‘The Harbour City’ – Wellington Waterfront

About Wellington

Wellington is New Zealand’s centre of government and the world’s southernmost capital city. It is also the country’s cultural capital and the third most populous urban area in New Zealand.

Wellington city has a steadily growing population which increased by over 10,000 between 2006 and 2011 to 200,100 people.

The city is home to many museums, theatres and arts festivals, including Te Papa Tongarewa (the Museum of New Zealand), the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, the Royal New Zealand Ballet, and the biennial Festival of the Arts.

Wellington is also a leading centre for creative industries, such as film and computer technology, and it is the home of the New Zealand Stock Exchange (NZX).

The city is situated alongside Wellington Harbour and surrounded by natural beauty including the Town Belt and Zealandia, an award-winning eco-attraction just minutes from the central business district.
Key facts

Wellington city is the largest of a number of closely linked cities and districts that make up the Wellington region. The region overall is home to almost 500,000 people.

The city accounts for 41% of the region’s population and 5% of New Zealand's overall population.

Wellington city's population is young with 55.9% aged 18 - 49 years (2006) compared with 45.1% in New Zealand generally.

Over one-third (33%) of Wellington residents have a bachelor degree or higher qualification - the highest in the country.

Wellington enjoys around 2,000 sunshine hours a year. By comparison, London averages 1,500, Edinburgh 1,350 and Vancouver 1,850.

Incomes in Wellington city are well above the average for New Zealand with over 40% of households having annual incomes of over $89,000.

In early 2009, Wellington city was ranked by a 'Top Spots to Live' survey as New Zealand’s best place for families as well as New Zealand’s greenest city.

In a 2011 international quality of living survey, Wellington ranked as the 13th city for quality of living and came in as the 9th safest city in the world to live.

Wellington people are better educated than the average New Zealander. 46.3% of people aged 15 years and over in the Wellington Region have a post-school qualification, compared with 39.9 percent of people throughout New Zealand.

In 2008, 33 % of Wellingtonians worked in information communications technology, architecture, engineering, science, education, arts design, media and sports occupations.
Wellington’s vision: *Towards 2040: Smart Capital*

Towards 2040: Smart Capital sets out a vision for the future of Wellington City that builds on the city’s existing strengths – such as its natural beauty, vibrancy, compactness, close-knit communities and great people.

It’s a vision for a city that puts people first – a place that is welcoming and friendly, provides opportunities for all, strong neighbourhoods and communities, and embraces differences and changes.

It’s a vision for a smarter and stronger economy – one that is based on knowledge, skill and innovation; that provides a wider range of exciting and rewarding jobs; that leads to greater prosperity, and is based on stronger connections between people and businesses both within the city and around the world.

It’s a vision for Wellington as a leading eco-city – one that moves steadily towards a low-carbon future based on ‘green’ innovations that also provide an economic edge and support an outstanding quality of life.

Above all, it’s a vision that positions Wellington for the future – one that’s smart and sustainable.

Toward 2040: A Smart Capital sees Wellington as a connected city, with easy access to regional, national and global networks. Connections will be physical, allowing for ease of movement of people and goods; virtual, in the form of world-class communications technology infrastructure; and social, enabling people to connect with each other and their communities.
Wellington Waterfront

Our Waterfront
The Wellington Waterfront provides public spaces and public life, being an accessible asset for the city, featuring a blend of cultural, educational, artistic, residential, retail, business and industry use.

The waterfront is much changed from the bustling port of old, with the majority of commercial port activity now focused to the north of the Waterfront precinct, adjacent to the Wellington Regional Stadium (Westpac Stadium) which is a major landmark and attraction to the area.

The harbour was officially named Port Nicholson until it assumed its current name in the 1980s. In Māori the harbour is Te Whanganui-a-Tara (the great harbour of Tara).

Wellington Harbour is an arm of Cook Strait, covering 70 km², with a two-km wide entrance at its southern end between Pencarrow Head and the Miramar Peninsula. Wellington Harbour, is of tectonic origin, and a major earthquake fault, the Wellington Fault, lies along its western shore.

Wellington’s central waterfront area is a 20 hectare site from the Overseas Passenger Terminal near Oriental bay to Shed 21, opposite the Wellington Railway Station. At this point, there is an obvious land-use delineation toward heavy-industry and commercial port activity.

