Shifting to a sustainable city? citizen participation in Wellington's *Our City ~ Our Future* Strategy

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Abstract

This study explores the potential contribution of citizen participation in the shift to sustainable cities. Citizen participation has attracted considerable attention, and the theoretical issues are explored. A number of international agreements promote the need for citizens to be involved in achieving 'sustainable development', including Agenda 21. This is something that is accepted by central and local government in New Zealand, with statutory provisions requiring participation included in both the Resource Mangemetnt Act and the Local Government Act . There is a question as to how effective citizen participation is. In an attempt to assess the contribution to sustainability of Wellington, I evaluate the effectiveness of a city-wide strategic development process in Wellington, called *Our City ~ Our Future*. This process was initiated by Wellington City Council as a means of addressing Agenda 21, and Strategy development attracted a considerable degree of interest, with up to 2,000 citizens involved over the 18 month period of Strategy development. The final document is considered a 'reasonable' first step and efforts are now being directed at implementation. There is a widely held view that implementation is not progressing as fast or as thoroughly as it could. Key themes that emerge as possible explanations for this include: the representativeness of the process, an uneasy balance between council and citizen control, the lack of internal council support, under-resourcing, group dynamics, council governance, and a lack of understanding of sustainability. The wider economic and political climate also contributes to limited progress. To address the barriers to implementation a number of recommendations are made. Priorities for action include: a change in Council attitude — a genuine commitment to citizen participation needs to be made; adequate resourcing of the Advisory Group which is overseeing Strategy implementation; capacity building and resourcing for community groups involved in citizen participation processes; a need for raising awareness of sustainability; and finding ways to ensure involvement by key stakeholders.

Dedication

The origins of my desire to help make the world a better place can be found in the loving influence of my grandparents. It is to the memory of Lance and Edith Blyth, and Mary and Wally Bampton, whose lives were rich in generosity and love of their families, that I dedicate this thesis.

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List of abbreviations

ACE	Action on Community and Environment
AG	Advisory Group
APRG	Advisory Peer Review Group
CSG	City Steering Group
IUCN	World Conservation Union
KRA	Key Result Area
ICLEI	International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives
LA21	Local Agenda 21
LGA	Local Government Act
LGNZ	Local Government New Zealand
MfE	Ministry for the Environment
OCOF	*Our City ~ Our Future*
PCE	Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment
RMA	Resource Management Act
SWG	Specialist Working Groups
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNCED	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme

WCC	Wellington City Council
WCED	World Commission on Environment and Development
WFF	World Wide Fund for Nature

Author's note

A large number of official Council documents and miscellaneous papers are referred to in this thesis. To distinguish between references to items listed in the bibliography and other documents consulted, the following convention is used: for the former, author is followed by year, eg (Roseland 1998); for the latter, author or corporate author followed by day/month/year, eg (Mowat 20/3/98).

A copy of the final *Our City ~ Our Future: Strategy for the Future of Wellington* is can be viewed online at: www.wcc.govt.nz/wcc/future/ocof/

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Introduction

It is widely acknowledged that the shift to a more sustainable way of living is dependent on strong and vibrant democratic processes. Citizens must contribute to decision-making about the social and environmental direction of our nations and cities. Within cities the need is particularly pressing given the concentration of negative environmental impacts: air, water and land pollution, water scarcity, habitat loss, urban expansion into fertile agricultural areas and high levels of resource use. Citizen participation is critical to the development of creative and durable sustainability solutions, not only through contributions to decision-making but also through attitudinal and behavioural change. In the transition to sustainable cities local authorities have a central role to play. Councils must provide leadership, resourcing and legitimacy, and it is important they work together with citizens on the untested and difficult path to sustainability. The purpose of this thesis is to explore how citizen participation can be effectively tapped to bring about the sustainable city.

In Wellington, due to a particular constellation of factors, a citizen participation exercise was initiated that sought to address the question of how to make Wellington a sustainable city. A combination of council staff interest, Councillor support and receptive citizenry, led to the development of a city-wide, multi-stakeholder strategy. The process, known as *Our City ~ Our Future*, was a highly participative process involving thousands of Wellingtonians and resulting in a document which answered the question of "What could, or should, Wellington be like next century and beyond?" The preliminary steps were taken in early 1995, and strategy development extended over eighteen months from the establishment of a steering group in February 1996 to August 1997, when the Council received the final Strategy. Since that time efforts have shifted to implementation of the Strategy, with a review of the Strategy planned for 2003. In this study the effectiveness of the citizen participation process and the Strategy's ongoing implementation will be assessed with the aim of coming to some conclusions

about the prospects for the shift to a sustainable city. In undertaking this study I hope to see whether the shift implied by 'sustainable development' is something of substance or merely rhetorical.

1.1 What is a sustainable city?

The notion of sustainability is a subject of debate and contention. It is only since the 1960s that any serious attention has been given to human impacts on the Earth, including those of cities (Roseland 1997), with the notion of 'sustainable development' emerging in the 1980s. There is no agreed definition of this concept, and nor is there a consensus on how sustainability is to be achieved. At this point I will briefly outline the core definition of urban sustainability adopted in this thesis.

The origins of 'sustainable development' can be found in the recognition since the 1960s and 1970s of a pending global environmental crisis and the pressing need for social development to be addressed. Poverty, pollution, habitat destruction and consumption of irreplaceable natural capital are at the core of the dilemma we are confronting. Despite more than two decades of efforts to address negative environmental trends, progress has not been great, as the following statement from a United Nation's Environment Programme report indicates:

> *GEO-2000* makes it clear that if present trends in population growth, economic growth and consumption patterns continue, the natural environment will be increasingly stressed. Distinct environmental gains and improvements will probably be offset by the pace and scale of global economic growth, increased global environmental pollution and accelerated degradation of the Earth's renewable resource base (UNEP 1999: 5).

Far from receding, environmental problems still need pressing action.

The pressures referred to above led to the development of the concept of 'sustainable development', which is premised on the need to balance social, economic and environmental values. One of the most widely used definitions is that of the World Commission on Environment and Development, which describes 'sustainable development' as: "...development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (WCED 1987:

43). It was this definition which underlay thinking in Agenda 21, a global blueprint for action in all major areas affecting the relationship between the environment and the world's economy, which was agreed to at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992. According to Jacobs (1993), at the core of the meaning of 'sustainable development' are the following considerations:

- environmental considerations must be entrenched in economic policy-making
- sustainable development incorporates an inescapable commitment to social equity
- 'development' does not simply mean growth....[but] implies qualitative as well as quantitative improvement (cited in Roseland 1998: 4).

As mentioned above there is no single interpretation of sustainability, and its meaning is an enduring source of debate, detailed discussion of which is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, it is important to signal that debate on interpretation of the concept is vigorous, with a distinction drawn between 'strong' and 'weak' sustainability (Rees 1996, 1997: Roseland 1998).

Cities are seen as playing a critical role in any shift to 'sustainable development'. The reasons for this are starkly presented by O'Meara (1999: 9):

> Rather than devouring water, food, energy, and processed goods without regard for the impact of its ravenous appetites, and then belching out the remains as noxious pollutants, the city could align its consumption with realistic needs, produce more of its own food and energy, and put much more of its waste to use.

The concept of 'ecological footprint' has been developed to convey information about the resource consumption and assimilation requirements of a city or other unit of human settlements. Preparing a 'footprint' shows that the impact of human settlements stretches far beyond city boundaries to other areas, including neighbouring agricultural lands and to the global hinterlands (Rees 1996: 9). Using this tool, cities can be described as grossly unsustainable.

The following two definitions encapsulate the key elements of urban sustainability. Peter Newman (1997: 4) states that the primary goal of a sustainable city is to "...reduce the city's use of natural resources and its production of wastes whilst simultaneously improving its human livability". A similar definition is proposed by Mark Roseland

(1998: 214), who calls for an "...unprecedented and simultaneous emphasis on efficient use of urban space, on minimizing the consumption of essential natural capital, on multiplying social capital and on mobilizing citizens and their governments". With the addition of the attributes outlined by the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment, these definitions are touchstones for what I mean by a sustainable city in this study.

In New Zealand, the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment has led the way in the application of 'sustainable development' to cities. A definition proposed in the report *Cities and their People* is that "...at the simplest level, sustainable urban development is about ensuring a better quality of life for everyone, both now and in the future"(PCE 1998: 51). The key attributes of this are:

- a reducing ecological footprint with improving resource use efficiency and reduced waste
- maintenance of the natural environment and life-supporting ecosystems with action to limit global and local environmental threats such as climate change and the loss of biodiversity
- opportunities for true individual and community participation in decision making and management of the environment
- recognition of cultural diversity and the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi
- well maintained physical and social infrastructure
- transport systems that provide mobility, accessibility and choice
- a healthy, safe and pleasant environment with opportunities for recreation and leisure
- the provision of affordable housing and recognition of the social needs of everyone with[in] an equitable and caring community
- the provision of business opportunities and employment choice (PCE 1998: 51).

Although interest in urban sustainability is growing in New Zealand, it is still in its early stages. It is also important to mention that 'sustainable development' is not used in the Resource Management Act, but rather the concept of 'sustainable management' is incorporated into the Act. A detailed examination of the implications of the difference between these goals is beyond the scope of this research. It should, however, be noted that 'sustainable management' is considered a reactive approach consistent with the prevailing political and economic climate. 'Sustainable management' is not considered adequate to ensure the goals of 'sustainable development' are achieved (PCE 1998b).

1.2 The research question

In order to understand the role of citizen participation in the shift to a sustainable city, I have chosen to conduct a case study of one particular citizen participation exercise, the development of the *Our City ~ Our Future: Strategy for the Future of Wellington* by Wellington City Council and citizens. The research question that I sought to answer were:

- identify barriers to public participation in and limited implementation of the *Our City ~ Our Future* Strategy
- look at options for overcoming barriers to participation and steps to implement actions identified in the Strategy
- make recommendations to enhance public participation in implementation of the Strategy and to make progress with implementation of the Strategy.

This initial research question is premised on the need to establish the degree to which *Our City ~ Our Future: Strategy for the Future of Wellington* is being implemented. As this study unfolded it was obvious that it is difficult to distinguish Strategy development from implementation. Many of the causes for limited implementation are grounded in the way the Strategy was developed and in the final Strategy itself. These research questions also imply a need to understand the extent to which Wellington is meeting the criteria of urban sustainability outlined above.

In undertaking this research I have used a qualitative, inductive approach. I considered this approach was the most appropriate because it would generate data rich in insights, ensuring the voices of interview respondents could be heard, and permitting incorporation of wider contextual factors. It is also important to acknowledge that qualitative research is consistent with the notion that the researcher is not isolated from the subject of research. Researchers bring with them values and partisanship which can influence the research results, whether this is acknowledged or not. It is important that any biases are made transparent.

It is at this point that I acknowledge my own interest in the topic. I have been a participant in social and environmental change for the last decade, taking a particular

interest in city form and function. As a citizen of Wellington I have an interest in ensuring that the environment that I live in is not polluted and has capacity support future generations. I was a participant in *Our City ~ Our Future,* and am interested to see it achieve its potential. It is my belief that shifting Wellington along the path of urban sustainability will enhance the quality of life of its citizens and improve the condition of the environment. A goal of my study is to contribute to this aim. In declaring this interest I acknowledge the tradition of scholarship which places a high value on social change and advocacy.

To answer the research question, the research process entailed a number of elements. Prior to beginning fieldwork I undertook background reading on participatory democracy, 'sustainable development' and city-wide strategic planning. The two primary data-collection techniques were: firstly, a review of documentation related to the Strategy, including the draft and published Strategy and related reports, Council and steering group agendas, and minutes, advisory reports to Council committees, publicity material, submissions on strategy documents and other miscellaneous papers; and secondly, interviews with key informants who were participants in the Strategy development process. From this material a history of the process was prepared (see Chapter Three), and key themes from documents and interviews reported on (see Chapters Four and Five). I had a number of informal conversations with Council staff and other people interested or involved in *Our City ~ Our Future,* all of which contributed to my understanding of what has happened. For practical purposes, the cut-off point for data collection was September 1999. Feedback on a draft of the thesis was provided by Jane Dawson, an Advisory Group member and former member of the Transport Specialist Working Group.

1.3 Chapter summary

The structure of this thesis is as follows:
In **Chapter Two** the theoretical underpinnings of citizen participation are reviewed, particularly the relationship of participatory to representative democracy. Then the contribution of citizen participation in the shift to sustainability is considered, with reference to international agreements and debates. Finally, I consider the role of citizen

participation in local authority decision-making and planning in New Zealand, including a review of central government attitudes and statutory provisions.

In **Chapter Three** I report on data gathered to explain the strategy development process. This includes setting out the context of city-wide strategy planning in Wellington city, and a detailed survey of *Our City ~ Our Future* citizen participation process, including timing, issues and budgets. The first steps of the Advisory Group implementing the Strategy are also considered. In the part three of this Chapter I provide a preliminary review of *Our City ~ Our Future* implementation.

The focus of **Chapter Four** is reporting on key themes that emerged from documentary analysis of City Steering Group minutes and papers, Wellington City Council papers and committee minutes and Advisory Group minutes and papers. Themes considered include the understanding of citizen participation and sustainability revealed in these documents, levels of resourcing, representativeness of the process and group dynamics.

The findings from interviews with seven key informants are presented in **Chapter Five**. Among the key themes reported on are citizen or council control, leadership, funding and other barriers to implementation, and the role of sustainability.

The themes that emerged from the data collection are discussed in **Chapter Six**. Key foci are the relationship between council and citizen control, the effectiveness of citizen participation, the outcome of *Our City ~ Our Future* and issues of sustainability.

In the concluding chapter, **Chapter Seven**, I discuss options and recommendations to ensure urban sustainability can be addressed, and steps that can be taken to ensure citizen participation is effective. These recommendations are addressed to Wellington, but are also intended to be transferable beyond the *Our City ~ Our Future* process. Some areas are suggested for further research.

The challenge of engaging citizens in the future of their cities is a big one. As is described above, the need for involvement is pressing. Whether city-wide strategic planning processes can fulfil the intentions of its promoters is of more than academic interest. In exploring the issues surrounding citizen participation and sustainability below, I hope to enable local authorities and citizens to understand how they can be most effective in bringing about change. It is to the role of citizen participation in the shift to the sustainable city that I will now turn.

Linking citizen participation to sustainability

The purpose of this chapter is to outline the role of citizen participation and its centrality to democratic thinking and environmental problem solving in particular. Citizen involvement is a widely acknowledged means of ensuring the good health of democracies, particularly at the local government level. Increasingly the need for participation is seen as being important to address environmental problems and move toward 'sustainable development'. This is borne out in a number of international agreements, including the much hailed Agenda 21 (UNCED 1992). Discussion abounds of the need for democratic renewal to revive governments at all levels, because only then can pressing social, economic and environmental issues facing society be effectively addressed. In discussing these issues the scene will be set for consideration of an episode of citizen participation in Wellington: the development of *Our City ~ Our Future* Strategy, intended to secure citizen input and commitment to shaping the city's future and shift toward urban sustainability.

The Chapter begins with a discussion of citizen participation. This will explore key terms before moving to an analysis of the various strengths and weaknesses of these. The second section will focus on the role of public participation in the shift to sustainability as discussed in international fora. The final part focuses on opportunities for citizen participation in New Zealand, in relation to both environmental decision-making and the role of local government.

2.1 What is the meaning of citizen participation?

The plethora of terms and concepts surrounding public involvement are replete with intended and unintended connotations and meanings. In the literature on local

democracy you will find references to public participation, citizen engagement, citizen involvement, citizen participation and community participation. Each phrase has its own nuances, and there is a tendency for terms to be used imprecisely. To begin with I will briefly outline why I refer to citizen participation throughout this text.

2.1.1 Some definitions of citizen participation

The choice of citizen participation is deliberate. It is a term that has a long lineage, and is imbued with meaning. Derived from the Latin for city (*civitas*), citizenship is at the heart of democratic thinking. It conveys a notion of individual membership of a political entity, linked to a bundle of rights and obligations. The modern social liberal interpretation of citizenship was published in 1950 by T H Marshall (1996). He identified three related, but independent elements of citizenship which have evolved over the last three centuries. These are:

- civil citizenship — rights necessary for individual freedom, including liberty of the person, freedom of speech, thought and faith, the right to own property, and the right to justice; these rights are mediated through the courts

- political citizenship — the right to participate in the exercise of political power, either as a member of a body holding authority or as an elector of this body; the central institutions for the exercise of these rights are parliament and local authorities

- social citizenship — the right to a modicum of economic welfare and security, and access to a standard of living which is commonly considered acceptable within a society; exercise of these rights is associated with the education system and social services (Lewis 1998:109).

The social-liberal interpretation of citizenship stresses the rights of citizens, but without reference to a corresponding set of responsibilities. In understanding the nature of citizenship a distinction has been drawn between 'passive' and 'active' citizenship' (Selman 1996: 145), and in other terminology between liberal and communitarian citizenship (Forgie *et al* 1999: 8). Liberal citizenship is described as conferring entitlements to rights and benefits within a society but without corresponding duties. It is essentially an individualist approach in which individual rights are paramount. Typically, rights are perceived of as opportunities to act rather than the substantive

practice of rights. For instance, equal access to the courts is a right, but insufficient resources (ie inability to afford a lawyer) may prevent this opportunity being converted into a substantive right. In contrast, the concept of communitarian citizenship stresses pursuit of obligations and duties. The practice of rights occurs in a social setting and can be seen to reinforce social bonds or social capital. 'Active' citizenship also conveys a sense of collective interest and action — perhaps best summed up as the whole being more than the sum of the parts. Communitarians argue that the primacy of liberal citizenship in western democracies is leading to excessive individualism, which according to Etizoni (1998: 42) results in "...a sense of entitlement to rights but shirking of social responsibilities". It is argued that a shift to citizenship defined on communitarian terms is necessary. At the heart of this shift is the need to give priority to collective interests and respond to community problems. To achieve this, as well as redefining the individuals' role, it is necessary to revivify social institutions such as schools and family, and recreate devolved decision-making structures (ibid: 43-45).

The nature of an active citizen's obligations are dynamic. Selman (1996) develops the concept of active citizenship in an attempt to address the response by individuals to 'sustainable development'. As an environmental citizen, Selman posits (1996:149), responsible individuals will not only learn about environmental problems but will act on this information, as individuals, in their households and through voluntary organisations. Ideally people will engage in debate and hold public officials to task for their activities. In essence, it is about 'good housekeeping and the routinisation of environmental action' (Selman 1996: 153). The necessity for action brings with it some dilemmas, including the potential for individual action to encompass law-breaking protest, and for the perennial activists to capture the process. These dangers are not considered to outweigh the benefits.

Another dimension of citizenship has emerged in the 1990s in the wake of changes promoting the introduction of New Public Management into the public sector. Government at all levels is expected to operate in a 'business-like' way, therefore maximising economic efficiency, fiscal responsibility and accountability. As a consequence many government services and activities are run as businesses, with

citizens redefined as customers or consumers. Healthcare, housing and social services are examples of areas of government activity to which New Public Management has been applied. In these, and other areas, 'users' have opportunities for input regarding service provision and a widening of choices available (Clarke 1998: 22). Setting prices, hours, service levels, and feedback mechanisms are grist to the consumer mill. Customer satisfaction surveys and suggestion boxes are two typical means for providing feedback.

