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Committee Wellington Regional Strategy Committee  
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## WRS Implementation: NZ Urban Design Protocol

### 1. Purpose

The Wellington Regional Strategy contains an agreed action item for formal sign-up of all councils in the region to the NZ Urban Design Protocol (WRS action at page 43 and description at page 33 of June 2007 version).

Four councils in the region are already signatories to the protocol, with the others either already embarked upon, or beginning to consider the process.

This report sets out relevant background and the proposed approach to achieving a joint sign-up under the auspices of the WRS.

Endorsement is sought from the WRS Committee for officers to pursue the necessary agreements. A late 2007 / early 2008 timeframe for achieving sign-up appears feasible.

### 2. Significance of the decision

The matters for decision in this report **do not** trigger the significance policy of the Council or otherwise trigger section 76(3)(b) of the Local Government Act 2002.

### 3. NZ Urban Design Protocol

#### 3.1 Overview

The Ministry for the Environment oversees the New Zealand Urban Design Protocol as part of the Government's *Sustainable Development Programme of Action*.

New Zealand is acknowledged as a significantly urbanised country, giving rise to a need to design towns and cities that are successful in meeting people's needs as well as being safe, accessible and prosperous.

An overview of the NZ Urban Design Protocol is provided in **Attachment 1**. The Ministry's publication "*The Value of Urban Design*" is in **Attachment 2**.

The signatories to the Protocol, as at 30 July 2007, are listed in **Attachment 3**.

### **3.2 Benefits of Being a Signatory to the Protocol**

The Ministry for the Environment advocates that becoming a signatory to the Protocol signifies a commitment to continual improvement of the 'look and feel' of cities, districts and regions.

The protocol promotes a more comprehensive approach to thinking about how activities of signatories can further improve quality design around the region.

As a signatory, WRS members will also give effect to the role of promoting sustainable urban form as set out in the Resource Management Act.

Other benefits offered include access to a network for sharing information, training and a package of resources. Signatories are also given preference in future funding.

## **4. Comment**

### **4.1 Wellington Regional Strategy & the NZUDP**

The purpose of the WRS is to create an integrated framework to achieve sustainable growth in the region. A significant focus of the WRS is on the form of any regional growth. An important role of the WRS is to create "context" and "collaboration" throughout the region.

One of the three focus areas of the strategy is investment in good regional form. Quality design is a key component of the focus area, which is articulated as:

*"Quality urban design is about cities and towns that look good, feel safe and are easy to get around. Good design is another core component of international competitiveness." (WRS page 33)*

The development process for WRS identified that the 'look and feel' of the region's towns and cities does make a difference to the attractiveness of the region as a place to invest, work and live. Research from a range of sources confirms that it makes a positive difference to investment decisions and the 'liveability' of regions where design considerations and principles are successfully applied.

This is relevant to managing 'public realm' spaces such as roadways, footpaths, public open space, public buildings and facilities. It also follows that there are benefits from promoting attention to design as part of private and other sector development decisions. (WRS reports by Urbanista, Kemp and CityScope available on the WRS website).

A range of means of addressing the importance of ‘quality design’ were considered by the WRS Forum. An important first step (which was also endorsed by the bulk of submissions on this topic in the draft WRS), was to achieve a region wide signup to the N.Z. Urban Design Protocol.

The Protocol is not just about appearances and built form, but incorporates environmental, economic, social and cultural consequences of design. It is also about the process of decision making.

Councils have a number of functions, programmes, strategies and plans that either seek to obtain the “qualities” described by the Urban Design protocol, or provide a framework to direct decisions on the consequences of quality design.

Some of the more significant strategies and plans, undertaken by local government include the Long Term Community Council Plans (LTCCP), the Regional Land Transport Strategy (RLTS), the Regional Policy Statement (RPS), individual District Plans (DPs), and the Wellington Regional Strategy (WRS) itself.

Four councils in the Wellington region are already signatories:

- Kapiti Coast District Council
- Porirua City Council
- Wellington City Council
- Greater Wellington Regional Council

The experience of these councils provides useful guidance and examples of how to put the NZ Urban Design Protocol into practice.

For the five councils still to sign, officer discussions suggest that the timeline to enable tying in with their existing meeting schedules and work programs will require through to early December 2007 at the earliest. Potentially into the first quarter of 2008 may be needed depending on the rate of progress.

A body of supporting information is already available via the councils who are already signatories, plus offers of support in the form of officer advice have been made to assist and inform decision making processes.

It is proposed that a joint regional action plan will be prepared, outlining how the region will implement the protocol.

Details of the contents of the action plan are yet to be finalised however it is feasible that existing plans such as that for the recently finalised Greater Wellington Action Plan could be used as a template for a region wide action plan.

## 4.2 Commitments as a Signatory to Protocol

Signatories to the Protocol commit to putting quality design principles into effect by developing, monitoring and reporting on a set of actions. For the purposes of the WRS this activity could be facilitated and co-ordinated via the WRS office which services the WRS Committee.

Signatories choose their actions within six months of signing to the Protocol, then report every two years on actions. The Ministry for the Environment will publish the collective progress by the WRS signatories.

Implementation and monitoring for the NZ Urban Design Protocol is relevant for the WRS Committee and reflects the wide range of interests the Committee has in economic, environmental, transport and related matters.

The development, monitoring and reporting on actions is proposed to be overseen by the WRS office and will focus on those areas that WRS members already produce plans and strategies that reinforce the “qualities” of quality design.

## 5. Communication

Subject to the Committee’s decision, a press statement will be prepared confirming the WRS Committee decision to progress the joint regional signing of the NZ Urban Design Protocol.

Our understanding is that the Wellington region would be the first in New Zealand to have achieved a jointly signed, comprehensive endorsement of the NZ Urban Design Protocol. The media material would highlight this fact.

## 6. Recommendations

*That the Committee:*

1. ***Receives the report.***
2. ***Notes the content of the report.***
3. ***Endorses the content of the report as an appropriate basis for progressing joint regional sign-up of all councils to the NZ Urban Design Protocol.***

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**Attachment 1: NZ Urban Design Protocol**

**Attachment 2: Value of the value of Urban Design**

**Attachment 3: Signatories to the Protocol**