Wellington Harbour is a significant port serving the lower North Island, with the Greater Wellington Regional Council-owned company Centreport recording around 14,000 commercial shipping movements each year. The region’s largest container port is in Wellington city and a tanker terminal is located at Seaview, in Lower Hutt.
The Waterfront Framework

In July 2000 the Wellington City Council agreed a future development plan for the Wellington Waterfront.

The Waterfront Framework seeks to:

- Provide an overarching vision for the waterfront.
- Establish the principles, including values, governing future development.
- Provide a framework for urban design.

To undertake this stage of the process the Council established the Waterfront Leadership Group (comprising three City Councillors and seven members of the public representing various community interests). The Framework represents 18 months of consultation with Wellingtonians and the Council ultimately adopted the Framework as its policy for the waterfront in April 2001. It is against this Framework that all proposed waterfront developments are now considered.

The Framework provides the policy for Wellington’s Waterfront, through a vision, values and principles to guide development, rather than a prescriptive masterplan.

Wellingtonians do care passionately about their waterfront. They do want to be part of the on-going debate and the Framework provides the opportunity.
History of development

Maori Development
Long before Europeans settled in Wellington, the waterfront area was the centre of local Maori life.

Kupe, the great Maori explorer, is said to have stayed in the harbour hundreds of years ago and many place names in the harbour acknowledge his presence – Matiu and Makaro, or Somes and Ward Islands as they are also known, are the names of two of Kupe’s nieces.

When European settlers arrived they found thriving Maori settlements stretching from Waiwhetu on the eastern side of the Hutt Valley, Petone, round to settlements at the mouth of the Kaiwharawhara Stream to Pipitea Pa, Kumutoto Pa, Tiakiwai Pa and finally into Te Aro Pa in the heart of the waterfront.

Colonial development
When the first European settlers arrived in 1840, the demand for more land and wharfage was almost immediate.

The first New Zealand Company settlers actually didn’t care much for Wellington itself when they first set foot in New Zealand, and settled in Petone instead. But shallow anchorage, rough tides and the exposed nature of the site saw them start to move down to Lambton Harbour.

Lambton Harbour was deeper and had fewer hazards than the Petone shoreline. The potential for wharfage was recognised, with the only problem being the lack of usable land.

Land reclamation
Reclamation and essential infrastructure was needed to help shape it into one of New Zealand’s most important ports, and from then until the 1970s, most of the goods and people that came and went from Wellington did so via the harbour.

Just how much of Wellington has been reclaimed from the sea becomes more obvious when a map of the wharves in Lambton Harbour also shows the 1840 shoreline. Reclamation has added more than 155 hectares to Wellington.

It was in the 1850’s that the first sizeable reclamations took place, and by the end of the 1870’s some 70 acres of land had been reclaimed by the Government, Provincial and City Councils using spoil from the hills behind Lambton Quay and from Wadestown.
Hill, and the new seawalls ran almost in a straight line from the bottom of Willis Street to Pipitea Point.

The first deep water wharves had been constructed in the area which became Queens Wharf, the first pile being driven in 1862, but most of the Te Aro foreshore and its wharves remained privately owned.

The years from 1880, when the Wellington Harbour Board was formed, to the turn of the century saw some major developments, including a reclamation north of Pipitea Point for railways land and south of Queens Wharf the Te Aro area was extended seaward with reclamations carried out by the City Council, removing the last vestiges of private ownership of the foreshore. By the end of the 19th century, the 1840 shoreline had disappeared.

The following 30 years saw further reclamations for railways and Harbour Board purposes, additional wharves, the seawall at Oriental Bay built and the construction of a boat harbour at Clyde Quay.

The next and final phase of reclamation in Lambton Harbour took place in the 1960’s and 1970’s, when new methods of cargo handling - containerisation and roll-on/roll-off cargoes - required more land adjacent to ships berths.

Reclamation was carried out on both side of Queens Wharf and, most significantly, the container terminal was created by a large reclamation at Thorndon (the first container ship berthed on 19 June 1971). Today the terminal has 24.3 hectares of back-up space capable of holding some 6,284 containers.
Waterfront Governance

The Waterfront area is managed by Wellington Waterfront Limited (WWL), a Wellington City Council-Controlled Organisation (CCO).