Commercial imperatives, however, can be at odds with citizens' influence over the provision of services and priority setting through democratic political processes. This is particularly so when considering accountability, as consumers may have opportunities to provide input on how services are delivered but have no say in what services are delivered. There is increasing recognition that responsiveness to consumers must stand alongside opportunities for participation in governance (Cheyne 1999). In a report to Local Government New Zealand, KPMG state "Consumer responsiveness must be stronger, and participatory democracy is critical; service delivery through a corporate model can be designed with citizens and can meet consumer and ratepayer demands" (KPMG 1999a: 29).

A key theme that emerges from the above discussion is the dynamic nature of citizenship. It is a concept that is subject to change, reflecting wider social mores. At any given time citizenship cannot be fixed, as it can be interpreted according to a particular situation. As Lewis (1998:108) states "[t]he notion of citizenship ... contains within it a number of contradictory discourses about the relation between the individual and the state which can be expressed as a series of oppositions — between the collective and the individual, rights and responsibilities, and equality and inequality". It is beyond the scope of this work to resolve the contradictions noted. Suffice to note, relevant concepts need to be used with care.

2.1.2 Strengths and weaknesses of citizen participation

I will now turn my attention to the nature of participation. Definitions of participation vary across the range of disciplines in which it is used, including psychology, human

resource management, business, public administration, political studies, social policy and development studies. Participation is a key element in much democratic theorising.

Citizen control	
Delegated power	Degree of
Partnership	Citizen Power
Placation	
	Degree of
Consultation	Tokenism
Informing	
Therapy	Non
	participation
Manipulation	

Figure 1.1 Arnstein's ladder of participation (1969)

In what is regarded as the 'classic' description of citizen participation, devised by Sherry Arnstein in the late 1960s, an enduring approach to participation was put forward. The schematic was developed by Arnstein following research on participation in the development of a service delivery programme for a government agency. The eight step participation ladder is broken into three groups, ranging from non-participation through degrees of tokenism to citizen power (see Figure 1.1). At the bottom of the ladder is manipulation and therapy, while at its pinnacle there is delegated authority and citizen control. It is considered desirable for citizens to move up the ladder and secure increased political power and influence. Success at gaining more control is reliant on an institution being open to sharing power, and entering into participation in a genuine way (Arnstein 1969).

The limitations of Arnstein's model were addressed by Burns, Hambleton and Hoggett (1994). Building on Arnstein's ladder of participation, they draw attention to the need to distinguish between control and participation more carefully, to include additional forms of empowerment identified since the 1960s, and to integrate awareness that the rungs of the ladder are not equidistant (1994: 161). At the same time, some dangers were recognised, including the potential for the development of an overly complex model, the limitations of schema in representing reality, and the risk of a model being used

prescriptively. A goal of the work of Burns *et al* was to develop the ladder of participation so that it could be applied to other spheres of activity, although their primary focus was on local government. The number of rungs on the ladder was increased to twelve, incorporating the following steps:

Citizen control

12) interdependent control

11) entrusted control

Citizen participation

10) delegated control

9) partnership

8) limited decentralised decision-making

7) effective advisory boards

6) genuine consultation

5) high quality information

Citizen non-participation

4) customer care

3) poor information

2) cynical consultation

1) civic hype. (Burns *et al* 1994: 162-63)

The implications of power-sharing are not lost on the authors. A big leap is required to move from decentralised decision-making and the rungs below this, to partnership and the steps above. It is recognised that "if, as we suggest, a genuine participatory democracy must go beyond the level of control over organisations to a notion of participation in and control over communities, then the idea of community development must be central to our concerns" (Burns *et al* 1994:177). The theme of empowerment is a critical one.

The approach taken by Burns *et al* has been the subject of criticism by Sweeting and Cope (1999), who question the use of the ladder of participation to measure empowerment. A concern raised relates to the ability of the model to take into account the fact that government agencies will have a variety of relationships with different publics. It is noted that "[t]here are many different communities of citizens representing consumers, producers, residents, voters, taxpayers, pressure groups, ethnic groups, religious groups and so on" (Sweeting and Cope 1999: 6). The degree to which citizens are listened to is another issue, particularly given the fact that they are competing with council staff, managers and expert professionals (ibid: 7). Finally, it is argued that a systematic discussion of power is lacking from Burns *et al*'s analysis. Sweeting and Cope (1999: 8) state that "any model attempting to measure citizen participation or empowerment must take the concept of power on board". I return to the nature of empowerment below (see 2.1.3).

Arnstein's model was the basis of another approach by Wilcox (1994), who developed a guide for designing effective participation, particularly in relation to designing and initiating participation exercises. He argues that no approach is any better than any other, but rather different levels are appropriate at different times to meet the expectations of different interests (Wilcox 1994). Participation is successful when it meets the needs of those involved. In Wilcox's framework there are just five steps on a continuum of degrees of control and levels of participation. The steps are:

Information: the least you can do is tell people what is planned.

Consultation: you offer a number of options and listen to the feedback you get.

Deciding together: you encourage others to provide some additional ideas and options, and join in deciding the best way forward.

Action together: not only do different interests decide together what is best, but they form partnership to carry it out.

Supporting independent community initiatives: you help others do what they want - perhaps within a framework of grants, advice and support provided by the resource holder (Wilcox 1994).

2.1.3 How much participation is desirable?

The degree of participation considered desirable is a topic of much debate. As is noted above, Arnstein argues that citizens should ideally progress up the ladder of participation, and eventually achieve citizen control. This is a message that has been emphasised as interest in participation was renewed in the 1990s. The concept of 'empowerment', another of those elusive words with multiple meanings and interpretations, is at the heart of this renewal. Clarke and Stewart (1994: 23) state that:

> [e]mpowering the public as community involves giving them the right to participate and whenever possible determine issues effecting the community through direct control, through such institutions as neighbourhood forums or community councils.

Sweeting and Cope propose using a definition of power which distinguishes between 'outcome power' and 'social power'. They refer to Dowding (1991: 48), who proposes the following meanings:

- 'outcome power' = the ability of an actor to bring about or help to bring about outcomes
- 'social power' = the ability of an actor deliberately to change the incentive structure of another actor or actors to bring about, or help bring about outcomes.

The intention in reviewing these definitions is to indicate the necessity to consider power relationships, although the operationalisation of these is beyond the scope of this study.

It is a call which many see as necessary to address environmental problems and 'sustainable development'. Selman (1996: 148) argues that empowerment must occur with power being transferred from government and corporations to communities. Discussing Local Agenda 21 implementation in the United Kingdom, Young (1996) concludes that the 'bottom-up strategy' is the approach most likely to result in empowerment. At its best, strategy development can give people a real role in shaping decisions, ensure they have opportunities to engage in dialogue with councils and have a share of power. As well as academic considerations of the need for decentralisation of decision-making, activists are also calling for a shift of power to neighbourhoods as an effective means of improving the quality of life and addressing environmental problems

(Trainor 1995; Theobald 1997). At its most radical, the call for participatory democracy is a demand for self-government.

2.1.4 The tension between representation and participation

Herein lies a source of enduring tension. Although there maybe powerful arguments for some form of direct government, within liberal, western countries the predominant form of democracy is representative. The degree to which participation is consistent with representation is a tension that has attracted much comment. It is to this topic that I now turn.

In an article exploring the strengths and weaknesses of representative and participatory forms of democracy, Hucker (1998) concludes that consultation or participation is not an end in itself but a means to supplement representative democracy. The fact that participatory democracy is based on decisions by the people or citizens was seen as a significant shortcoming. This is not to suggest that representative democracy is without flaws, for elected members have to effectively use sound judgement to balance the interests of both the majority and minority. Hucker (1998: 18) outlines three principles (those of personalism, subsidiarity and pluralism), which, along with Berger's postulate of ignorance, calculus of pain and calculus of meaning, are necessary to ensure decision-makers have adequate information, make decisions at the appropriate level, and work within a strong civil society. In short, Hucker argues that participation and representative democracy are not incompatible provided the former is not sacrificed to the latter.

This melding of democratic forms is a topic that resonates in the literature on citizen participation. Following research into development of Local Agenda 21 strategies, Selman and Parker (1997: 178) conclude that:

> No matter how effective the 'participatory democracy' model may be at drawing in new participants and stimulating community energy, it is an incomplete substitute for the 'representative democracy' of local government. For maximum legitimacy and durability, the two must be spliced together in a very deliberate manner".

Discussing the New Zealand local government context, Forgie *et al* (1999: 17) acknowledge that "[r]ather than being a challenge to representative democracy, participatory democracy can be a means of strengthening it". Donaldson (1998: 1) observes that people do not want to get rid of government, nor is "[e]mpowerment ... necessarily about having "power" *per se*; rather it is part of a continuum of building trust and working relationships that might lead to power being redistributed in the form of or access to, and influence over, decisions that are being made" (emphasis in original).

2.1.5 Critiques of citizen participation

A repeated criticism of participatory democracy is its susceptibility to politics of self-interest. Under representative democracy decision-making is said to transcend self-interest by focusing on the 'public good'. In contrast, a recurrent observation is that participatory processes have a tendency to be captured by interest groups. From these groups self-appointed citizens exert a disproportionate influence over decision-making, without being held accountable for the positions that they hold. There is a risk that this will result in policies and activities that are in the self-interest of particular sectors of societies, and even particular individuals (Cheyne 1999: 218; Forgie *et al*: 15; Selman: 1996: 148; Selman 1998b: 550-51). At the heart of public choice theory is the notion of capture. According to this theory interest groups will attempt to control the decision-making process for their own gain, thus leading to their group "...capturing a disproportionate share of national income" (Boston *et al* 1996: 18). Although decision-making at the local authority level may not result in the transfer of a substantial sum of income, access to resources is hotly contested and decisions that favour one sector over another are a source of much debate. Despite the tenets of public choice being critiqued (because of its inaccurate view of human behaviour and the lack of predictive validity) the arguments are still influential.

Not only is the threat of 'capture' a well rehearsed criticism, but there are others regarding the practice of participation. These include:
- the pressure placed on government processes and systems, for instance, officials who are overloaded through running participation programmes (Davies 1998:14)

- the size of bureaucracy increases to support participation processes and remains in place even if participation does not continue (Forgie *et al* 1999:15)
- the expectations of the public can be raised to unrealistic levels (DETR 1998: 2.1)
- elected members can sense a loss of authority and control
- slowness of decision-making ('paralysis by analysis') (Selman 1996: 157)
- participants suffering from consultation fatigue as a result of continually being asked to submit their views
- the lack of representativeness may mean the outcome is biased.

Balanced against these criticisms are a number of inherent benefits of participation. At its heart participatory democracy is about self-realisation and promotion of personal fulfilment. Davies (1998:11) summarises the case for participation as found in Pateman as promoting human development, enhancing political competence, reducing alienation from government, encouraging collective responses to problem solving, contributing to the development of active and knowledgeable citizens, and promoting interest in political affairs.

Many other benefits are ascribed to participation. Forgie *et al* (1999: 12-14) note that participation:

- contributes to the responsiveness of decision-makers
- "provides an arena both for building trust and for reinforcing the legitimacy of government decisions" (13)
- promotes linkages with government, in the wake of mega-bureaucracies
- is a safety valve when officials perform poorly, or controversial issues are raised
- promotes civic virtue, including ennobling citizens and educating them in the process of government
- contributes to good decisions and acceptability of decisions.

Selman (1996: 157) states that with regard to environmental issues, participation ensures knowledge of problems is widely shared, and that implementation is sped-up and is thorough because people understand the problems and solutions. Also, despite comments to the contrary, public involvement is considered to be cost effective because it ensures services and policies which reflect community sentiment. Costs can therefore

be avoided because services which do not meet expressed needs are not developed (DETR 1998: 1.3). In short, participation is viewed as a essential feature of democracy by assisting complex problem solving.

The tension between participation and representation cannot easily be resolved, if this is at all desirable. The strengths and weaknesses of each form of democracy can be seen to complement one another and, when held in dynamic tension, provide varied opportunities for citizen input and influence. The precise mix between participation and representation is heavily dependent on local circumstances and needs. It is important that the tension is acknowledged, and one approach does not override the other. As is discussed with regard to *Our City ~ Our Future*, both representative and participatory approaches need to be used equally. Before turning to discussion of how citizen participation can contribute to 'sustainable development' I will consider two further considerations related to participation.

2.1.6 Citizen participation techniques

There is no shortage of techniques with which to involve the public in decision-making. The UK Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions (1998: 1.1) list nineteen techniques in their guide to enhancing participation, while in a document produced by the UK Local Government Management Board (LGMB 1997) 35 techniques are noted. There is some evidence in the UK that local authorities tend to jump from one approach to the next in a haphazard way. Bishop and Bonner (1995: 209) observe that:

> Most community involvement is *ad hoc*, occasional rather than regular. It appears to be guided by choice of specific methods than awareness of overall approach. There is a notable absence of properly grounded, overall processes which enable participants to develop practice from project to project.

The DETR also witnessed this phenomenon, noting that, to be effective, participation must be integrated with mainstream council activity, not seen as a bolt on extra. This conclusion is reinforced by Donaldson (1998), who argues that commitment to participation processes is one of six issues that must be addressed before organisations can effectively empower communities. She suggests this can be achieved by developing

a set of principles and guidelines which clearly set-out how consultation will be undertaken, and ensuring staff within an organisation actually believe that involvement is worthwhile, rather than just going through the motions to fulfil statutory requirements (Donaldson 1998: 3-4).

There is no shortage of accessible principles if local authorities want to demonstrate commitment. For instance, the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment (1996) appended to her report on the management of conflict under the Resource Management Act a set of principles. These cover: timing, efficiency, conflict resolution, the role of Treaty of Waitangi and tangata whenua, access to information, accountability, inclusiveness, access to appeal and redress, and monitoring and enforcement (PCE 1996: A15-17). Reporting on public consultation and decision-making in local government, the Controller and Auditor General (1998) identifies some elements of good practice. Pre-conditions to effective consultation include 'having the right attitude', allowing sufficient time, being clear about the process, identifying all stakeholders and providing good feedback (1998: 56-57).

2.1.7 New ways of working together

It is also necessary to acknowledge one of the much-mentioned attributes of participation: the shift in decision-making styles to a collaborative approach. 'Partnership' and 'consensus' are buzzwords used with great enthusiasm, with the implication of a shift in the locus of power. Collaboration and consensus are particularly relevant when attempting to reconcile competing objectives. Bishop (1998: 112) suggests that collaboration and consensus are central if we are to move to a more sustainable world with some balance between economic, social and environmental interests. It is not always possible to reach agreement because of fundamental differences of values, knowledge or experiences. In this situation, promoting understanding between parties is a desirable outcome. Decision-making which stresses early resolution of conflicts, and even avoidance of conflicts through early involvement of stakeholders, is an emerging trend. But to be successful it is important to involve **all** stakeholders. Faced with reluctance by some key stakeholders, efforts may need to be made to encourage their involvement. Bishop and Bonner (1995: 210) state that often a

council will only talk with local residents, but not other stakeholders including business, voluntary organisations, young, disadvantaged and 'non-joiners', elected members, central government agencies. Conflict is likely to be intensified unless processes are well designed and inclusive.

This discussion emphasises the need for process to be considered as important as the outcomes of decision-making. The practice and lessons learnt are considered in subsequent chapters, as I review the effectiveness of 'Our City ~ Our Future'.

2.2 The role of participation in the shift to 'sustainable development'

The contribution that citizen participation can make to environmental protection and resource management has been recognised since the heightening awareness of environmental issues in the 1960s. Initially this entailed formal participation in institutional mechanisms such as town planning processes or voluntary contributions to practical conservation projects (Warburton 1998: 9). Interaction with those undertaking community development, and the emergence of the concept of 'sustainable development' in the late 1980s and 1990, has resulted in a renewed emphasis on public involvement. This is considered essential in addressing the social, environmental and economic challenges facing humanity.

One of the early works in which participation and community action was recognised was the World Conservation Strategy released in 1980 by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN 1980). Commenting on the Strategy, and developments that followed, Davidson and MacEwen noted that:

> ...increasing pressure by individuals and community groups for participation in decisions which affect their locality has been a notable movement of the past decade ... there is increasing enthusiasm for local action which offers great scope for building a resource saving society (cited in Warburton 1998: 12-13).

The next significant international contribution came with the UN World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), known as the Brundtland Commission, which was tasked with reporting on development and environment issues in 1982. When the Commission's report was finally released in 1987, the first requirement noted for the pursuit of 'sustainable development' was "...a political system that secures effective citizen participation in decision making" (WCED 1987: 65). To bring this about it is suggested that decision making about resources be decentralised, citizens' initiatives and people's organisations be supported, and local democracy be strengthened.

Following on from the Commission's work was *Caring for the Earth: a Strategy for Sustainable Living,* co-authored by the World Conservation Union, UN Environment Programme and World Wide Fund for Nature. One of the nine principles for developing strategies is "enabling communities to care for their own environments" (IUCN/ UNEP/ WWF 1991: 363). This is premised on the understanding that communities can be a powerful and effective force for change.

At the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), known popularly as the Rio Earth Summit, the imperative for citizen involvement in sustainable development was given its fullest expression to date. Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development states:

> Environmental issues are best handled with the participation of all concerned citizens, at the relevant level. At the national level, each individual shall have appropriate access to information concerning the environment that is held by public authorities, including information on hazardous materials and activities in their communities, and the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes. States shall facilitate and encourage public awareness and participation by making information widely available. Effective access to judicial and administrative proceedings, including redress and remedy, shall be provided.

Another of the texts developed at UNCED was Agenda 21, a plan of action for achieving 'sustainable development'. At its heart is a recognition of the necessity for citizen participation in decision-making and environmental action. Throughout there were numerous references to participation, including:

Chapter 1: Preamble
It is acknowledged that successful implementation is first and foremost the responsibility of governments but it is also noted "the broadest participation

and the active involvement of the non-governmental organizations and other groups should also be encouraged (Agenda 21, 1.3).

Chapter 3: Combating Poverty

It is particularly important to focus capacity-building at the local community level in order to support a community driven approach to sustainability (Agenda 21, 3.12).

Chapter 8: Integrating Environment & Development in Decision-making

To do this countries will develop plans, policies and programmes, including "ensuring access by the public to relevant information, facilitating the reception of public views and allowing for effective participation" (Agenda 21, 8.4 (f)).

Chapter 10: Integrated Approach to the Planning and Management of Land Resources

Governments at the appropriate level, in collaboration with national organisations and with the support of regional and international organisations, should establish innovative procedures, programmes, projects and services that *facilitate and encourage the active participation of those affected in the decision-making and implementation process*, especially of groups that have, hitherto, often been excluded, such as women, youth, indigenous people and their communities and other local communities. (Agenda 21, 10.10; emphasis added).

