom homes) as of August 2025. Homelessness is rising, with a 5% increase in those recorded as homeless by the Downtown Community Ministry (DCM) and a 24% rise in rough sleeping between March 2024 and March 2025. These challenges highlight the critical need for affordable housing solutions and more efficient, effective and joined-up interventions to address homelessness.

The new social housing structure Te Toi Mahana is bedded in and operating effectively. The Council is committed to upgrading approximately 50% of its social housing portfolio to the agreed standard over the next 10 years, as outlined in the Deed of Grant with the Crown. Transitioning to an affordable housing model has enabled tenants to access the Income Related Rent Subsidy (IRRS), which has significantly improved affordability for those who qualify.

The Council collaborates with a range of partners, including police, NGOs, and health providers, to deliver housing, safety and wellbeing services. The new Homelessness Coordination Service, funded through the City Safety Fund, trials a new model of working with the sector to create bespoke solutions for people experiencing chronic homelessness.

Additionally, aligning Community Housing Provider (CHP) housing plans to more closely align with community needs could help address gaps in supply. Increasing tenant turnover may enable more residents to benefit from IRRS, but long-term affordability ultimately depends on continued central government support. There is also an opportunity to learn from challenges, such as the stalled Arlington development, to improve future project delivery and ensure that planned housing initiatives are carried out effectively.

Resourcing and coordination issues in emergency management

The Council has a legislated role in emergency management and is a member of the Wellington Region CDEM Group. The Council also retains responsibility for planning and delivering emergency management within the Council's territorial area. Under a Joint CDEM Operation Agreement, WREMO leads many community resilience initiatives for the Council. However, there are opportunities to further strengthen the Council's role in building community resilience by taking a more collaborative and coordinated approach across Council teams that regularly engage with local communities.

Staff resourcing

Staff from across the Council are integral to emergency response efforts. Currently, around 200 staff are registered and trained to work in the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) during emergencies, which is sufficient for small-medium scale events, but may be inadequate for large scale or long duration incidents. To build the Council's capacity and capability to manage these major emergencies, Emergency Management responsibilities

could be included in every job description, with all staff receiving at least some level of basic EOC training. For a large, multi-week regional event, the EOC requires sustained 24/7 staffing across multiple operational shifts. Based on current role design, this implies a rosterable pool of ~450–600 trained staff (3 - 4× the on-duty complement) to cover rotations, leave, and specialist roles.

In emergencies, the Public Health function includes:

- issuing and communicating health protection advice (e.g., boil water/unsafe water, sanitation, mould)
- rapid inspection of food premises post-power outage and enabling compliant temporary/mobile food service to support communities.
- managing hazardous substances and emergency waste complaints in coordination with regional partners
- providing technical officers to the EOC welfare and operations teams
- responsibility for dealing with animals owned by residents (e.g. relocating to a holding for owners to collect).

Formalising emergency use of facilities

The Council's community facilities also play a role in emergency preparedness and response. Some facilities are designated as Community Emergency Hubs, providing places for the community to gather, self-organise and support one another in an emergency. Other facilities may be used as Emergency Assistance Centres, established and managed by CDEM during an emergency to assist those affected. Staff knowledge and connections to both communities and facilities are critical in emergency situations.

There is currently no consistent, citywide framework for activating community facilities for emergency roles. This creates avoidable delay and uncertainty in major events. The opportunity therefore is to establish a standard Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for Council and leased/community-run facilities covering activation, access, indemnity, staffing, security, and hand-back, to:

- specify minimum resilience features (backup power connection point, basic comms redundancy, potable water storage point, emergency lighting, accessible toilets, and wayfinding)
- pre-position hub/EAC kits (satellite/mesh communications, registration, accessibility aids) and maintain an auditable readiness schedule.

Emergency management engagement could be co-designed with mana whenua and community partners (including marae and disability), ensuring hub plans reflect tikanga, language, and diverse access needs. The Council could support marae-based responses where appropriate.



Public health administrative complexity

Public Health work needs to be adapted regularly in response to central government changes in regulation – particularly given the span of regulation and wide range of regulatory functions of the Council. Change implementation usually needs to fit in Council budgets. A recent example, the Council will no longer need to register and inspect hairdressers effective following a government decision to revoke hairdressing regulations in 2025.

If legislation that the Council administers and enforces is not clear, and / or provides objection and appeal processes, there can be unfair outcomes, and extended application processes sometimes involving litigation. The Council can use policies and other tools to make regulatory decisions more transparent and consistent. There is an opportunity to develop a Local Alcohol Policy (LAP) under the Sale and Supply of Alcohol Act 2012 to minimise harm from alcohol. An LAP could, for example, set limits on the number of alcohol licences allowed in some areas, or restrict legislated licensing hours. Although the primary focus is to reduce alcohol related harm, an LAP could make rules clearer and mitigate application and administration issues. The development of an LAP is on the draft policy work programme this triennium.

We have heard from key stakeholders that some Council consenting processes remain complex and overlapping, which can lead to confusion and reduce public trust. Digital transformation has improved efficiency and transparency, notably through an online portal for licence and permit applications. Further opportunities exist to enhance service delivery with advanced digital tools and mobile platforms. Despite progress, some systems still rely on paper-based processes and legacy IT, which can limit responsiveness.

To sustain regulatory effectiveness and public confidence, the Council should continue to invest in enforcement capability, digital innovation, and stakeholder engagement.

Māori inclusion in regulatory activities

Māori culture and practice have been incorporated into some of our regulatory processes, alongside engagement with Tākai Here partners when developing new bylaws and policies. Further opportunities to promote and deliver holistic practices in the approach to public health include:

- Enabling submissions in te reo Māori, supported by Council policy advisors and qualified translators.
- Building strong relationships with Māori community providers to support officers in culturally sensitive environments like marae and kōhanga reo.
- Allowing community members to present evidence in te reo Māori at forums such as the District Licensing Committee hearings.
- Investing in understanding the Tākai Here partnership and its value to Māori communities.

Ensuring Sufficient Cemetery Capacity

The Council has statutory obligations to provide for the short- and long-term cemetery needs of Wellington. Two cemeteries, Karori and Mākara, are currently operated to provide a variety of interment and cremation services. These facilities offer spaces for burial, cremation, and memorialisation, supporting the communities' needs and traditions.

Karori Cemetery is nearing its burial capacity and once closed will transition to a historic reserve. The site will continue to host a cemetery office, crematorium, and two chapels, with cremations and funeral services ongoing. However, after approximately 2028, all new burials are expected to take place at Mākara Cemetery.

Mākara Cemetery is the city's main operational cemetery for burials and ash interments, including options for natural burials. Currently, its remaining capacity is about 45 percent. Projections indicate that overall capacity may be reached by 2038, with some denominational sections expected to reach capacity much sooner.

Legislation requires the council to plan for and accommodate the burial needs of different denominational and non-denominational groups. To address future demand, the Council has been investigating options for cemetery expansion since 2018. In 2021, the Council agreed to acquire land under the Public Works Act for cemetery purposes and allocated funding in the Long-Term Plan to support this. This new land, combined with current facilities, is expected to meet the city's needs for burials and ash interments for the next 60 years.

Capacity planning should include surge scenarios following a major regional event, developed with NZ Police and health sector partners. This includes temporary holding, culturally appropriate practice (including urupā and denominational needs), supply chain contingencies (fuel, cremator parts), and staff welfare.