WWL manages the day-to-day operations of the waterfront, including property management, cleaning, security and general maintenance; promotes and restores heritage buildings; supports commercial development; manages the Queens Wharf Events Centre and stages public events and conferences; and provides information about waterfront development to the public.

WWL’s Vision: Wellington’s waterfront is a special place that welcomes all people to live, work and play in the beautiful and inspiring spaces and architecture that connect our city to the sea and protect our heritage for future generations.

WWL’s Mission: To deliver the city’s vision for the waterfront and, in so doing, be recognised as a leading waterfront development organisation, confident of our position, trusted by our stakeholders and playing a leadership role as an integral part of our business.

Principles:
- Expression of heritage and history
- Expression of Maori heritage and presence
- “Sense of place” for Wellingtonians
- Diversity of Experience
- Sense of collective ownership and involvement
- Experience of space and openness
- Ease of access for all

Seven objectives have been agreed for the waterfront, being:
- The waterfront is locally and internationally recognised for its design.
- The waterfront is readily accessible to all people.
- The waterfront is and is perceived to be, safe at all times.
- The waterfront is seen as an attractive place that draws Wellingtonians and visitors alike.
- The waterfront successfully caters for a wide range of events and activities.
- Significant heritage buildings are protected on the waterfront.
- Activities on the waterfront are integrated with those on the harbour.

Roles
- Delivering the waterfront experience – optimising Wellingtonians enjoyment of the waterfront now.
- Developing the waterfront experience – building new waterfront features for future generations.
**Waterfront: Five precincts**

Under the Wellington Waterfront Framework, Wellington’s waterfront is divided into five precincts, each with its own distinctive style and personality.

**Waitangi**

The area where Waitangi Park is located has been the site of many changes, including major land reclamations and an earthquake in 1855 that uplifted land in the area by five feet.

Waitangi Park is near the site of the Waitangi Lagoon, fed by the Waitangi Stream. The waterway played a major role in the lives of the mana whenua (local Maori).

The first English settlers planned to dig a canal along the path of the stream to anchor boats in the Basin Lagoon upstream towards Newtown. However, an earthquake in 1855 lifted the Te Aro land by 1.5 metres in some parts. Within a decade, reclamation had started and within several decades the land now known as Waitangi Park was reclaimed from the sea.

Today, the Waitangi precinct comprises three distinct elements: **Waitangi Park** – At 6.5 hectares and just minutes’ walk from the CBD and the city’s main nightlife precinct, is New Zealand’s largest new urban park development in a century.  
**The Overseas Passenger Terminal** – Situated on Clyde Quay Wharf a linear building purpose-built for the era of sea bourne immigration.  
**Chaffers Dock** – A large art deco-styled building, formerly the offices of the country’s post and telegraph service, has been converted into luxury apartments with retail and food outlets on the ground floor in a covered public plaza.  
**Chaffers Marina** - The Marina is an important amenity for this precinct. The wharf provides support and 'anchorange' for the floating berth structure

A unique urban wetland is one of the most innovative and interesting aspects of the park design, bringing the Waitangi Stream back to the surface from within a stormwater culvert. It helps to keep the harbour clean by removing pollution from the existing stormwater outfall.

Any grease, solids and silts are removed below ground, so the water flowing through the park and into the harbour is completely clean and odour-free.
**Taranaki Street Wharf**

One of the few west-facing parts of the central city, the Taranaki Street Wharf precinct has undergone extensive, award-winning transformation in recent years. The work has involved paving, planting and redevelopment of previously unused buildings.

This precinct features the recreational amenities of the Wharewaka and the rowing clubs, which border the lagoon. East of this area is Mac’s Brewery, featuring a large outdoor harbour-side dining area and public concourse leading to Te Papa.

The brewery and adjoining restaurant and bar now occupy what was once a wharf shed housing goods arriving from, or departing for, destinations abroad. Then known as Shed 22, the building was constructed in 1921 and is a good example of buildings that were fundamental to the operation of the wharves.