Chapter 23: Preamble to Section III, Strengthening the Role of Major Groups

One of the fundamental prerequisites for the achievement of sustainable development is broad public participation in decision-making. Furthermore, in the more specific context of environment and development, the need for new forms of participation has emerged. This includes the need of individuals, groups and organisations to participate in environmental impact assessment procedures and to know about and participate in decisions, particularly those which potentially affect the communities in which they live and work (Agenda 21, 23.2; emphasis added).

Chapter 28: Local Authorities' Initiatives in Support of Agenda 21

Because so many of the problems and solutions being addresses by Agenda 21 have their roots in local activities, the participation and cooperation of local authorities will be a determining factor in fulfilling its objectives. Local authorities construct, operate and maintain economic, social and environmental infrastructure, oversee planning processes, establish local environmental policies and regulations, and assist in implementing national and sub-national environmental policies. As the level of governance closest to the people, they play a vital role in educating, mobilizing and responding to the public to promote sustainable development (Agenda 21, 28.1).

Section Three of Agenda 21 is devoted to strengthening the role of major groups, including the need to include women, children and youth, indigenous people and their communities, non-governmental organisations, local authorities, workers and trade unions, business and industry, and the scientific and technological community in decision making. Local government is encouraged to assist in the development and adoption of "a local Agenda 21". This document would involve consultation with citizens, and local, civic, community, business and industrial organisations.

Since the UNCED 'Earth Summit' the language and impetus for public participation in resource management decision-making has been widely supported and endorsed. This has occurred both within academic community, governmental and non-governmental organisations. The role of local authorities is gaining increasing prominence. The International Commission for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI), along with other partners, has been prominent in promoting participation. Case studies, guidelines for 'sustainable development' strategies and best practice have been prepared, and ongoing dialogue and information sharing is a key feature of ICLEI's work. *The local Agenda 21 planning guide : an introduction to sustainable development* is one example of ICLEI's work (ICLEI 1996).

At the 1996 UN Conference on Human Settlements, known as Habitat II, it was emphasised that good governance in the management of cities requires a highly participatory approach. The Habitat Agenda, an enormous corpus covering everything from urban design and land-use to structures and processes, devotes much attention to popular participation and civic engagement, with proposals for a range of institutional measures and legal frameworks. This is, perhaps, best summarised in the Istanbul Declaration, agreed to at the Conference. Article 12 of the Declaration states:

> We adopt the enabling strategy and the principles of partnership and participation as the most democratic and effective approach for the realization of our commitments. Recognising local authorities as our closest and essential partners in the implementation of the Habitat Agenda, we must, within the legal framework of each country, promote decentralisation through democratic local authorities and work to strengthen their financial and institutional capacities in accordance with the conditions of countries, while ensuring their transparency, accountability and responsiveness to the

needs of people, which are key requirements for Governments at all levels (UNCHS 1996b).

The close relationship between 'sustainable development' and citizen involvement has found a receptive audience. Increasingly there is support from diverse sectors, including governments, academic institutions and grassroots campaigners who are promoting the benefits of citizen participation. As Doering (1994: 1) notes:

> [s]ustainability planning must be community-led and consensus based because the central issue is will, not expertise. We can't protect ecosystems, let alone restore them, unless ways and means can be found to integrate the work of all the communities within the region. We must experiment with ways that involve citizens more directly and deliberately into policy-making at all levels. Ultimately it all comes down to social and political will.

Recognition that the shift to 'sustainable development' is reliant on participation is widely acknowledged. When attention is turned to New Zealand, the evidence suggests that receptiveness to citizen participation is mixed.

2.3 Citizen participation in Aotearoa New Zealand

My focus will now shift the international context to the situation in New Zealand, and a review of domestic policy and relevant statutory provisions. Public involvement is not the responsibility of a single piece of legislation, nor any one department. The topics covered below are the primary mechanisms by which public participation is enabled.

2.3.1 Attitudes to government

Before looking at the institutional arrangements for participation, it is useful to look at New Zealanders attitudes toward government. In the 1998 Study of Values, a comprehensive study of New Zealanders' attitudes and opinions about all facets of society, views on politics were sought. A Local Government New Zealand (1999a) report came to the following conclusion:

> With regard to the operation of government, respondents generally felt they had little control or influence over politics, government officials or

> decisions, and that government was unresponsive to public opinion, even
> though a significant majority were interested in elections.

It was noted that only 25% of respondents agreed to the proposition that the average person has considerable influence on local politics. Similarly, addressing the question of the average person's influence on government, only a few respondents agreed they had a great deal of influence on government decisions, with just 7% for central government and 17% for local government. Turning to government responsiveness to public opinion, 39% agreed local government is generally responsive to public opinion, while 25% agreed that central government was. Although local government fared better than central government, the results indicate relatively high levels of mistrust and apathy toward the operation of government.

A factor which arguably has had a strong influence on citizen involvement in New Zealand is the prevailing dominance of neo-liberal economics. In the past fifteen years successive governments have vigorously pursued an agenda promoting a central role for the market through deregulation and a limited role for government. Privatisation and semi-privatisation of government utilities, including telecommunications, energy and postal services, has shifted authority to non-elected boards whose priority is to generate a financial return for the government. With regard to environmental planning those with resources are seen to be advantaged. For instance, participation in resource management processes requires access to legal and technical expertise and therefore favours developers. This leads Hayward (1995) to conclude that it is almost impossible for participatory democracy to flourish in a market-oriented economic environment. As noted in the discussion of citizenship above, there has been in a shift in opportunities for public input from that of citizens to that of consumers. This is described as being the result of the ascendancy of neo-liberal economic policies, particularly so with regard to social services. Cheyne *et al* (1997: 140-41) note that consumer rights to participate are akin to protection afforded to buyers of goods, therefore "...facilitat[ing] the operation of markets for goods and services". The ability of citizens to set the agenda, and ultimately influence policy setting, is undermined. These broader cultural and structural factors create a context within which any participation occurs.

2.3.2 The Government's approach to citizen participation

Central government has recognised the importance of citizen participation in environmental decision making and the shift to 'sustainable development', and has taken steps to put this into action. The Environment 2010 Strategy was prepared in 1995 as a statement of the Government's priorities for action on the environment. One of the six environmental management objectives in the Strategy highlighted public participation. Goal six is "...to ensure that people have the opportunity for effective participation in decision making that affects the environment" (MfE 1995: 58). Despite some progress since then, a number of new and emerging risks were noted in a subsequent stocktake of the strategy (MfE 1997a). Risks noted included: the reluctance of some decision-makers to consult sufficiently with stakeholders; the lack of understanding by people of the legislative provisions for participation; legal and other costs creating barriers to participation; and processes not being sensitive to Maori cultural values and processes.

The New Zealand government entered into Agenda 21 (MfE n.d). Although this is not a legally binding agreement, it does carry some moral imperative for action. It was recognised at the time that "[o]ne of the fundamental pre-requisites for the achievement of sustainable development is broad public participation in decision-making" (MfE & LGA 1994a: 6). A critical component of this is the need for access to information by communities, and for social, economic and environmental planning to be integrated.

Implementation of Agenda 21 was seen by central government as primarily being a local authority issue, following the logic set-out in Chapter 28 of Agenda 21 (Gow 1998). The focus of attention has been on preparing materials and promoting awareness amongst councils of the opportunities presented by Agenda 21. To this end the Ministry for the Environment, in conjunction with the Local Government Association (now Local Government New Zealand), released a set of documents called *Securing the future: a guide to Agenda 21*. This material covered key principles of the agreement, and summarised the contents of the 500 page Agenda 21. Overall the most that could be said to have been offered is moral support, but no funding, to encourage councils wanting to respond to Agenda 21. The agreement has lived on through the efforts of individual

councils, community activities and the occasional efforts of Local Government New Zealand. The latter has included arranging occasional seminars and conference workshops, and a survey of local authority Agenda 21 initiatives is on the LGNZ's 1999 work programme.

Five territorial local authorities did agree to carry out some implementation activities. Waitakere City Council, Hamilton City Council, Nelson City Council, Tasman District Council, and Waimakariri District Council were the councils involved (PCE 1998a: 55). The councils involved undertook various initiatives, with the intention that these be pilot projects, after which the lessons learnt would be disseminated around the country. However, the idea of these acting as pilot projects has not caught on. Few other councils have engaged with Agenda 21, although Christchurch City Council and Wellington City Council are notable exceptions. Manukau, Hutt City and a handful of other councils have adopted an approach consistent with Agenda 21, adopting healthy cities or safer community philosophies (Ombler 1998: 32). Some community organisations have initiated responses. Diana Shand (1996: 25) notes efforts by Dunedin's Green Business Challenge, Sustainable Cities Trust in Christchurch and a range of other groups as leading the charge.

However, on the whole, the central government's 'hands-off' approach to Agenda 21 has attracted considerable criticism. The Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment noted that since the pilot studies:

> ...there has been little national leadership, promotion or coordination of local Agenda 21 initiatives with no national Agenda 21 implementation strategy. Without adequate central government support, the awareness of opportunities provided by Agenda 21 in integrating economic, environmental, social and cultural factors is limited. (PCE 1998: 55)

Shand (1999 pers. comm.) commented that the Government has not show any leadership or interest in Agenda 21. The absence of leadership is a recurrent theme, and it came up as recently as August 1999, at the Royal Society's "Forging Links: Social and Environmental Sustainability and Social Science Research" seminar. The development of Local Agenda 21s, which have been adopted in some 2000 municipalities globally, has only been attempted by a small number of local authorities in Aotearoa. Commenting on Local Agenda 21 in New Zealand, Ernst Zöllner identified

limited interest from politicians, management and even planners as a significant barrier (cited in Ombler 1998: 32).

The Government has rejected this criticism, arguing that the Resource Management Act and other initiatives effectively meet its obligations for action under Agenda 21 and no additional effort is required. In describing the Government's approach the Ministry for the Environment noted that "...New Zealand's legislation (Resource Management Act, Biosecurity Act, Local Government Act, etc.) is largely in accord with the themes in Agenda 21. In our case, therefore, the action needed is to implement that legislation satisfactorily" (MfE 1999). Although the government may be happy with this approach, community sentiment and comparison with countries leading the charge suggest that New Zealand's efforts should be described as being modest, if not inadequate.

2.3.3   The statutory framework for citizen participation

It is to the statutory framework for participation that I will now turn my attention. The two primary pieces of legislation for consideration are the Local Government Act 1974 and the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA).

Resource Management Act 1991

Public participation is regarded by some commentators as a cornerstone of the Resource Management Act. From the outset citizens were assigned a critical role in the management of physical and natural resources. Because of its knowledge about local environments, and the potential impacts of new activities, the public was seen as being in a good position to contribute to decision-making. Also, the importance of different cultural values in relationship to the environment was recognised. Essentially, therefore, citizen involvement was considered an effective mechanism to safeguard natural resources.

There are two main avenues for public involvement in the RMA: one is in plan setting, and the other responding to specific resource consent applications (Milne 1993). Plans cover all land, water and atmospheric resources in a particular area. There is a hierarchy of plans, starting with national policy statements and national environmental standards,

then regional policy statements, regional coastal plans and regional plans, and finally district plans. These plans define what activities can occur in all or part of the area covered by the plan. Classification of activities creates a framework by which to assess the effects of an activity, with some individual activities requiring resource consents, which are secured through an application process. Procedures by which consents are put in place are governed by provisions in the Act. Both plan setting and resource consent applications are open to public input, with conditions for participation set-out by the law. This covers timeframes, notification, hearing of submissions, rights of appeal and other related topics. Provisions in the Resource Management Act contrast with the Town and Country Planning Act 1977 which it replaced, which limited participation to those directly affected by developments and took a highly prescriptive approach to planning.

The degree of, and opportunity for, public participation has been the subject of intense scrutiny and debate. It is widely recognised that there is potential for greater citizen involvement. It is noted that:

> Theoretically, the Act sets up more opportunities for participation. However, the culmination of more flexible and less restrictive plans along with greater delegation to council officers has effectively reduced the opportunities for participation on resource consent applications (Forgie *et al* 1999: 76).

There have been numerous complaints and comments about the ability of Maori and the wider public to participate. These concerns led to an investigation by the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment (1996), who concluded that there a number of barriers to participation. Concerns were seen to fell broadly into the following areas:

- the public's lack of awareness of RMA procedures and failure to recognise the importance of being involved as early as possible in the planning process
- inappropriate council management of decision-making processes (including pre-hearing meetings and hearings which are not user-friendly)
- lack of resources (people, skills, funding) for the public to participate
- the nature of the statutory procedures (including time available and the adversarial nature of hearings) (PCE 1996:1).

In a review of the interactions between local authorities and Maaori organisations in Resource Management Act processes the following issues were raised:

- consultation with iwi organisations is ineffective or inadequate
- involvement of Maaori is too late in the process for an adequate response, and Maaori are hampered by lack of access to knowledge and human resources
- there are difficulties of identification and involvement of appropriate iwi/ hapu groups
- funding by councils for Maori involvement is often inadequate
- it is beneficial for iwi/ hapu to develop resource management plans, insufficient resources available, results in Maori perspective being left out of other plans
- limited professional expertise within Maori community is an impediment to effective input
- despite training and awareness raising activities, communication with councils impaired by inadequate levels of cultural understanding, and limited understanding of Maori resource management issues and the Treaty of Waitangi
- some miscommunication occurs between councils and iwi
- guidance to help interactions between councils and Maori organisations is necessary (MfE 1998: 21-25).

Despite various reviews, with attendant recommendations, progress improving the situation has been slow. In a paper to the 1999 Local Government New Zealand conference Jane Wylie (1999: 1) expressed frustration at barriers faced by citizens, noting that "the Act is failing to deliver because of a failure in the local democratic participation that was intended to be central". It is argued by Wylie that the recently proposed amendments, as detailed in the Resource Management Amendment Bill 1999, will undermine public participation. Two reasons why this may occur cited by Wylie are the removal of provisions requiring consultation by resource consent applicants with affected parties, and the transfer of consent processing to private interests (ibid: 6). The Action on Community and Environment Campaign (1999), set-up to raise awareness about the proposed changes to the RMA, declare that "Prime Minister Jenny Shipley wants to push through major changes to the Resource Management Act that will

drastically reduce environmental protection and take away the public's right to have a say". Even those provisions for input that do exist are seen as being under threat.

Local Government Act 1974

Scepticism also surrounds the promise and practice of participation under the Local Government Act 1974. The Act sets out the purpose and functions of local authorities. Legislative amendments in 1989 swept in a new era of transparency and accountability. The reforms resulted in re-organisation of council boundaries, and the introduction of a corporate approach to management. A key purpose encapsulated in the Act was provision for the recognition of communities, and the effective participation of local persons in local government (section 37K). The Act sets out a variety of optional and mandatory mechanisms for enhancing accountability, including annual plans and annual reporting, the Special Consultative Procedure, wards, community boards, and separation of functions. The Special Consultative Procedure (section 716A) outlines the local authorities consultation responsibilities to the public. Requirements for the hearing of submissions and minimum timeframes for public notification of proposed actions or expenditure are specified in the Act.

A subsequent amendment to the Act in 1996 has potentially strengthened the financial accountability framework, with councils required to develop ten year financial strategies and funding policies and to use the Special Consultative Procedure when doing so. Since these amendments were passed, many local authorities have recognised the need to first determine the overall priorities for its district or community before making decisions about funding. The trend toward development of long-term strategic plans, which incorporate integrated planning and policy-making mechanisms, has been bolstered. Although this was not the intention of amendments, Perkins and Thorn (1998: 20) argue that "...paradoxically the legislative reform introduced to encourage fiscal accountability and the employment of a strict accountability model has also allowed some councils to use this process for setting social and economic goals". The opportunity to incorporate broader social and environmental concerns into strategic plans was recognised by McNeil (1995: 3), who suggested that Agenda 21 was a useful resource for councils. As will be discussed below, tackling 'sustainable development'

through strategic planning has proved problematic in New Zealand, as the case in Wellington city indicates.

The effectiveness of amendments to the Act to improve accountability through public participation is a subject of debate. In a review of consultation under the Local Government Act the Controller and Auditor-General (1998: 16) noted that although consultation is required or implied by statute, the nature of the obligation to consult is not specified. As a consequence different communities have very different experiences of consultation. Experiences have not always been positive, with the following problems with the Special Consultative Procedure being noted:

- the perception that consultation is a 'sham', with local authority processes described as inappropriate or inadequate
- costs of consultation are a barrier to involvement
- undue pressure group influence, therefore process dominated by a few groups or individuals (Controller & Auditor-General 1998: 43-46).

In addition, a range of other pressures have been identified, including increasing diversity of communities, local authority 'capture' by well organised and/or resourced groups, and changing community expectations (Controller & Auditor-General 1998: 10). Elected representatives have sometimes resisted the introduction of consultative methods, because these are considered costly and time-consuming processes and are seen to undermine representative decision-making (Forgie *et al* 1999: 83).

Despite misgivings about participation, statutory requirements are increasingly described as a minimum, or as a bottom-line guarantee of consultation. As a result some "[l]ocal authorities are interested in developing new and better ways to consult with the community to an extent well beyond the statutory requirements" (Controller 1998: 50). Cheyne (1999: 213) suggests that in addition to plans and formal consultation, some councils are committed to developing a more consultative process. This has led them to develop consultation guidelines, plus seeking guidance about good practice and learning from other public sector organisations.

It is also important to be cognisant of the increasing prevalence of a privatised approach to decision-making, through the use of market mechanisms for the delivery of services by councils, which relies on input from consumers rather than greater involvement of citizens through political processes. Services or activities affected by this approach include housing, electricity supply, property development, water supply and transport. This has entailed both contracting out and the establishment of internal business units within councils as 'stand-alone' units (Boston *et al* 1996: 193). The potential conflict between rights of citizens to engagement and opportunities for consumers for input as users prompted Local Government New Zealand to commission a report on citizen engagement and commercial activities entitled *reach further/ look behind the beyond/ a "thinkpiece": Is citizen engagement compatible with a corporate service delivery structure?*

There is a tension between the RMA and LGA, and no clear mechanism for determining the relative priority of goals and actions developed in plans under the separate pieces of legislation. Perkins and Thorns (1998: 20) conclude that the RMA privileges bio-physical environmental issues over social and economic planning considerations, which have effectively been sidelined, or ignored. Planning for 'sustainable development' is complicated by the lack of practical integration between the different pieces of legislation.

2.3.4 Local government interest in innovation

There is a high level of interest in the local government sector for a renewal of democracy. Local Government New Zealand is playing a central role is promoting local democracy in New Zealand through a range of initiatives. Its July 1999 conference was called 'focus@democracy.lg.nz', and covered a range of topics including participatory techniques, environmental choices and the overlap between the commercial and political pressures. In June 1999, LGNZ released a paper called "Local Democracy 2000" explores which many aspects of democracy. A key aspect of this was the recognition that local democracy is "...about working with communities to identify common, or public, goods and creating a sense of local identity and place" (LGNZ 1999b). At another local government conference, the Community Government Forum, 2-3 June

1999 organised by Christchurch's Mayor Garry Moore, the aim was for local government leaders and sector interests to consider how to change in the way communities govern themselves. It was recognised that "...governments at national, regional, territorial and community board levels have the democratic legitimacy to provide a strategic leadership role in establishing and maintaining community governance processes" (Mike Richardson 1999: 3). Innovative participation techniques, enhancement of representative processes and empowerment, along with traditional concerns about the limits of local government authority and funding were discussed. Whether this was cynical window dressing in an attempt to secure greater legitimacy or a genuine attempt to create an agenda for power sharing is a question that remains to be answered (Blyth 1999).

There is considerable interest in enhancing democracy — whether it be representative, participatory or both — in local government in New Zealand, and considerable room for individual councils to take the initiative. There is a framework and some limited support for encouraging participation, and no limit to social, economic and environmental issues that need to be addressed. Both central and local government have acknowledged the vital contribution that citizen participation can play in shifting to sustainability. The knowledge and energy of citizens needs to be tapped to bring about changes demanded by 'sustainable development'. This will occur both within decision-making and planning, and through individual attitudinal and behavioural change. It is in this context that I will explore issues surrounding one particular citizen participation episode in Wellington.

The path to Wellington's strategy for the future

O*ur City ~ Our Future* has received a considerable amount of praise. It is not only the final product, a detailed for Strategy for the Future of Wellington, that receives attention but also the process by which it was developed. The city-wide, multi-stakeholder process is a unique episode of citizen participation in New Zealand. Over a period of eighteen months, around two thousand Wellingtonians and over a hundred organisations produced a visionary document which has secured positive feedback from many in the community. The following claims were made:

- *it is the first strategic plan for a NZ city, guided and developed by a group of community representatives*
- *it is a unique document as NZ's first strategic plan written by a wide range of residents, organisations and groups*
- *it results from the largest public participation project ever undertaken in Wellington* (WCC 1997b: 8; emphasis in original).

In this chapter I will critically examine these claims about *Our City ~ Our Future*, and set-out what happened and why. In the first part I will briefly summarise what the Strategy is. Next, the context in which the process took place will be considered, including a review of Wellington City Council's strategic planning initiatives. Part three will describe the origins, design and practice of citizen participation and the implementation process which comprised *Our City ~ Our Future*. In the final part a preliminary assessment of implementation will be considered. The period covered in this Chapter is from early strategic planning initiatives in 1992 up until consideration of *Our City ~ Our Future* at a Council Strategy meeting in September 1999. I first summarise my own experience of *Our City ~ Our Future*.

The preparation of this Chapter was the first step in my fieldwork and entailed a review of documentary and published material. Documents consulted included *Our City ~ Our Future: Strategy for the Future of Wellington*, Wellington City Council Strategy Plan

and annual plans, papers presented to Council, Council minutes, City Steering Group papers, minutes and other material and newspaper articles. The starting point for the research was the outline of the process published in the final Strategy (WCCa 1997a: 54), a box of City Steering Group papers loaned from CSG member Chris Horne and a survey of the Wellington Library's collection of Council papers and minutes. After an initial review of these papers I identified gaps in documentation which I filled through requests to the Council. In this Chapter my intention is to set the scene by describing the process in chronological order, with analysis of themes that emerged from the papers occurring in Chapter Four.

My experiences of *Our City ~ Our Future*

As a citizen of Wellington I was interested to hear in early 1996 that the Wellington City Council was prepared to embark on a citizen controlled, strategic direction setting exercise for the city. I was optimistic about the possibilities for change that this process could set in train. I recall the many documents and invitations for participation. In early 1996 many of the organisations I worked with were holding visioning workshops. At this stage the process seemed exciting and full of opportunity — at meetings of Campaign for a Better City, an anti-motorway lobby group of which I was a member, there were many discussions about the potential of the process. The group considered it a priority to be involved.

The establishment of Specialist Working Groups (SWGs)[1] to develop detailed policy was the first time I was directly involved. As will be expanded on below, eight Working Groups were set-up to develop the 'nuts and bolts' of the Strategy. Membership was open to interested individuals and representatives of key organisations. I attended one or two meetings of the Transport group, but the prospect of torturous debates at endless meetings was a deterrent to my ongoing involvement. The SWG meetings I attended showed that many diverse interests and backgrounds were represented, with bus operators, public transport advocates, members of driver organisations and planners

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[1] Specialist Working Groups covered the following themes: Built Environment; Communities; Culture; Economy and Employment; Education, Information and Technology; Natural Environment; Recreation and Leisure; and Transport.

amicably discussing thorny issues. Facilitation of meetings was shared between participants and venues were provided by organisations involved, so they were not all at the town hall. It was a process which seemed to hold considerable promise.

When the draft Strategy was released in May 1997 it was clear that the vision for the future of Wellington aligned with ideas that had been discussed in groups I was working with. Fewer cars, more green space, energy efficient buildings, heritage protection, urban villages, improved public transport and many other ideas were included in the draft Strategy. I was strongly supportive of the Vision and the process. In a submission to the *Our City ~ Our Future* Steering Group on the draft Strategy I stated with great enthusiasm that:

> I would like to commend the Council on backing this initiative. The extent of public participation is very exciting. Many of the elements of effective participation identified in Chapter 28 of Agenda 21 have been met.

Despite welcoming the opportunities presented by the Strategy, I was not actively involved in its implementation. However, it was attendance at a hui at Tapu Te Ranga Marae on 6 June 1998 that revived my interest in *Our City ~ Our Future*. A group of 60 people met to discuss one of the Natural Environment initiatives: the establishment of a Green Centre to focus on providing information and organising activities related to 'sustainable' living in Wellington. Although the hui was inconclusive, the group that organised it have continued to push the idea. I have been involved in one of the spin-off projects, development of a 'virtual e-cological centre'. This and other initiatives by individuals suggests that community interest in *Our City ~ Our Future* has not diminished. Whether urban sustainability is being achieved is another question.

3.1 What is *Our City ~ Our Future: Strategy for the Future of Wellington* all about?

Before discussing how and why *Our City ~ Our Future* was developed it is appropriate to briefly outline what was produced. At the core of *Our City ~ Our Future: Strategy for the Future of Wellington* is a vision. This long, descriptive vision sweeps from the coast

to the sky, in between touching on diverse cultures, a high quality of life, tino rangatiratanga and the need for cooperation (see Figure 3.1).

Vision

WELLINGTON IS A PLACE FOR ALL PEOPLE

Differences are celebrated,
our heritage is respected and our children are nurtured.
It is a City of diversity and opportunity, and choice in learning.
Our City is a healthy and safe place where
well-being and sustainability are promoted and the community is caring.

Wellington is dynamic, full of energy, music, laughter and contentment,
brimming with opportunities for
the arts, culture, leisure and recreational pursuits for all ages.

Wellingtonians respect their natural environment
from the harbour to beyond the hills,
and there are abundant examples of restored natural heritage.
The waters are sparkling and clear, and
the air is fresh and clean.
Wellington's unique character and beauty
are enhanced in its built environment.
People can move about the City with ease and in safety.

Wellington leads in creativity and innovation.
A vibrant economy promotes a wealth of opportunity.
As the centre of the nation's government,
Wellington contributes to improving the quality of life
for all New Zealanders.

Manawhenua me Nga Iwi O Nga Hau E Wha have *tino rangatiratanga*
encapsulated in the Treaty of Waitangi.

The communities of Wellington are empowered to promote this vision
in a spirit of co-operation.

Figure 3.1: *Our City ~ Our Future* Vision (WCC 1997b: 2)

Accompanying this written statement is a pictorial representation of a possible future Wellington. Underlying this is the following set of key principles (WCC 1997b: 5):

iwi

vision

fairness

diversity

participation

sustainability

celebration and fun

safety and well-being

innovation and excellence

opportunities and empowerment

The detail of the Strategy is contained under eight theme areas, with 36 goals, 102 targets and 98 ideas for initiatives. The themes are: Built Environment; Communities; Culture; Economy and Employment; Education, Information and Technology; Natural Environment; Recreation and Leisure; and Transport. One hundred and thirty-five possible implementation parties are listed for the goals, although at the point of publication many of these parties had not been approached.

Organisations are invited to identify which goals they will be involved in implementing, to indicate how they will go about doing this, including conducting a review their own strategic plans to see if these fit with *Our City ~ Our Future: Strategy for the Future of Wellington*, and to promote particular initiatives (WCC 1997b: 62). As will be discussed below, the *Strategy for the Future of Wellington* forms an overarching vision and plan for the whole city, under which both Council's and other organisations' (community, business, retailers and interest groups) plans would also sit (see Figure 3.2).
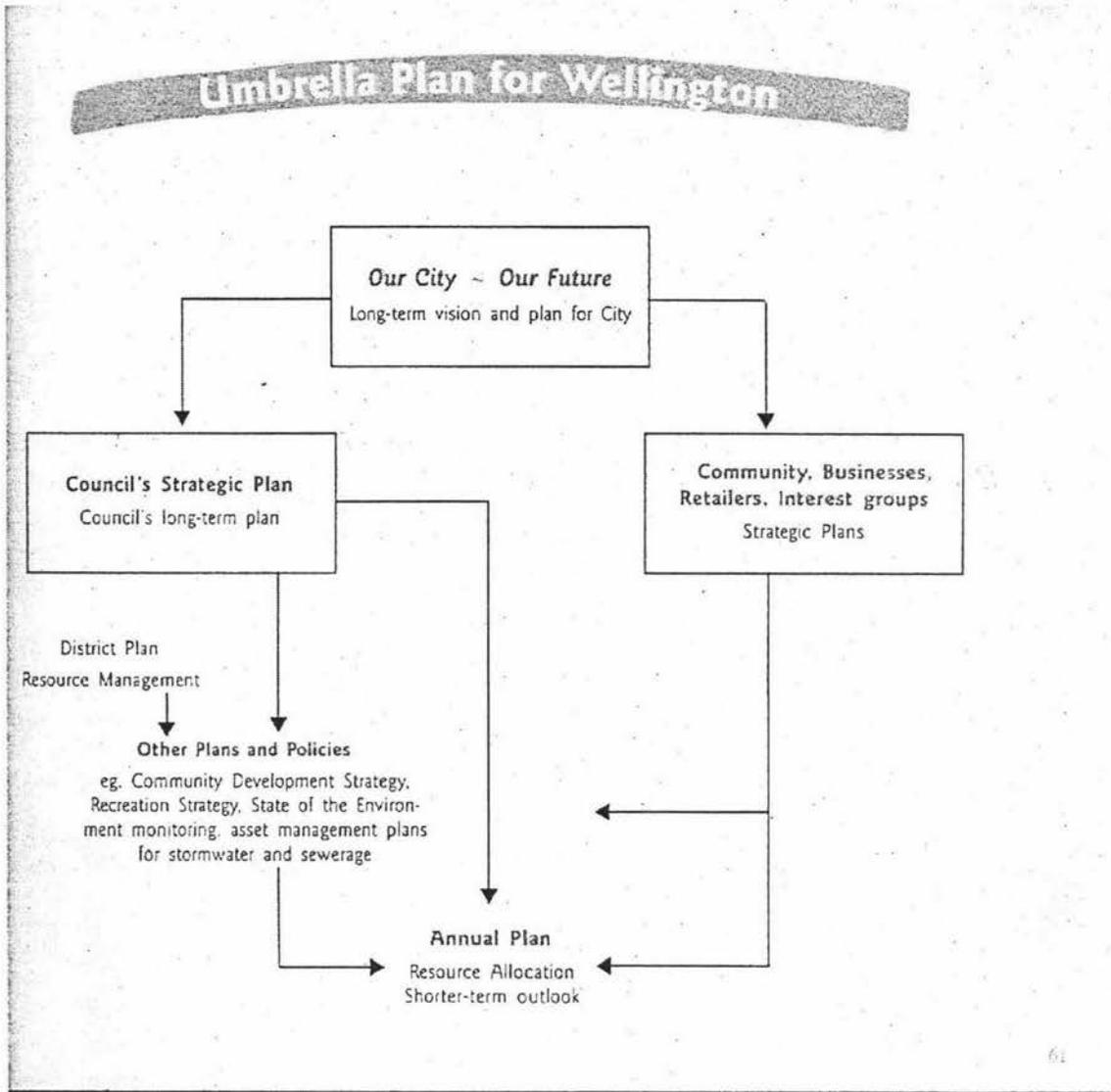
Figure 3.2: *Our City ~ Our Future* Umbrella Plan for Wellington (WCC 1997b: 61)

3.2 Strategic Planning in Wellington City Council

Development of a multi-stakeholder city-wide strategic plan for Wellington cannot be seen in isolation. Strategic planning in Wellington, both for the city and the council itself, occurred within a dynamic and changing local government environment. As noted in Chapter One, amendment of the Local Government Act in 1989 imposed on all local authorities requirements to be transparent, set clear objectives and policies and demonstrate how these are being met, engage the public, and importantly, act in an efficient and 'business-like' way. This 'New Public Management' influence on these

statutory provisions resulted in significant restructuring of Wellington City Council's structure and activities.

The first step in the restructuring was an announcement in November 1994 by the Council's Chief Executive that a new management team would be set-up (Sutherland 1999: pers. comm.). The Group Leader of Commissioning was given the task of devising the internal business unit structure and division between policy development and service provision in February 1996 (ibid). What followed was the establishment of an internal structure which would enable management of the assets of the Council and introduction of contracts for work to be done by internal business units and external contractors. Three Commissioning Units were established (Physical Urban and Natural; Social and Cultural; and Economic) to allocate resources for service delivery (ie waste, roads, recreation, etc). The internal structural changes required significant changes to staff levels. Between 1996 and 1998 staffing levels and structure changed three times. Over 740 jobs were cut during this period (*New Zealand Local Government* 9/98: 5) and Council embarked on Business Process Re-engineering, under the catchy title of Improving the Way We Work (IW3), with technological and culture change pursued. Discussing a review of the restructuring the Council's acting chief executive concluded that "...in our view, the extensive nature of the reforms undertaken were overly ambitious in the sense that they exceeded the capacity of the organisation to tightly manage the programmes and projects" (cited in *New Zealand Local Government* 3/98: 6).

Introduction of financial accountability requirements in the 1996 amendment of the Local Government Act required preparation and adoption by Councils of a long-term financial strategy. As required by this statute, Wellington City Council approved a Longer Term Financial Strategy and a Borrowing and Investment Policies in 1997 (WCC 1997f). Alongside its long-term financial planning, the Council also implemented a competitive tendering policy which is a "...programme to examine each service it provides to see whether a better service or savings could be achieved by putting the work out for tender" (WCC 1998b: 63). Top level management was also

subject to change, with a new Chief Executive appointed in mid-1997 and the entire Senior Management team being replaced soon afterwards (Zöllner 1999: pers comm).

3.2.1 Early steps in WCC strategic planning

Wellington City Council was amongst pioneering councils in New Zealand exploring strategic planning. An informal network of local authority officers began meeting in early 1992 to share ideas and support. The first meeting of the officers was hosted by Wellington City Council, and is likely to have contributed to the first tentative steps by the Council. Towards the end of 1992 the City Council embarked on its first strategic planning exercise. Underpinning this early initiative was the stated aim of establishing a clear vision for the future of Wellington (WCC 1992a: 1). The process involved: collection of baseline data about the city, including information detailing the demographic, economic, employment and education situation in the city; a workshop for Council staff and Councillors on strategic planning; and a survey of public opinion to determine city priorities. A paper was released for public comment and input requested on the desired future and how priorities will be developed (WCC 1992a). Council recognised that it should not necessarily control the direction the city took, but act as a facilitator. The following steps were suggested:

- agree on what we want for the city in the long term;
- understand the key factors which will affect the city's future; and
- establish ways for people to contribute to common goals (WCC 1992a: 1).

In April 1993 a Draft Strategic Plan prepared by Councillors with support from the Strategic Planning and Policy Division (WCC 1993) was released for public comment. The proposed mission for the Council was "Making Wellington the City of Excellence". A city vision, commentary on issues and the environment, the role of Council and a statement of intent were also included in the Draft Strategic Plan. Detailed suggestions for a vision were not put forward and goals were not supported by mechanisms through which implementation could be ensured. The draft Plan was not adopted, for reasons which are difficult to determine, although lack of community buy-in has been suggested. A project investigating links between the annual planning processes and longer-term strategy planning was underway in 1994 (2020 Task Group 1995a: 3).

Over a weekend in early 1995, Wellington City Councillors prepared a long term vision for the city, called the 2020 Vision (Corporate Office 13/7/95: 2). The vision outlines how the city should look in the year 2020, and proposes directions the Council should follow to realise it . The three themes are:

1. a smart city with an innovative and responsive economy
2. a city of opportunities for all people to achieve their potential and to contribute to the community
3. a city where today's actions take account of tomorrows [sic] consequences (WCC nd).

The ability of Council to progress the 2020 Vision was severely curtailed by staff changes. The four positions in the Strategic Planning Unit were vacant from March 1995 until after the local body election in October 1995 (Zöllner 1999: pers. comm.).

In the meantime, efforts were being made by the Council's Environment Division to promote a Sustainable City Strategy. After some preliminary work it became obvious to members on the Task Group developing this Strategy that planning for sustainability in isolation from wider city planning was unlikely to successfully achieve sustainability goals (2020 Task Group 1995a: 3). It was agreed at an early point to integrate the work on a sustainable city and Local Agenda 21 with the Council's strategic planning process. To this end, the 2020 Task Group was established in March 1995. This comprised Council staff from several departments, Councillors and members from external agencies, such as Victoria University and the Chamber of Commerce. The Task Group functioned through six sub-groups with the aim of providing the building blocks for development of a "2020 Plan of Action". These groups addressed: Principles, Review of WCC Strategies, Model of Wellington City's Resources and Resource Use, Mechanisms for Priorities, Consultation and State of the Environment Reporting.

A "Plan of Action" was presented to Councillors in July 1995 (Corporate Office 13/7/95). They accepted the recommendation that there be a three-pronged approach to Strategic Planning: 1) a WCC internal process; 2) development of an information package; and 3) The "City" External Development Process. The third element of the "Plan of Action" eventually got underway under the name of *Our City ~ Our Future*, to which I return to below. At this point I will concentrate on Council's internal process.

3.2.2 WCC 'internal' planning process

Work on a Strategic Plan was renewed following the October 1995 elections. This built on the existing 2020 Vision and operating principles, and was a simple statement of Council's ten year direction with priorities for the next three years clearly stated (WCC 1996b). After four months of debate the Interim Strategic Plan 1996-99 was adopted by Council in July 1996. It was later described as a brief, clear statement of Council direction but omitted key Council services and activities, such as water management, provision of sports fields and emergency management (Strategic Planning 11/3/97: 2).

The relationship between the internal WCC strategy and the 'City' strategy received much attention from Councillors. As is described above, the Council's strategic plan was to fall underneath the city-wide plan. This did not mean full adoption, but it did mean that all Council action should be consistent with the broad vision and goals of *Our City ~ Our Future*. Three options for managing the relationship between Council and city-wide planning were considered at the Strategy Committee's 7 May 1997 meeting (Strategic Planning 5/3/97). It was agreed to base the Council Plan on *Our City ~ Our Future: Strategy for the Future of Wellington*, though it would also include any missing priorities or other differences for Council action. The minutes note that:

> [t]he Council version of *Our City ~ Our Future* will have two parts: **Part A** as statements of priority (a small number of key goals and associated achievements), and **Part B** as a statement of general strategic direction covering all Council activities. Part B will be based on *Our City ~ Our Future* goals, targets, initiatives , with modification and extension where required (Strategy Committee 7/5/97 minutes).