The Odlin building has been transformed into the NZX Centre – home to the New Zealand Stock Exchange. Built in 1907 as the head office of timber and building hardware merchants C and A Odlin Ltd, the Odlin building is a rare example of Edwardian industrial building design.
**Frank Kitts Park**

Completed in the late 1980s, Frank Kitts Park was one of the first areas of the waterfront to be developed. The design was heavily influenced by the annual street car race that ran through the area at that time. The seaside promenade was the start grid for the race and is the reason why the promenade is flanked by a high wall on its city side – to ensure spectator safety.

The last street car race was held in 1997 and since then a desire has been expressed by many for the wall to come down and connections from city to sea – physical and visual – to be improved.

Len Lye's *Water Whirler* sculpture is adjacent to Frank Kitts Park, captivating waterfront visitors as it bends and twirls, in a crazily choreographed dance, creating artistic designs out of millions of droplets of water.

In mid 2007 Wellington Waterfront Limited undertook a Design Competition for the proposed redevelopment of Frank Kitts Park.

A design brief had been prepared by the Technical Advisory Group and, following public consultation, was approved by the Waterfront Development Sub-committee at their 11 December 2006 meeting. The intention being to preserve the park’s status as a major green open space.

The design brief currently included consideration of:
- The installation of a Chinese Garden
- Improved city-to-sea connections
- Improved relationship between the park and the southern end of the TSB Bank Arena
- Retention of space for events
- Retention of a children's playground
Queens Wharf

Queens Wharf is one of the busiest parts of the waterfront and the primary symbolic entry to the waterfront through the Queens Wharf heritage gates. Developments since the 1980s have seen its heritage buildings rejuvenated and given new life.

Key facilities in this precinct include:

**Museum of Wellington, City and Sea** – Using modern storytelling techniques, the Museum explores Wellington’s distinctive character from its first settlement by the Maori to present day.

**TSB Bank Arena** – A major city venue for concerts, exhibitions, conferences, gala dinners and indoor sports events.

**Restaurants, bars and attractions** – Queens Wharf is home to many waterfront bars and restaurants, as well as Helipro sightseeing helicopters and water-based recreation such as kayak hire.
**Kumutoto**

This precinct has undergone significant change in recent years, with the addition of new ‘Green-Star’ (efficient-rated) office buildings and redevelopment of heritage sheds.

The Kumutoto design includes three distinct public open spaces - Kumutoto Plaza, the Wharf Plaza and Brandon Plaza - connected by a lane that runs through the precinct.

Each area has a mix of trees, low level planting, asphalt, concrete paving, granite cobbles, timber inlays and plenty of seating. A new lighting design combines an intimate level of lighting with a good level for security so the area can be used at all times.

What had been a parking lot, occupying prime waterfront land, has been transformed into a water’s-edge pedestrian paradise of trees, planters, plazas, promenades, boardwalks and a bridge.

With these enhancements, the area has become a popular lunchtime or evening refuge from the rat race for office workers and other waterfront users. The ground floor businesses of the neighbouring Meridian building provide the public a place to relax by the water, enjoy a pleasant dining experience with great harbour views – all only a minute’s walk from the CBD.
In the future...

By the end of the Project, Wellington’s waterfront will have been transformed into a place of architectural, cultural, entertainment and recreational renown. The people of Wellington and New Zealand will have a waterfront experience they need, want and deserve.

The Waterfront project is all about building a better city. It is about showcasing New Zealand’s capital. It is an opportunity to promote and open up access to the harbour, create an unprecedented number of parks and public places, build new commercial and living accommodation, and in doing all of this, showcase excellence in urban planning and design. The city’s tourism industry will also be enhanced through the creation of new cultural, recreational and entertainment destinations.

The redeveloped waterfront will contain a network of public parks and open spaces. Over 12 hectares of new and improved open space (including Waitangi and Frank Kitts Parks, Kumutoto and extensive promenades) will provide both passive and active recreational opportunities.

In addition, over 36,000sqm of cultural and heritage facilities will be provided catering to the needs of tourists and locals alike. Mixed-use, sustainable communities will be developed, offering more than 39,000sqm of commercial office space, 240 apartments plus 18,000sqm of retail/food and beverage facilities. Collectively these provide living, working and playing opportunities 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Wellington’s waterfront belongs to the people and will remain an invaluable public resource. Through public consultation, the Waterfront Framework was formulated, allowing the opportunity for public and interested stakeholders to have a voice in shaping our city. The on-going involvement of Wellingtonians in their waterfront, is the secret to its success.