Although the *Our City ~ Our Future* vision was tweaked and economic concerns given a higher priority, *Our City ~ Our Future* can be seen to have played an instrumental role in the final WCC Strategic Plan. Mayor Blumsky noted in the introduction that "[t]he plan is based on the vision and goals of the *Our City ~ Our Future* process..." (WCC 1997b: 1) and the first point in the summary of the Plan states: "Council endorses the *Our City ~ Our Future* vision for the future of Wellington" (WCC 1997b: 2).

The Strategic Plan is an important document because it influences all aspects of Council planning and activity, setting the direction for annual plans, unit business plans, a core

services review, commissioning strategies and policies, and was to "...be integrated with the Policy Development process through the strategic fit test" (WCC 1997c: 9). Fifty outcome statements are detailed under eight Key Result Areas (KRAs) mirroring *Our City ~ Our Future* themes. The overall strategy for the Council is "...to build and promote facilities, services and features that enhance Wellington City's unique lifestyle whilst safeguarding the economic, ecological, social, and infrastructure foundations of the City" (Strategy and Planning 12/97: 7). Priority objectives for the city over the next six years are listed (see Figure 3.3), as are the means for financing priorities.

PRIORITY OBJECTIVES

Building and promoting the facilities, services and features which enhance Wellington's unique lifestyle and character

1997-99
- To increase **safety** and perceptions of safety in the public environment (top priority)
- To promote the involvement of **youth** in civic affairs and activities for youth and children
- To provide high quality spaces for recreation, playing, living, and working on the **waterfront**

2000-02
- To enhance the appearance of the City's **entry points**
- To maintain and enhance the range of **arts** and **events** throughout the city
- To promote the **greening** of the urban environment
- To enhance the contribution of **heritage** to the urban environment

Safeguarding the economic, ecological, social and infrastructure foundations of the City

1997-99
- To assist innovative **post-industrial economic sectors** through cluster support (top priority)
- To protect and enhance the range of **native habitats for plants and animals** in the City's open spaces (top priority)
- To improve public **transport**, transport efficiency and access to the central and suburban centres (top priority)
- To promote co-operation between businesses, and between businesses and residents

2000-02
- To promote the efficient use of **land** within Wellington, reduce **water** consumption, promote consideration of **energy** conservation in all aspects of urban development, and increase the volume of **waste** which is re-used and recycled
- To ensure a reliable, high quality **water supply** to all properties in the urban area, and improve the environmental performance of the City's **stormwater** and **sewerage systems** in older parts of the City
- To increase **community participation** in decision-making processes

Figure 3.3 : Priority Objectives (Strategic Planning 12/97: 6)

In 1999 the Council embarked on a review of its Strategic Plan 1997-99, with the intention of developing an updated version for the next three year period. Officials concluded that the existing Plan weighted equally all 50 outcomes detailed and therefore

provided no clear indication of Council priorities (Strategy & Planning 29/6/99: 4). Other weaknesses were also identified, including:

- The 'strategic direction' was not identifiable through all parts of the plan
- There are too many outcome statements
- Council's priorities are not linked to the outcomes or strategic direction
- Outcomes aren't ranked
- Implementation methods are not clear
- There is an extensive list of unranked objectives (Strategy & Planning 29/6/99: 4).

The review process aims to clarify and strengthen the strategic direction, simplify the contents and highlight priorities. Some form of citizen participation was identified as being an appropriate part of any review process, and key stakeholders have been identified and approached to contribute it (Strategy and Planning 29/6/99: 4).

Since its first foray into strategic planning in 1992 the Wellington City Council has come a long way. Over time understanding has developed, and as the process is an iterative one, improvements are being made, and will continue to be made. Translating the ideals of the direction into reality is a different story, and evaluating outcomes is something to which little attention has been paid. A prime motivation behind establishing a parallel city-wide process to the Council's own planning was to shift Wellington in its chosen, and hopefully sustainable, direction. The next section explores the origins and design of *Our City ~ Our Future*.

3.3 *Our City ~ Our Future* Strategy development

3.3.1 Origins of the city-wide strategy

The dawning realisation that cities have negative impacts on the environment prompted some Wellington City Council staff and Councillors to promote a response to this. Influenced by other initiatives overseas, particularly the work of International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI), the pilot Agenda 21 projects in New Zealand and the Ministry for the Environment/ Local Government Association documents, the notion of a Sustainable City Strategy for Wellington evolved. The Council's Environment Division was the driving force behind this. But, as is noted

above, the Task Group working on this concluded that sustainability is dependent on the city's overall direction, and a separate Sustainable City Strategy would not achieve the chosen objectives. The result was the merging of planning for sustainability and strategic planning under the auspices of the 2020 Task Group.

Explicit recognition was made that this planning initiative was part of a local Agenda 21 process. This was acknowledged within the 2020 Task Group deliberations and reports. It is noted that "... the process of identifying the long term objectives and vision inherent in strategic plans is also common to local Agenda 21s" (WWW 2020 Task Group 1995a: 6). The report to the Council Strategic Planning and Policy Committee recognised that the process being proposed was consistent with Agenda 21 (Corporate Office 13/7/95: 1,5). When finally produced, the *Our City ~ Our Future: Strategy for the Future of Wellington* clearly states its origins as being in Agenda 21. This was contentious as some Councillors opposed the concept of sustainability, and it preceded debate within Council about the risk of capture and the partiality of the final Strategy.

In addition to addressing Agenda 21 and 'sustainable development', the Task Group identified a number of benefits of developing a city-wide strategic plan. These included:

- strategic coherence, with consistency between different planning documents and processes, including operating principles, *2020 Vision*, district plan, and other plans
- a reduction in medium to long-term costs faced by Council, as reaching prior agreement can alleviate the need for expensive litigation
- a reduction in demand for Council expenditure, as the community is likely to own and fund initiatives identified through the planning process which it is supportive of
- integration of social, economic and environmental factors into a common framework which can be used to assist decision-making
- ensuring that accountability and transparency are maintained
- development of a final document which has community support, and therefore will more likely to be adopted and promoted by the community (2020 Taskgroup 1995a: 7-8).

The 2020 Task Group devoted considerable attention to development of principles and processes for citizen participation. Not only are guidelines for consultation explored in some detail, but a process for assessing the effectiveness of participation is proposed (2020 Task Group 1995a: A8).[2] It is noted in the report to Council that:

> The Taskgroup [sic] believe that it is only through the combined commitment and joint action of individuals, government, private and non-profit organisations that progress towards a sustainable city will be made (Corporate Office 13/7/95: 4).

A detailed "Plan of Action" was proposed by the 2020 Task Group for a 'multi-stakeholder process' for the citywide strategy. Six steps were identified to take place over the course of a year. These were:

1) formation of a city steering group, broadly representative of communities of interest in Wellington. It was noted that an important selection criterion was that people should take a wide view, rather than push particular interests

2) initiation of public participation, with distribution of information to promote awareness of both the process and issues surrounding sustainability

3) holding a community workshop to elicit support for the process and to start the specialist working groups phase

4) establishment and management of a number of specialist working groups to develop actions to be included in the Strategy. A preliminary list of five subject areas was identified, with some thought given to how the groups would work, including the need for peer review of actions

5) holding a consensus forum to seek feedback on Strategy and process, and also decide on how community input would continue into strategic planning process

6) launching the strategic plan, and implementing "...a process for ongoing public input". (2020 Task Group 1995a: 23-26)

This early design was very similar to the one that was subsequently adopted.

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[2] The proposed monitoring and review of public participation process incorporated the following: an independent and impartial survey of community knowledge of process; evaluating participants' attitudes to workshops, meetings, etc; and the overall approach; analysis of observations by facilitators, co-ordinators; and frequent meetings of facilitators and sponsors. There is no record of a review along these lines taking place.

Some preliminary estimates of the resources necessary to run the process were made by the 2020 Task Group. It was expected that one-and-a-half full-time equivalent staff members would be required for the whole process. Duties for the positions would be analysis of input and coordination/ administration of the process (2020 Task Group 1995a: 26). A budget allocation of $100-150,000 was also sought to cover costs of facilitation and advice, meeting costs, publicity, and honoraria/ expenses of Steering Group members (2020 Task Group 1995a: 27). A suggestion that funding be sought through sponsorship was noted, though exactly who would contribute to this was not detailed.

The Council Strategic Planning and Policy Committee considered the Report of the 2020 Task Group at its 31 July 1995 meeting. The recommendation that Council "...seed fund and facilitate at least initially a public participation process which will contribute to setting a strategic plan for Wellington City itself" was accepted (Corporate Office 13/7/95: 2). It was noted that the timetable proposed was indicative only. According to the schedule tabled, the process was set to begin on 31 July 1995 and be completed by 31 October 1996. In reality the process was not started until early 1996, and was finalised in July 1997.

Progress with the process was delayed until election of a new council and the re-establishment of the Strategic Planning Unit in October 1995. The newly-formed Strategy Committee, which was a committee of the whole, endorsed the proposed strategic planning programme, called 2020 CityPlan, at its meeting on 13 December 1995. The decision set off a flurry of activity within Council, as staff and external advisors met to prepare a work programme and project timetable. The outcome of this work was reported to the Mayor, Cr Sue Kedgely and senior managers on 20 December 1995 (Strategic Planning 5/2/96b: 1).

3.3.2 First steps for *Our City ~ Our Future*

The participation process was extensive and subject to many changes over time as a result of the availability of resources, issues that emerged and the complexity of the process. Published in the final *Our City ~ Our Future: Strategy for the Future of*

Wellington is a diagram setting out how the process ran (see Figure 3.4). The diagram, which suggests a straightforward flow of events, belies a complex reality.

How Our City – Our Future Developed

1995

February 2020 Taskforce convened
July proposal to develop city-wide multiple stakeholder strategic plan
December new Council agrees to fund and facilitate development of the plan

1996

February *Our City – Our Future* project team convened
March public meetings and City Steering Group nominee meetings
April City Steering Group convened
May Vision Workshops
June Community Forum
July draft vision and goal pamphlet to all households
August Specialist Working Groups convened
September Advisory Peer Review Group formed
October goals, targets and indicators developing
November Linkage Evening
December displays at cafes, libraries, community centres, swimming pools

1997

January Advisory Peer Review Group feedback to Working Groups
February adjustments to goals, targets, indicators and initiatives
March displays and Open Houses
April Advisory Peer Review Group report
May publish draft *Strategy for the Future of Wellington*
June you have your say! draft *Strategy* available for feedback
July feedback reviewed, changes made and *Strategy* finalised
August onwards organisations review *Strategy* and incorporate appropriate components into their own planning

54

Figure 3.4: How *Our City ~ Our Future* Developed (WCC 1997b: 54)

The initial aim was to present a draft Strategy at a Community Forum in December 1996, with the release of the finalised Strategy at a International Futures Festival scheduled for February-March 1997 (Strategic Planning 5/2/96b: 6). The Festival was being promoted as an opportunity for Wellingtonians to explore "sustainable future options" under the themes of natural environment, politics, science and technology, socio-economics and spirituality. International speakers, symposiums and public outreach were all part of the proposed programme (Future Festival n.d). As it happened the event did not take place, nor was the ambitious timetable adhered to.

Having secured agreement from Council to proceed, the first step was to convene a Council project team in February 1996, set up a Project office and appoint additional staff. The thirteen member Project team included staff from the following units Strategic Planning, Physical, Urban and Natural Commissioning, Economic Commissioning, Social and Cultural Commissioning and Corporate Communications, with Carole Donaldson, a public participation specialist from Landcare Research, as the team's external advisor (Strategic Planning 24/4/96: 3). Its role was to: design and manage the process, ensure open and broad-based participation, and pursue multiple stakeholder implementation. One of the first tasks for this team was the establishment of the City Steering Group.

The design for the process had at its core a City Steering Group (CSG). This Group was to share control over the direction and contents of the project (Strategic Planning 5/2/96a: 2). Its role was to: liaise with a wide cross-section of Wellington communities; have a range of expertise, interests and liaison networks; be visionary, innovative, creative, dynamic and enthusiastic; and ensure full participation in *Our City ~ Our Future* (WCC 1997b: 57). It is recorded in the final *Our City ~ Our Future: Strategy for the Future of Wellington* that the Steering Group "... worked as 'guardians of the process' to ensure that the spirit and intent of the original visioning exercise are embodied in the Strategy document" (WCC 1997b: 4). There was a clear intention that the Steering Group should not decide on the content and vision, but should work toward ensuring what the community wanted was reflected in the resulting document.

Membership of the CSG was to be representative of the diverse interests and communities in Wellington, with decisions on representation made by relevant communities. A call for nominations went to 380 people, with a request that they spread the word about the opportunity to get involved. Community meetings were held in the city's five wards and three sector or interest group meetings (Social/ Cultural, Business/ Economic, Natural/ Physical) were held to appoint CSG members (Strategic Planning 5/2/96a: 2). Interest was high. For instance, papers prepared for the Natural Environment and Physical Environment Interests meeting show that 20 nominations were received, from which three were selected to be CSG members. Initially 20 members was considered the right size for the group, though 23 people were in fact on the first membership list (CSG minutes & agenda 15/4/96). Early on, members realised that not all sectors were adequately represented and additional members were sought, so that within a few months of establishment the CSG had grown in size to 30 members (Strategic Planning 24/4/96: 4-5). The list of participants shows a highly qualified group of people with a wide variety of experiences (see Appendix 1). Mayor Blumsky was appointed as Chairperson, though it was later agreed to rotate chairing of meetings.

The first steering group meeting was held on 15 April 1996, and the group met at least monthly until the Strategy was completed in July 1997. In announcing the first meeting, Mayor Blumsky noted the hard work ahead: "We're charged with helping shape the future direction of the city. But don't worry, it'll be fun" (WCC Press release, n.d). Discussion at the first meeting covered an introduction to the process, vision workshop organisation, preparation for the first community forum in June, and representation on the Steering Group. At this point Tangata Whenua representation had not been finalised — it was not until the second meeting of the City Steering Group that Maaori liaison people joined the Steering Group.

During the early stages staff and steering group members made considerable effort to contact community leaders and organisations to promote the process. The April quarterly progress report noted 42 personal meetings, and presentations were made to two key stakeholders, the Chamber of Commerce and the Wellington Regional Council (Strategic Planning 24/4/96: 1). An information handbook, *Right Here, Right Now,* was

published and distributed to project participants and members of the public. The booklet "…is a snapshot of Wellington City now. It'll help you gain a quick appreciation of the many aspects of life in the capital" (WCC *Our City ~ Our Future* Project Team 1996: 2).

3.3.3 The visioning phase

Creating a vision for the future of Wellington that could unite and inspire people was a central aim of the process. A lot of care and attention was devoted to designing and running a process in which people could have input into a vision for the city. In an early plan for the project only two to four visioning and issue identification workshops were planned (Strategic Planning 5/2/96b: 3).

Vision workshops were clearly an exciting and novel experience for participants. With professional guidance the workshops provided an opportunity for people to be creative and develop a positive picture of the future. The workshop used the following format:

> Each workshop followed a structure which encouraged participants to put aside their specific concerns and take a "big picture" view of their ideal city. Participants were asked to visualise their ideal Wellington of the future and write down what they noticed. The common themes amongst these ideas were identified by the group and the ideas then listed under the theme headings as the group saw appropriate. The group then produced by consensus a vision statement which encapsulated most of their ideas (OCOF Project Team 6/96).

Interest in visioning in the city was piqued and demand for workshops was beyond all expectation. Schools, sector groups and community organisations all held workshops. An *Our City ~ Our Future* advertising sheet offered organisations that could coordinate a meeting of at least fifteen people a facilitator, costs for a venue, materials, a cuppa and a promise to stay in touch with participants. In response seventy workshops were organised between March and June, involving over 1,000 people (Strategic Planning 26/6/96: 1). Ideas from each workshop were recorded with a summary of flipcharts sent to participants. By the end of the process over 6,000 units of information were collated and recorded (OCOF Project Team 6/96) It was this material that formed the basis for consideration at the Community Visioning Forum, held on 8 June (see below), and

grouped into themes, would be later used by Specialist Working Groups to develop detailed strategy.

Workshops were only one of the techniques used to elicit input into the vision. Other opportunities for input included:

- a visioning competition for schools. Young people were invited to portray their ideas about the future of Wellington through prose, poetry, music, dance, drama or visual media. A display of this material was to be part of the "Focus on the future" week.

- a vision box was placed at the library for a week in May into which people who had not been part of the workshop process could contribute ideas. Seventy people took up this opportunity.

- a computer brainstorming session, with laptop computers set-up at the Council office for one day for people to contribute ideas. Two hundred people used this opportunity for input (OCOF Project Team 6/96).

3.3.4 'Focus on the future' week

With enormous amounts of material, and a high degree of enthusiasm for the development of a vision, the next step was to bring the various threads together. What was designed at this stage was the integration of the vision statements from various sources and to summarise issues or challenges that faced the city. A week of high profile events was organised, culminating in a Community Visioning Forum.

There were many and varied events as part of the 'Focus on the Future' week leading up to the 8 June 1996 Forum. Two events for young people were held: an afternoon for children up to the age of 12, with activities such as music, banner making, face painting; and an evening of performance and a 'cabaret' for teenagers (Strategic Planning 24/6/96: 1). There was an 'Our City ~ Our Past' exhibition at the library which 500 people viewed, and a display of visions, ideas, themes and artwork on an ideal future Wellington at the centrally located James Smith building to which 600 people came (Strategic Planning 24/6/96 2).

The 8 June Community Visioning Forum was an opportunity for the presentation of vision statements. The public was given a chance to participate in workshops on key themes, then take part in a plenary session "...which will draw all the visioning work together into one statement" (Strategic Planning 24/4/96: 2). One hundred and fifty people attended, with 80 people participating in the workshops (Strategic Planning 26/6/96: 2). Unfortunately, Mayor Blumsky was unable to attend the "Forum", preferring instead to take a sponsored trip to Melbourne to investigate tourism marketing (*Dominion* 8/6/96).

According to the design, a final vision was to be completed at the 8 June Forum. This did not prove to be realistic. With so many ideas and preferences, it was not possible to distil a vision from the 70 workshop contributions and the ideas that emerged on the day. This was clearly a source of tension, and the CSG took responsibility for finalising a vision. A small working group did the 'wordsmithing' necessary to finalise the vision (CSG 10/7/96 minutes).

In August the next stage of public outreach began. A brochure introducing the process, and setting out the draft vision and goals from each of the Specialist Working Groups was circulated to all households in Wellington (Strategic Planning 25/9/96:2). Introducing the brochure, Mayor Blumsky noted that "... the questions and issues involved are too big for the Council to tackle in isolation" and he invited participation in the process.

3.3.5 Specialist Working Groups

Having developed a vision and identified the themes, it was time to move on to 'nuts and bolts' of the Strategy. It was at this point that the detail of the Strategy was prepared through an intensive policy development process involving a wider circle of citizens. Membership of Specialist Working Groups was open to CSG members, experts, members of key organisations, interested public and at least one member of the Council Project Team, with involvement of Councillors also encouraged (Strategic Planning 25/9/96: 2). The eight SWGs were established in July/ August 1996 to cover eight themes identified at the Community Forum (see Footnote 2). Membership and

attendance varied, but at least 100 people were said to be involved. Each CSG member was on one of the Working Groups, helping to link the work of the different Groups to the Steering Group process.

Working Groups were tasked with confirming or refining draft goals, proposing for each goal specific targets and indicators, identifying projects and initiatives, and initiating "self-sustaining projects" to meet targets and goals identified (CSG paper 12/8/96: 1). Each step was to be referenced to the agreed Vision and Goals. A key part of the process was for groups to function in a collaborative way, with a consensus between the diverse interests represented being the ideal. Participation was another important operating principle. It was recognised that each Working Group had to identify and actively engage key stakeholders, ensure a wide range of involvement from different parts of the community and "...ensure the projects are supported and developed by those who must carry them out and be affected by them" (CSG paper 12/8/96: 5).

This part of the policy development process was a long one. Initial plans report back to a Community Forum in December 1996 were abandoned after the City Steering Group realised that the proposed timetable could not be adhered to. In addition, audit though an Advisory Peer Review Group (APRG) added another layer to the process. It was not until July 1997 that final SWG meetings were held.

After being established, support for the Working Groups was minimal. It was for each group to decide how to record, manage and distribute information generated, and to co-ordinate meetings, agendas and reports. The guidelines encouraged members to seek "[s]upport from commercial participants in the form of small-scale sponsorship..." (CSG paper 12/8/96: 5). It was noted that community and stakeholder support could be demonstrated through provision of such things as meeting rooms and photocopying. A month after commencement of the process, City Steering Group members were notified that a discretionary fund of $1,000 had been established for each Working Group (Rippingale 4/9/96). This was available to cover advertising, facilitation and other expenses.

It was through negotiation and debate in the Specialist Working Group that the final Strategy was developed. It was an ambitious process, and one which was only partially successful as will be discussed below.

3.3.6 Advisory Peer Review Group

To ensure the Specialist Working Groups did not go off the rails and develop unsuitable or radical suggestions, a level of quality assurance was built into the process. A three person Advisory Peer Review Group (APRG) was established with the aim of "...enhanc[ing] the rigour and technical competence of the development of goals, targets, indicators and initiatives, and the overall *Strategy for the Future of Wellington*" (CSG paper 22/8/96: 1). The team comprised Michael Harte, Senior Planner with the Ministry for the Environment; Chris Livesey, Environmental Consultant with Tonkin and Taylor Ltd; and Marg Gilling, Principal in Social Research with Business and Economic Research Ltd (OCOF Team 1/97: 7).

The process that the APRG followed was to provide a technical briefing for Specialist Working Groups and offer advice as requested. *From Vision to Action: Developing Indicators for Our City ~ Our Future,* a paper written by the APRG which contained criteria for preparation of indicators, was distributed at this point (APRG 17/1/97: 2). At the briefing for Specialist Working Group members by the Peer Review Group it was clearly stated the SWG contributions should be simple and SMART — Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-limited (Ong Su-wuen 16/9/96).

The next step was for the APRG to review all the draft goals, targets and indicators, agree on feedback, then report back to each SWG. Separate meetings with each group could be arranged. After finalisation of the draft Strategy in March 1997, APRG was to review this then report back to the City Steering Group with recommendations for changes. Following this the Specialist Working Groups would consider whether and how to incorporate suggestions.

In its January 1997 report to the City Steering Group, the Peer Review Group acknowledged that SWGs were making good progress with translation of the vision into

action. Many issues were raised, both about the overall approach taken and issues related to particular SWGs, which lead the APRG to make two major recommendations:

- The Specialist Working Groups now select **two** critical targets for each of its goals and develop or refine key indicators to measure progress toward these targets.
- The Specialist Working Groups work closely with the Advisory Peer Review Group to find the best way to address both the general and Group-specific issues raised above (APRG 17/1/97: 9).

Three months later the APRG acknowledged progress was being made on the above recommendations, but the Group was concerned that targets and indicators were being used to promote a specific action rather than identifying the direction to be taken, and other criteria for target and indicator development were not being met. Further recommendations were made to address this (APRG 14/4/97: 1).

Having produced two reports, the APRG disbanded and strategy content was left in the hands of CSG members. Some of the suggestions of the Review Group were controversial, particularly the imposition of a standard style across all Working Groups. Its role added to the complexity of the strategy development process, but was seen as an essential part of ensuring a high quality document was produced.

3.3.7 Outreach and strategy development

With Specialist Working Groups meeting regularly, and monthly City Steering Group and additional sub-groups meetings, the period from August 1996 to presentation of the draft Strategy was one of intense activity. Meeting preparation and follow-up meant Steering Group members had a large workload, but it was clearly a vibrant period in the life of *Our City ~ Our Future*. In December this stage was described as the project's most productive (Planning Corporate 11/12/96: 3). The two-person Project Office was expanded with the appointment of a Maaori Liaison officer, whose role was to facilitate the full participation of Maaori in *Our City ~ Our Future* (OCOF Team 1/97: 6).

The Steering Group not only met monthly but also functioned in between times through a series of sub-group meetings, and other activities were often taking place. In the minutes and other papers there are references to the following: sector caucus meetings,

Publicity Subcommittee, Planning Group, Strategy Group, Community Forums Group (OCOF Team 1/97: 4). Other ad-hoc meetings also took place to undertake detailed planning. For instance, the design of the Working Group process was considered at a sub-committee meeting in May, and as noted above, the Vision required 'word-smithing' by another sub-group. CSG members reported to the Council Strategy Committee on more than one occasion. There were other activities as well including:

- team building events and celebrations of milestones, such as a trip to Matiu/ Somes Island in June 1996

- invitations to other events organised by Council, for instance, in June 1996 an invitation was extended to members to attend a Sustainability Indicator Workshop

- liaison with communities of interest.

Strategy development on a citywide scale was an intensive undertaking.

To ensure that the Specialist Working Groups were on the same track a "Linkage Evening" was organised for 20 November 1996. This brought together the full City Steering Group, and members of the SWG "[t]o address gaps, overlaps and conflicts in draft goals, targets and indicators" (CSG paper 7/11/96: 1). Each Working Group presented its work to-date and received feedback. With the material collected feeding into another cycle of SWG deliberations.

Throughout this period the CSG and Project Team ensured that the public was kept informed of progress, and were given additional opportunities for input. A set of posters were designed to capture the spirit of the *Our City ~ Our Future* process and promote opportunities for input. These 'eye-catching' posters were displayed in community centres, libraries, swimming pools and cafes (Strategic Planning 5/3/97: 2). Four open houses or community forums were organised in early March 1997 in Johnsonville, Kilbirnie, Newtown and Karori. These small-scale events were intended to present key ideas, seek feedback and encourage people to get involved in making the Strategy a reality. Advertising on radio and in papers, along with distribution of other promotional material preceded the events. Radio and television interviews and production of a video are other outreach strategies that were also used (WCC 199b: 59).

3.3.8 Draft Strategy launched

Almost exactly a year after its inception, the City Steering Group met to finalise the draft *Our City ~ Our Future: strategy for the future of Wellington*. The CSG held a workshop on 20 April to sign-off the draft Strategy. This full-day workshop was based on recommendations from the Advisory Peer Review Group, Specialist Working Groups' requests, and CSG member suggestions (OCOF 4/97: 1). Members were encouraged to keep the big picture in mind, and maintain the integrity of the vision.

An agreed draft was prepared and the date for presentation to the Council Strategy Committee of the Draft Strategy set for 7 May 1997. At the presentation the focus was on the Strategy development process, providing an outline of the document, and inviting Councillors to the launch and a workshop covering the Strategy in detail (Rippingale 1/5/97). Only photocopied versions of the document were available, as it was still being printed, and the item was discussed for only ten minutes. No record of the debate exists, though the Committee's response was noted as follows: "[t]he Committee thanked and commended the Steering Group on their achievements to date" (Strategy Committee Minutes 7/5/97).

A letter to Steering Group members indicated that the Council response was not entirely positive. Zöllner noted "…Crs Parkin and Nicholls immediately started questioning the bias of the Strategy - the old "capture" argument they have raised consistently over the last year" (Zöllner 11/5/97). To counter criticism, a telephone survey of residents was commissioned to assess how people responded to the vision and some of the central ideas contained in the draft. One thousand residents were contacted and their responses, reported back in June, were generally positive. Zöllner commented to the CSG June meeting that "[t]he survey shows strong endorsement for the Strategy and gives Council a powerful base to incorporate the *Strategy for the Future of Wellington* into the WCC strategic plan" (CSG minutes 19/6/97: 3).

Following its release to Councillors, the next step was to formally launch the vision. On 15 May 1997 Mayor Blumsky hosted a launch of the draft Strategy at a ceremony at the newly upgraded Courtenay Place pedestrian area, raising *Our City ~ Our Future* banners

to mark the occasion. The release was greeted with a high level of media interest although coverage concentrated on one or two controversial aspects of the Strategy. The lead story of *City Voice* declared "Radical green vision proposed for city" (15 May 1997), while the *Evening Post* headed its story "Ban cars from inner-city suburbs - proposal" (16 May 1997). Submissions were called for by 27 June 1997.

As previously agreed, the Council was going to make a submission on the draft Strategy. Staff were invited to contribute by participating in one of four 'work days' (Zöllner 11/5/97). Following this the Strategic Plan Sub-committee would discuss staff input, and prepare a draft for consideration by the full Strategy Committee. Concerns were expressed by CSG group members that staff had been excessively critical of the document (CSG minutes 19/6/97: 3).

During this period the draft Strategy was presented to the Wellington Regional Council and other key stakeholders. CSG members were encouraged to promote the opportunity for input to communities of interest in which they were in contact. By the closing date in late June 230 submissions had been received (WCC 1997b: 6). Of submissions received 74% were from individuals, and the remainder were from non-governmental organisations, government agencies, and businesses (Wharton 1999: pers. comm.). The majority of submissions generally supported the approach taken. Though some submissions were negative about the Strategy, or gave only conditional support for some aspects, very few recorded opposition to the Strategy or any of its elements (OCOF Team 3/7/97). Indeed, there was almost a complete lack of engagement by people who were known to be critical of the process.

The CSG next had to consider public input into the draft Strategy and revise it accordingly. The CSG was working to a tight timetable: the final Strategy was due to be presented to a full Council on 6 August. The Specialist Working Groups had an opportunity to consider the submissions on the draft Strategy and propose changes at a series of workshops. The results of these meetings fed into the day long Workshop on 19 July 1997. At what was advertised as the CSG's last meeting on 31 July no substantive issues related to the strategy were raised. Reports were received on the

planned launch of the Strategy, the development of an implementation plan, and incorporation of the Strategy with the WCC Strategy Plan and the new CSG (CSG minutes 31/7/97).

After eighteen months of solid work and wide public involvement, the *Our City ~ Our Future* development process was drawing to a close. The Council's 6 August 1997 meeting had a large agenda, and the presentation of *Our City ~ Our Future: Strategy for the Future of Wellington* was overshadowed by the resignation of Angela Griffin, the Council's Chief Executive. Nevertheless, the work of the *Our City ~ Our Future* Project Office and the CSG was acknowledged. Mayor Blumsky presented 'Absolutely Positively Wellington' certificates to the nineteen active Steering Group members, but there was no mention of the Council response to the Strategy (Council minutes 6/8/97). Endorsement of the Strategy would come later, when Council adopted its Strategic Plan.

3.3.9 Our City ~ Our Future Budget

Although figures vary according to the source, expenditure on in *Our City ~ Our Future* process was considerable. The *Evening Post* reported on 19 June 1996 that the *Our City ~ Our Future* project would cost $455,000, including staff time. Three years later a report tabled at the Strategy and Major Projects Committee estimated that the amount spent on the project was $320,000 for the period 1995-97, excluding staff time (Strategy & Planning 29/8/99: 2).

At the outset Council budgeted $121,000 over two years for public participation (Strategic Planning 5/2/96a: 5). Costs for public participation in 1995/96 were $64,500, and the following year $56,500. Funds were allocated for venues and related costs, information distribution, promotional activities and assistance for the public to participate. By September 1996 the total cost for the 1995/96 year was recorded as $135,123, with an allocation of $83,000 available for the 1996/97 year. In addition a $20,000 Contingency Fund could be applied for should this be necessary (Rippingale 4/9/96.

Staffing of the Project Office consisted initially of a full-time Project Manager and Project Coordinator, and a part-time Youth Events Coordinator and Special Events Team Member. Also contributing were permanent Council Staff, including a Project Leader (up to two days per week), Economic Policy Advisor (half to two days per week), Communications Coordinator (one day per week), Natural and Physical Environment Advisor (half to two days per week), Social and Cultural Advisor (up to two days per week). Other staff were available to assist as and when required (OCOF Team 4/96). Not all of these Advisors continued to contribute for the duration of the process. In December 1996 the Project Team was bolstered with the appointment of a Maori liaison person (OCOF Team 1/97: 6).

These costs reflected only those contributed by the Council, and exclude any estimate of the costs of the voluntary efforts contributed by the City Steering Group, Specialist Working Group and Advisory Peer Review Group members.

3.3.10 Preparing for *Our City ~ Our Future* implementation

Strategic planning exercises are meaningless if implementation is not addressed. Bryson (1995: 166), in his seminal handbook for strategic planning by public and non-profit organisations, emphasises that implementation is a critical part of the strategic development process, with the primary outcome being 'real added value' by meeting goals and receiving a satisfied response from stakeholders. This is consistent with thinking within Council, whose Strategic Planning team acknowledged that "words mean nothing, implementation everything" (Strategic Planning 9/5/97: 2). I will now outline the steps that have been taken to ensure *Our City ~ Our Future: Strategy for the Future of Wellington* is implemented.

The final Strategy clearly states that "[a]n Implementation Plan will be developed to identify the roles of different implementation parties in achieving the Vision and goals" (WCC 1997b: 6) Not only was the Council unwilling to fully adopt and implement the Strategy, Council realised it was inappropriate to do so as it would contradict with the community ownership at the heart of the process. Other organisations were encouraged to support Strategy implementation by aligning their planning with the Vision and

Goals, and work in partnership on projects (WCC 1997b: 4). A draft implementation plan was circulated, and subsequently published as a Progress report (WCC 1998a). However, it took a high-level overview, rather than providing detail of when and how things would happen.

Although Council was not active in its approach to developing mechanisms for implementing the *Our City ~ Our Future: Strategy for the Future of Wellington,* the City Steering Group was willing to address this. The issue of the future structure was on the agenda from its November 1996 meeting onwards. At its February 1997 meeting, the Planning Sub-group reported back on some initial ideas, including the notion of establishing a group to act as "Guardians of the Strategy" (CSG minutes 19/2/97: 3). The functions were described as Advocacy (marketing, promoting action, and validating appropriateness of initiatives) and Monitoring and Review (publication of an annual monitoring report, collection of feedback and initiation of full review every six years). Group members were asked to consider their ongoing involvement. Helen Johnson, a Mana Whenua representative on the CSG, promptly responded that "...Maori are in *Our City ~ Our Future* for the long haul"(CSG minutes 19/2/97: 3). It was recorded at the CSG's next meeting that 15 current members (ten men, five women) indicated interest in continuing after July when the Strategy was completed (CSG minutes 19/3/97: 3).

Over time the proposals developed by the Steering Group were fleshed out. At the CSG's June meeting, recommendations in a Process Sub-Group paper on the "Future Organisation of the City Steering Group" were accepted (CSG minutes 18/6/97: 2). The CSG agreed to the terms of reference, to establish a joint Council/ CSG process for establishing the new group and selected five representatives to take the next steps. The over-riding aim for the group was to "...strengthen the capacity of the City to collectively shape its own future" (CSG paper 18/6/97: 2). In addition to advocacy, and monitoring and review as previously identified, networking and communication was also included as a key task. It was anticipated that the Group would meet a minimum of four times a year, plus hold additional workshops or fora as required. Membership was to be limited to twenty people, and its composition "...determined by the need to create

a representative group which could succeed in implementing the Strategy" (CSG paper 18/6/97: 3).

At the time of deliberations on the future of the Steering Group within both Council and the CSG there was much talk of a governance model based on Birmingham's City Pride Board. Michael Clarke made a presentation to the Council about this, and minutes refer to discussion on a presentation on Birmingham's governance structure (CSG minutes 18/6/97: 2). This Board had 35 members with an independent chair and an executive comprising five senior representatives of partner organisations. It took on a high profile approach to its governance role within the city (not just the council), focusing on problem solving. Both Mayor Blumsky and the CSG were positive about potential for leadership such a Board could offer (OCOF Team 6/97).

Attractive as the City Pride concept may have been, progress making decisions on it was slow. A paper presented to the Communication and Consultation Committee in December 1997 noted that any decision on a City Pride Board had to take place in the context of related forums and governance structures. It was suggested this debate would take most of 1998, with new structures possibly established in 1999 (Strategic Planning 3/12/97: 5). At the time of writing (in late 1999) no decision had been made on future governance options.

Four options for a possible structure of the future CSG were presented to the Communication and Consultation Committee at its meeting on 3 December 1997. The Committee was asked to consider the merits of the following structures:

- an independent body which would be completely separate from Council and have no staff or Councillor involvement by, nor Council funding
- an advisory group, providing advice on processes and implementation working cooperatively with Council's Strategic Planning Unit on monitoring
- a charitable trust initially established by Council with a community focus, Council support would be provided and a link maintained.
- a governance body, with the existing CSG reshaped with inclusion of CEOs, Council and community representatives (Strategic Planning 3/12/97: 6-9).

The Committee agreed to:

> ....invite past members of the Our City ~ Our Future Steering Group and the various Working Groups to join a project Advisory Group, which will provide community input to the marketing, implementation and monitoring phase until a review of the Our City ~ Our Future strategy in 2001, or until the establishment of a possible City Pride type initiative. (Communication and Consultation Committee minutes 7/12/97).

It was also signalled that the City Pride approach would be debated early in 1998.

Although Council did not concur with the CSG's preferred option of establishment of a Trust, it was an option which the Group did not abandon. Immediately after the Committee's decision was made, work began on establishing the Advisory Group. A paper detailing the Advisory Group's operating criteria, its relationship with Council, resourcing, the time commitment, and selection criteria was prepared and circulated (AG papers 4/98). Membership of the Advisory Group was to be limited to 7-12 members representative of communities in Wellington. A close link with the Council would be maintained, primarily through the Project Team. It was anticipated that a meeting of the Group would be held every two months, plus members were expected to maintain ongoing contact with members of the community. Members were expected to be committed to the *Our City ~ Our Future* vision and goals, be connected to established networks and be at least familiar with the *Our City ~ Our Future* process, if not have been heavily involved (Strategic Planning 3/12/97: appendix).

3.3.11 Establishing the Advisory Group

The first meeting of the Advisory Group meeting was held on 1 April 1998. The Agenda covered Council's current consultation policies, the next stages for *Our City ~ Our Future* and Advisory Group membership. Attendees included past CSG members and individuals from selected organisations in Wellington, including Sport Wellington, Career Services, NZCCS, the then Wellington Polytechnic and Te Papa Tongarewa (AG minutes 1/4/98: 1).

Substantial Council funding for the Strategy was exhausted by the end of July 1997. However, from this point on a new marketing and implementation staffing position was to be established, with a maximum of 32 hours per week (CSG minutes 19/3/97: 3). The

Council did also commit to making a nominal payment for attendance of Steering Group members at meetings, and provide facilitation, administration support, information, venues and refreshments (Strategic Planning 3/12/97: appendix).

The Advisory Group has met infrequently during 1998-99 (which I will return to below). The decision to establish a Trust was the subject of ongoing debate, and delays in finalising a Deed hampered the Group's activities. Because of the essentially voluntary nature of the group and its limited access to resources, the capacity to pursue advocacy, rather than just monitoring, was severely constrained. Council's attitude to the Advisory Group has had a big impact on its ability to function effectively. In June 1999, Cindy Woest, the staff member responsible for *Our City ~ Our Future* proposed:

> ... that the role of Council should shift away from the city-wide implementation of the Strategy as this is no longer required. Instead, the Council will focus on the "internal" Council implementation and monitoring of the Strategy (Strategy and Planning 2/6/99: 4).

The reasoning behind this seemed to be that Council's profile in the community could be maintained by working internally to implement the Strategy and putting effort into publicity and monitoring, and by careful use of resources give effect to its own priorities in the name of *Our City ~ Our Future*. Although the high risk approach advocated in this paper was not discussed by Councillors (the paper was withdrawn from the Strategy and Major Projects Committee's agenda), the level of Council engagement in the *Our City ~ Our Future* implementation process is open to question. It is a critical issue which will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

3.4 What has happened since the Strategy was finalised?

The question of how to evaluate the impact of implementation of *Our City ~ Our Future: Strategy for the Future of Wellington* is a complex one, particularly if one wants to look at its contribution to urban sustainability. There are two issues to be considered: is *Our City ~ Our Future* being implemented? and secondly, is *Our City ~ Our Future* contributing to sustainability? The first issue is related to recording progress toward meeting targets and initiation of projects outlined in the strategy. Many of these can be measured with precision, but they must also been seen in a wider context. Therefore, as

well as looking at Council's reporting on progress, I will review community perceptions and visibility of *Our City ~ Our Future*.

The second issue, *Our City ~ Our Future*'s contribution to the shift to urban sustainability, is more complex. Even if progress is being made toward goals which will bring about 'sustainable development', there are a number of factors to consider including:

- the selection of indicators may not accurately reflect the state of the environment, ie partial coverage or focussed on insignificant impacts or activities
- disaggregating indicators may disguise progress, or the lack thereof, toward goals when compared with looking at indicators collectively
- the rate of change may be minimal
- data collected may not be reliable
- data for some indicators may not be available, as it is not collected at all.

There is not necessarily any cause-effect relationship between progress toward specific goals and achievement of sustainability. Robust, meaningful indicators are necessary to measure this, something that is still being done. Raising these issues does not imply that indicators presented in *Our City ~ Our Future: Strategy for the Future of Wellington* are not useful, but rather that they should be treated with care. It is a point to which I will return in greater depth below.

Before assessing progress with implementation a couple of further points need to be made. The Strategy outlines the need for substantial change. Clearly this will not happen overnight, so it would be prudent not to be too hasty about coming to conclusions about implementation. Secondly, one of the major outcomes of *Our City ~ Our Future* has been promoting dialogue and communication between disparate groups in the city. Conditions in which a collaborative process can work promise substantial change further down the track.

During this research many people commented that they did not know about *Our City ~ Our Future*, or if they did know about it, thought that it was not going anywhere. There is a widespread community perception that *Our City ~ Our Future* was not being fully

implemented. A member of a non-governmental organisations said they were interested in contributing to the implementation but did not know how. Others have commented that they thought the process was not being pursued. For instance, Celia Wade-Brown, a former Councillor and participant in the process notes that "...OCOF seemed to turn into a checking device rather than a catalyst to action - which is not to say checking devices aren't also useful" (1999: pers. comm.). Although she comments that maybe initiation of projects was not expected of *Our City ~ Our Future*, this is something that is seen as a major weakness. The near invisibility of the Strategy is hampering its implementation.

Content analysis of local and national media print (through an IndexNZ search) up to early 1999 revealed that the last media coverage for the document was in 1997 when the Strategy was released. A vigorous public debate or even scrutiny of the merits of the process is not occurring. Councillor interest is particularly low. The first report on *Our City ~ Our Future* to any Council committee in 18 months was withdrawn from the June 1999 agenda of the Strategy and Major Projects Committee, and when resubmitted to the Strategy Committee in September 1999 any decision on Council's future support was deferred. There is no reference to *Our City ~ Our Future* in the Council's 1997/98 Annual Report, and it receives passing mention in the 1998/99 Annual Plan (WCC 1998b: 51). References to *Our City ~ Our Future* in the draft 1999/2000 Annual Plan are extremely limited.

The Council is committed to monitoring progress toward achievement of goals in the Strategy. Benchmark data is being progressively collected for each the indicators (WCC 1998a). The first progress report in 1998 simply recorded how many targets or initiatives were being addressed. Data presented was collated from responses from 44 organisations (36% of the 123 approached) which had indicated that they were prepared to work on Strategy implementation. Of the 261 targets and initiatives listed, 174 (67%) were being addressed, 53 (20%) were not being addressed and information was not available for the remaining 34 (13%). As well as raw figures, the report recorded: who can make it happen, how it will be achieved, who can help and general comments. The

effort being put into addressing targets was not detailed, nor was the reliability of responses considered.

A second monitoring report was drafted and circulated to City Partners in December 1998. *How far, how fast* measured progress toward the targets in the *Our City ~ Our Future: Strategy for the Future of Wellington* (WCC 1998c). Of the total of 138 Indicators, improvement toward meeting targets is only recorded for 28 (20%) indicators, with no change recorded for 1 indicator and deterioration for 4 (3%) indicators. What is more significant is that 66 (48%) indicators require further work, and 39 (28%) have only had benchmark data collected or analysed in the last year (WCC 1998c: 3). The picture of progress is very partial given that there is data for less than a quarter of indicators. Nor can the reliability or appropriateness of indicators to measure progress toward targets be assured.

In September 1999 the *Our City ~ Our Future* Advisory Group considered a paper entitled "Looking Forward to 2003: a critical assessment of the 1997 Strategy" (AG paper 7/9/99). The independence, enthusiasm and high levels of participation in Strategy development were recognised, but although the document is seen as being credible it was also described as being "hard to implement" and costly to monitor. For the 2003 review of *Our City ~ Our Future* it was proposed that the strategy be implementation focused, with "specifically worded targets; a realistic number of targets". It was recognised that there was a need to "link targets to implementers as soon as possible; get more buy in from implemenation parties". These conclusions indicate a degree of dissatisfaction with *Our City ~ Our Future* implementation.

Further work needs to be done on the topic of implementation. In subsequent chapters this issue will be considered in greater detail. These preliminary comments indicate that although some progress is being made toward reaching targets, it is too early to say whether this will result in a sustainable Wellington. In the next Chapter I will look in some detail at issues and themes emerging from the Council and City Steering Group process.

Our City ~ Our Future on paper?

Development of a city-wide, multi-stakeholder citizen participation process and subsequent strategy implementation is a complex undertaking. As was demonstrated in Chapter Two, the *Our City ~ Our Future* process involved multiple layers of activity and many organisations and individuals. Whether the Strategy achieves its aim of shaping the future of Wellington, and contributes to the sustainability of the city, will be determined by the role of various actors involved. At this point the key themes from the documentary research will be presented. In this Chapter the focus will be on: the workings of the City Steering Group and the issues it faced in the period March 1996 to August 1997; Council understanding and attitudes to both citizen participation and 'sustainable development'; and the Advisory Group's activities since its formation in April 1998 up until September 1999.

The Chapter is divided into three parts. In part one the operation of the City Steering Group and the issues it faced will be reviewed based on analysis of CSG minutes and associated papers. Part two will focus on Council attitudes toward participation, its role in *Our City ~ Our Future* and its understanding of sustainability. Reference will be made to agenda papers presented to Council committees, primarily the Strategy committee, and key published reports. The final part will focus on activities and issues faced by the Advisory Group. This is based on Advisory Group minutes and other papers.

The approach I have taken to identifying key themes is as follows. Selected documents were coded using categories which emerged as key themes in the wider literature on strategic planning and urban sustainability, as well as allowing for emergent issues. After reading the documents, and building up a body of material through note taking

and coding, the data was sorted and a data reduction strategy employed to narrow the focus with key themes reported on below.

4.1 City Steering Group: what happened

The minutes and supporting papers of the City Steering Group reveal some of the issues faced by the Group. The Steering Group played a critical role in the *Our City ~ Our Future* process, so these will be covered in some detail. The minutes of fourteen CSG meetings formed the core of documents consulted, though some other supporting papers and letters were also reviewed. A note of caution is required before the issues faced by the CSG are explored. The record contained in minutes and other official documentation does not necessarily present an accurate picture of the reality experienced by members of the committee. There is no guarantee that these papers will convey all the issues that were considered: indeed it is important to note whether some topics have not been considered at all or in limited detail, as I do at the end this part. Although it is likely minutes were prepared by Council staff, the author(s) of the minutes is not known. Notwithstanding these caveats, the official record was viewed as a key source of information.

4.1.1 City Steering Group understanding of citizen participation

The City Steering Group had the primary responsibility for running the *Our City ~ Our Future* citizen participation process. The CSG documents show that the role of the Steering Group was an ambiguous one. On the one hand the Group was running the process, while on the other its sphere of influence was limited. From the outset, clear limits were placed on the CSG's scope for decision-making by the Council. Presented with a pre-designed process, it was the CSG's role to work through this process. The Group's operating criteria state that it:

> ... undertakes to ensure that a draft Wellington City Strategy for the Future is available for launch at the Futures Festival in February/ March 1997. Within this constraint, the City Steering Group has *control* over decisions on the consultation timetable (OCOF Team 2/96; emphasis added).

At the same time the Council's role, through the Project Manager, was to:

> ... *manage* the project according to the Project Brief and process already
> outlined, subject to *guidance* from the City Steering Group (OCOF Team
> 2/96; emphasis added).

The operating criteria stress a collaborative working process, with the Steering Group role defined as that of working in conjunction with the Project Team, and the Project Manager, or delegate, facilitating parts of the process (ibid).

In later discussions, the CSG considered whether the following descriptions of its role in the process were applicable: advocacy; directing, writers; workers; or guardians (CSG minutes 22/5/96: 2). No conclusion was officially recorded, but there is a clear acceptance of the role of CSG as guardians, monitoring and intervening in the process to maximise opportunities for citizen participation. Other roles are emphasised as was felt appropriate when the need arose.

Tension between CSG and Council roles

From the CSG documents it is possible to discern a tension between CSG control and Wellington City Council control. From the outset the CSG were expected to manage the process so that it was completed by the agreed date. The pressure to perform was to meet a Council agenda. Concern about time pressure is a constant refrain. Reference is made to the tight timetable at CSG meetings in April, May, June, July, August, October and November 1996. Very early in the process it was recognised that:

> [t]o give full justification to all aspects of the identified themes, it would be
> virtually impossible for the project to be completed by February 1997. We
> recognise the pressure to finalise and produce a strategy will be full on,
> especially once the Community Forum is completed, but in the overall
> interests of presenting a credible Vision Strategy which will stand up to
> detailed scrutiny, we urge a longer term view should be take of the whole
> project (CSG report 16/5/96: 1).

There is an evident tension between producing a Strategy which can withstand community buy-in, and completing the process within the timeframe.

The Steering Group was also under pressure to perform its tasks within budget. Meeting minutes are littered with references to the budget limitations of the project. Innovation and suggestions for additions to the project were greeted with comments about limited

funding. CSG members were reminded that they "...must be aware that available money is not a bottomless pit" (CGG minutes 12/8/96: 2). Any additional resources had to be secured by approaches to Council, and although both Mayor Blumksy and Cr. Allan Johnston were willing to put the case, there was no certainty of a positive response.

Despite the pressure to limit expenditure there is no record of the CSG making decisions about the budget. Indeed, council staff seem to be managing the budget. Comments recorded in CSG minutes state: "Ernst [Strategic Planning Unit Manager] reminded members that the project management retained discretion as to how the project budget would be spent. .... He noted that final budget approval would occur next week, and that a financial outline would be forwarded to the CSG" (CSG minutes 14/8/96: 4).

The Council made it very clear it was only one of a number of stakeholders in the process, and so expected others to contribute to the costs of the process. The call for sponsorship was made at almost every meeting. A wide variety of fundraising initiatives were pursued. These included personal approaches by CSG members (for instance members were asked to "... put your thinking caps on, use your networks, and shoulder tap your contacts" (Rippingale 1/9/96: 1)), a Mayoral approach to Council suppliers for support (CSG minutes 14/8/96: 3), and a form letter for CSG members to send out to likely prospects (CSG minutes 19/2/97: 3). Writing to sponsors Mayor Blumsky noted that "[w]e are offering you the opportunity to indicate your support for Wellington. You can choose the level of sponsorship that is right for you or your organisation" (Blumsky 2/97). All this effort generated very little revenue. Seven organisations are acknowledged for their support in *Our City ~ Our Future: Strategy for the Future of Wellington* (WCC 1997b: 64) but no funding was secured for the next stage of the process.

The relationship of the CSG with staff, as expressed in CSG documents, reveal that staff played an influential role. The written record does not provide a lot of information with which to assess the relationship, though some tentative observations can be made. Frequently, the CSG seemed to be presented with a proposal from staff with which they

would concur. For instance, the decision to set up the Advisory Peer Review Group and its operating criteria, the framework for the SWG Linkage Evening, and proof-reading of the final strategy were initiatives which came from officers with the CSG being asked to consent to proposals (CSG minutes 14/8/96; 9/10/96; 19/2/97).

Guardians of the process

The CSG refer on many occasions to the need to ensure that the community has adequate opportunities to have input into Strategy development. The call to 'go back to the community' and to ensure 'community ownership' is a recurrent theme in CSG papers. The Project Manager advised the CSG that:

> The critical success factor of *Our City ~ Our Future* is the degree to which all sectors of the Wellington community are present and participating in the process. Their ownership of the vision and input to how it can be achieved is essential to the effective implementation of the *Strategy for the Future* (OCOF Team 6/5/96: 1).

The salience of this advice was not lost on the CSG who worked to ensure input could be made easily and frequently.

Presentation of the Strategy to the community receives careful attention from the CSG, with the style and accessibility of documents discussed on several occasions. The Strategy was to be written in a "readable and accessible" way, so "promot[ing] wide ownership" (CSG paper 22/1/97: 2). Use of graphics and symbols to make the document visually appealing was a high priority. As well as presentation, incorporation of Te Reo Maaori was also discussed. It was agreed to translate the vision into Maaori in the final version of the *Strategy* (CGG minutes 24/7/96: 2).

At the same time CSG did not want to place too much pressure on the community to get involved. For instance, it was noted in July 1997:

> Initial concern was expressed that acceptance of proposals in the paper could bring things back to the beginning, as it takes the community a long time to come up to speed. There is value in trying to elicit ideas and give the community further opportunity to contribute. No need to be over concerned about numbers flooding in, but it would signal to the community to become involved (CSG minutes 10/7/96: 2).

When discussing formulation of goals, targets and indicators by the working groups, the CSG debated whether it should control the content of the strategy or let the community determine this. It was noted that:

> Some members wanted enough time to sign off goals and indicators as being robust, while other members do not want to see anything done by the SWGs overturned by the CSG. The latter thought the City ought to be allowed ownership and not have it vetoed" (CSG minutes 14/899: 2).

Although the outcome of the debate was not recorded, the discussion shows a clear desire of some on the CSG to respect community input.

Representativeness

The issue of the representativeness of the process, and in particular the involvement of key stakeholders on the City Steering Group, was something which the Steering Group paid attention to throughout the process. Representativeness was an issue not only for the membership of the Steering Group, but also for many other parts of the process. The CSG addressed representativeness of the Specialist Working Groups and the Youth Caucus at different times.

Discussion of Maaori involvement took place on several occasions. The Steering Group were told at their first meeting that discussions were being held with Maaori about their role in the process (CSG minutes 15/4/99: 2). The result was both Mana Whenua and Taura Here were represented on the steering group. Discussion of Maaori involvement extended beyond the appointment of CSG members to measures to facilitate involvement. As Maaori interest crossed all themes, providing input on all issues required significant effort. Concerns about the limited time with which Maaori had to comment on the emerging strategy were raised on more than occasion (CSG minutes 10/7/96; 24/7/96; 9/10/96). In response the CSG agreed to additional time for input, the Maori liaison officer was to assist by providing comments on drafts, and input from a policy analyst was to be sought (CSG minutes 10/7/96: 4; 9/10/96: 3). Ongoing sensitivity to Maaori interests is reflected in CSG documents, including agreement to use Te Reo in the published Strategy.

The CSG kept its attention focused on gaps in representation. One of the most significant gaps was the absence of 'big business'/ economic interests in the process. A report to the CSG noted the 'big business' sector:

> ... is the single largest group which does not have a CSG member with strong existing networks. The larger commercial sector units are major players in the development of Wellington. Their close involvement in the development of a vision and *Strategy for the Future* is an important element in ensuring its successful implementation. The need for the big business sector to be adequately involved in the process has prompted more expressions of concern from members of the public than for any other representation and liaison issues (OCOF Team, 6/5/96: 2).

Recognising this gap, the Steering Group agreed to approach business sector asking for a representative to participate. The Pacific Island community was also seen be under-represented and an invitation was extended for another member to join the Steering Group (CSG 8/5/96 minutes: 2).

Considerable effort went into talking with key stakeholders. Presentations and briefings to the Chamber of Commerce and the Wellington Regional Council were made on more than one occasion. The importance of the relationship with the Regional Council is indicated by discussions between staff of both councils, a submission from CSG on the Regional Council's strategic plan, and other correspondence (CSG paper 6/5/96; CSG minutes 13/11/96, 29/1/97). The Specialist Working Group phase was seen as an opportunity for substantial involvement by organisations or sectors not involved up to that point (CSG paper 21/6/96: 1).

Wellington City Council Councillors were identified as other key stakeholders. The two Councillors on the CSG were heavily involved. Allan Johnston attended two-thirds of all CSG meetings, while Celia Wade-Brown attended nearly all meetings. The CSG also kept up-to-date on views of other Councillors, and support from a number of Councillors is recorded in the minutes (CSG minutes 19/3/97: 3; 29/1/97: 4). A positive response was received to a CSG presentation from a WCC Strategy Committee meeting in September 1996 (CSG minutes 9/10/96: 2). It was noted in January 1997 that the Council had an ongoing interest in the process and was supportive of it. The elected representatives were reported as being willing to consider a request for additional resources (CSG minutes 17/1/97).

CSG was conscious of the need for representativeness, and monitored this throughout the process. Although the CSG may have been aware of gaps in representation, these were not always effectively addressed. For instance, 'big business' did not become involved. The invited representative, Nigel Gould, attended only one meeting. The minutes record neither any explanation of why he did not return nor efforts at follow-up.

4.1.2 Group Dynamics

Bringing together 25 to 30 people who have not worked together before is bound to require considerable effort for the group to work effectively. This is particularly the case when the people involved are from a range of disparate backgrounds, with different philosophies and objectives. The availability of expertise, experience of group members, and willingness to work cooperatively all impacted on the functioning of the group.

The voluntary nature of contributions was very clearly stated from the outset. The Selection Criteria state "No formal payment will be made to members of the City Steering Group" (OCOF Team 2/96: 2). Reimbursement for some reasonable expenses was available, though it is unclear whether CSG members were paid anything. There was concern expressed about pressure on individuals involved in the process, and the large amount of work facing CSG members.

The workload had an impact on attendance of CSG members. Attendance was patchy throughout the whole period, with a significant tailing off by the last meetings. Analysis of the 14 meetings for which records were available provides a useful touchstone. However, it should be noted, that as the CSG held many other workshops and events it is only a partial record. The results show that:

- at no single meeting did all CSG members attend[3]
- meeting attendance ranged from 8 to 25 participants
- the final four meetings were attended by between 8 and 14 members

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[3] Officially there were 30 members on the CSG. However, because of changes in membership and inaccuracies in the minutes, the numbers of members recorded as being present and absent at meetings does not tally.

- of the 30 CSG members, 8 attended five or less meetings, 11 attended between 6 and 10 meetings, with 11 attending up to 14
- two people attended all 14 meetings.

Reasons for this will be explored below, but likely factors are that members were faced with a heavy workload and were already busy and committed people. The absence of meeting attendance fees, frustration at slow progress and conflict between Steering Group members are other possible explanations.

The issue of attendance was one that the CSG addressed. At one point, concerned that less than half the members were participating in meetings, the CSG discussed how to combat the issue. As a result, Mayor Blumsky wrote to all CSG members acknowledging the demands placed on members, particularly with work on SWG occurring concurrently to that of the CSG. Members were asked to signal whether they were able to continue with their involvement, and what, if anything, could be done to make it easier to be involved. Blumsky noted "It is important ... that the robustness of the Steering Group be maintained and this is reflected in the size of the group and breadth of sectors present at the table" (Blumsky 11/10/96). It was noted at the next meeting that only one reply had been received, and as the attendance record indicates, the issue was not effectively resolved as the full CSG did not meet.

CSG worked on developing effective team processes. Team building was something that some effort went into (as mentioned earlier, for example, a trip to Somes Island was organised), and celebrations were organised to mark the reaching of milestones. It was agreed that chairing of the CSG be rotated (CSG minutes 24/7/96: 1). This clearly placed pressure on the meeting process — not everyone was proficient at chairing meetings. In a memo on meeting processes it is noted that "Improving the way we organise and conduct our meetings will be conducive, if anything to getting our job done and getting it done well!" (CSG paper 8/96).

Despite awareness of the need for healthy group dynamics, effective decision-making was not always in evidence. Discussion on some issues was not able to be resolved, a fact noted in the minutes on more than one occasion (CSG minutes 14/8/96; 19/10/96),

and other issues returned to successive meetings with little demonstrated progress. For instance, sponsorship was an agenda item from the outset yet there was limited success at securing additional resources. Similarly the CSG's ambition to implement a concrete project was extensively discussed over the CSG's life, but a suitable project remained elusive.

The potential for capture of the process by particular interests was considered. The CSG was alert to the potential for the Strategy to be discredited if it was seen to reflect narrow, sectional interests (CSG minutes 12/6/96: 2). Some effort was taken to guard against this. For instance, in preparation for the workshop at which the draft Strategy was to be finalised, it was stated that "It is critical to the success of the workshop that members leave their SWG affiliations and 'hats' behind and concentrate on the 'big picture' wearing their CSG 'hats'" (CSG minutes 19/3/97: 2).

4.1.3 CSG efforts shaping the future of Wellington

The CSG directed effort at ensuring that *Our City ~ Our Future: Strategy for the Future of Wellington* had a measurable impact. This revolved around implementation, including the establishment of a body to supersede the CSG and promote ongoing implementation.

Concern that the document would be weak, or of a low quality, was addressed throughout the process. Issues of substance and wording were key issues, but the Advisory Peer Review Group also raised questions about the relative priority of targets and consistency of approach. The Natural Environment Specialist Working Group's asked the CSG to respond to the contention that "...some language may be too generalised, too bureaucratic or too technical" (CSG minutes 19/2/97: 2).

The CSG documents demonstrate that the Group was vitally interested in achieving practical results. This was seen as being important for the credibility of the CSG and to shape the future of Wellington. The theme sub-committee noted it "felt strongly about the need for practical and/ or inspiring initiatives to emerge from the project" (CSG paper 16/5/96: 1). It was an issue that CSG members returned to on many occasions

(CSG minutes 12/6/96: 2; 9/10/96: 4; 13/11/96: 2; 29/1/97: 2). The options were virtually endless, with suggestions including a:

> ....commissioned work of art; commitment to feed back - memorial wall, eg Telecom Roll of Honour; harbour focus - OCOF water meter/ indicator; TransAlta fairy lights "OCOF wishes you a merry future" as lead into Community Forum; one of the SWG initiatives; blimp; Kupe Statue (CSG minutes 13/11/96: 2).

Despite some efforts to make a big statement, the CSG ultimately was left "...investigat[ing] the possibility of planting a tree with an *Our City ~ Our Future* plaque somewhere else in the City in the near future" (CSG minutes 19/6/97: 3).

If the CSG role in implementation was limited, it was also aware that although Wellington City Council was a key stakeholder, it would not solely be responsible for implementing the strategy. It is noted that:

> Council will not be asked to adopt OCOF in its entirety as it is not the Council's plan, but it will consider the OCOF strategy fully... Every attempt must be made to ensure that other key organisations also review their strategic plans to incorporate elements from the OCOF strategy (CSG minutes 14/8/96: 3).

Working with other agencies was identified as a key strategy, and resourcing for this was high on the list of the CSG's priorities. The conundrum of the Plan being a Council plan but at the same time not being a Council plan was a difficult issue to resolve. It is an issue I return to below at part 4.2.2 and also in Chapter Six.

The establishment of the Advisory Group or Trust to succeed the CSG was seen as a key to implementation. Considerable effort was put into designing an appropriate structure with a clear role. The CSG was vitally concerned about "...how can the CSG become more self-sustaining; ... get council on board for monitoring; and how can it be financed ... [from] July onwards" (CSG minutes 19/2/97: 3). This issue did not daunt the CSG, with details emerging over time of a proposed future structure. CSG members were willing to put forward their names to go on the future governance group, and a small team agreed to work with Council to develop mechanisms for Strategy implementation (CSG minutes 19/6/97: 3).

4.1.4 What was missing

Evaluation

To some extent the CSG continually monitored the process, identifying gaps and weaknesses and intervening where necessary. Issues that were emerging in Specialist Working Groups were brought to the full CSG for discussion and resolution (CSG minutes 14/899: 2). Another layer of input was provided by the Advisory Peer Review Group, though this was largely restricted to the contents of the Strategy with a focus on goals, targets and indicators.

The only detail recorded of the CSG evaluating its effectiveness was a CSG survey on the process. Responses were reported back at a CSG meeting, and the minutes state:

> ... that the great majority of responses indicated that CSG members were happy with both the CSG and the Project Office. Comments which were made by respondents are being taken on board by the CSG sub-groups and the Project Office (CSG minutes 29/1/97: 4).

No detail is provided of the exact nature of comments made, nor whether the CSG was going to take steps to address issues raised.

There is no mention of the monitoring and review of public participation proposed by the 2020 Task Group (see Chapter Two). This review was intended to check the adequacy of efforts in engaging the public through a variety of techniques.

Sustainability

Given its roots in Agenda 21 and a Sustainable City strategy, it could be expected that sustainability would be an issue considered in depth by the City Steering Group. The contrary is the case: very little attention was paid to how *Our City ~ Our Future* the challenge of 'sustainable development'.

References were made to Agenda 21 and international initiatives with the intention of seeking guidance on the process. There does seem to have been some understanding of the need to consider economic, social and environmental values as indicated by preparatory work on the eight theme areas (CSG 16/5/96: 1). However, there is limited evidence that the substantive nature of sustainability was considered by the CSG.

The need to test the *Strategy* for its adherence to sustainability criteria emerged as an issue at the CSG's November 1996 meeting. The Group considered a proposal from the Natural Environment Specialist Working Group to test all goals, targets and indicators against sustainability criteria. A paper presented to the CSG stated:

> Sustainable development is meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The origin of Our City ~ Our Future is Agenda 21, which required all signatories to develop strategies for sustainable development.
>
> Although the Wellington City Council has taken some steps along this path, it is yet to adopt a comprehensive sustainable development plan. Earlier initiatives aimed at creating this plan were folded into this project - Our City ~ Our Future. So a major responsibility now lies with us (Memo to CSG 11/96; emphasis in original).

The CSG decided that the issue should be considered at a special Linkage Evening (see Chapter Three) to determine its relevance to the process. Although this may have happened, there is no record of the discussion, and future CSG minutes do not mention the proposal as either being accepted or rejected.

Six months later, the need to test the strategy against Agenda 21 principles was discussed. At the June CSG meeting the question was raised of assessing whether the Strategy was consistent with Agenda 21. The City Steering Group's decision is recorded as follows: "It was suggested that this may be left for the new CSG to consider" (CSG minutes 19/6/97: 2). There seemed to be a degree of reluctance to look at this, and people were concerned that close association with Agenda 21 may be off-putting to the public.

4.2 Wellington City Council: what happened?

Details of a high proportion of the Wellington City Council's work is recorded in some form and available for scrutiny by the public. In the following section I will review the Council's approach to citizen participation as contained in published documents and papers presented to Council committees. In doing so I can only capture the formal decisions and intentions, and the views of staff as presented to Councillors. It was not possible from the written records alone to ascertain the views of elected representatives.

4.2.1 The Council's approach to citizen participation

Before looking at the specific context of participation in *Our City ~ Our Future,* it is first necessary to review the Wellington City Council's overall approach to citizen participation. It is a topic on which much has been written, so this review will be limited to key themes. The primary focus will be on setting out what is understood by participation.

Section 223D of the Local Government Act 1974 requires a local authority to seek citizen submissions on its Draft Annual Plan and other major proposals using the Special Consultative Procedure in S716a. In addition, councils have a duty to consult citizens under the Rating Powers Act 1988, the Resource Management Act 1991, the Biosecurity Act 1993, the Dangerous Goods Act 1974 and the Land Transport Act and the Reserves Act (Controller & Auditor General 1998: 59-61). In addition to these requirements the Wellington City Council has prepared a large number of plans and strategies to guide all aspects of its operation[4], and other policies and plans to govern management of particular assets or areas, including such documents as the Otari Native Botanic Garden Management Plan, Town Belt Management Plan and South Coast Management Guidelines. Opportunities for citizen input into decision-making encompass a wide variety of techniques, some of which were used for the first in New Zealand. These have included: public meetings; community boards; ward meetings (Councillors talking about policies and activities); a youth council; forums; a citizen's jury; customer satisfaction surveys; focus groups; citizens' advisory groups; and an interactive website.

An overview of the Council's approach to citizen participation is detailed in its Consultation Policy, an updated version of which was adopted in 1996. This Policy provides staff and Councillors with a framework within which they can plan, and implement consultation activity. It clearly sets out the policy objectives of and reasons

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[4] There are 15 strategies listed in the 1997-99 Strategic Plan in various stages of development. These are: Urban Design; Heritage; Land Use; Social; Health and Safety; Emergency Management; Arts; Culture; Economic Development; Open Space; Water Management; Energy Management; Liquid Waste Management; Solid Waste Management; Recreation; Transport; Marketing; and Financial.

for consultation, the extent of Council's commitment, and the issues that will be consulted on. According to this document:

> [t]he need for the development of the policy arose from public perceptions that as a local authority we have not always consulted with the community as well as we could have. Councillors and Council staff often found themselves in situations where they felt consultation could have been improved (WCC 1996a).

What is described as a hierarchy of consultation options was included in the Consultation Policy (though they should perhaps more accurately be described as citizen participation options), with the basis of selection of techniques based on the issue being addressed and the circumstances. The four different levels identified are a modified version of the ladder of participation discussed in Chapter One. The four levels are:

> *Partnership* - people are involved right from the beginning of a process. They work together or plan jointly to achieve mutually acceptable goals. There is an equal sharing of decision making powers. The Council would delegate decision making to the group of people involved.

> *Participation* - representatives of the community are involved throughout a decision making process. They work together with Council to identify a compromise or consensus solution. Council would facilitate the process.

> *Accountability* - plans are formulated or modified after contact with the community. This includes the provision of reasonable information and reasonable opportunity for people to participate in decisions affecting their lives. Council would provide leadership in this type of consultation.

> *Interaction* - the provision of information to the community when their input or advice is required on a proposal that is or is nearly complete. Council would direct these kinds of consultation (WCC 1996b; emphasis added)

The importance of citizen participation is recognised in the Council's 1997-99 Strategic Plan. One of the fourteen priority areas for action is democracy, with the relevant strategic objective "to increase citizen participation in decision-making processes" (WCC 1997c: 15). This is emphasised in Outcome 13 in which Council seeks to ensure that individuals and groups have opportunities to "...participate in decision-making and development of their City, communities and cultures" (WCC 1997c: 28). The specific steps to implement this policy are due to be detailed in the 2000-2002 Strategic Plan. There is no doubt Councillors have debated the role of citizen participation within its decision-making process. That there is no single preferred approach to participation indicates an awareness by Council that the selection of techniques should be relevant to

a particular situation and the issue. Underlying this is an understanding that different approaches require greater or lesser levels of involvement. A ladder of participation was presented to the Communication and Consultation Committee as part of its deliberations on community forums (see Figure 4.1). There was also extensive analysis of both the
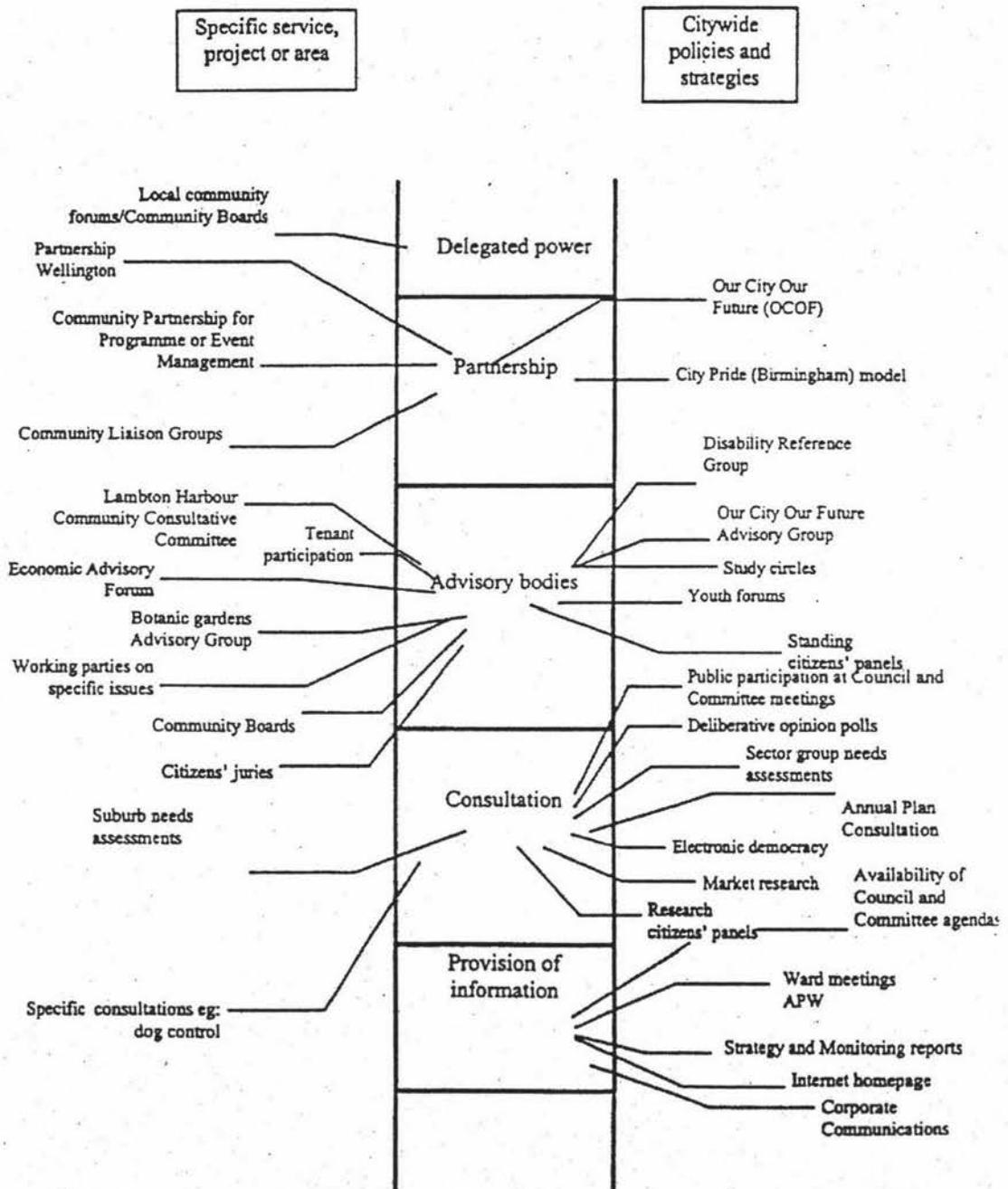
Figure 4.1 Ladder of participation presented to Communication and Consultation Committee (Democratic Services 20/11/97: 5)

benefits and costs of participation (Democratic Services 20/11/97: 6-11), and Councillors were advised of critical success factors for participation. Amongst these factors was recognition of the need to provide support and training for members of the community, and the need for political, management and staff support (Democratic Services 20/11/97: 12).

A framework for developing a participation policy was considered at a Councillor Workshop on Participation in March 1998 (Robinson 1988: 13). The framework incorporated considerations of the purpose of participation, barriers to it and priorities for action. The key conclusions presented were the need for Council action in:

- Developing structures or forums for participation in discussion and activities
- Reviewing Council practices and behaviour in relation to a commitment to listen and be responsive
- Building the community's capacity to participate effectively (Robinson 1998: 9).

As well as developing general understanding of citizen participation, the Workshop generated many recommendations for change.

Councillors were again presented with background information about participation when the Council discussed community representation in June 1999. When considering concerns related to community boards[5] in the city, the values required for citizen participation were reiterated by Council officers. It was stated that the following values were necessary if participation was to be effective:

- A willingness on the part of the elected representatives *and* Council officers to devolve real power to Community Boards/ forums.
- An ability to work in true partnership with any Boards/ forums established.
- A willingness to let a system evolve over time without a clear picture of how it would turn out.
- A commitment to listen to the community and respond (Democratic Services 2/6/99: 3-4; emphasis in original).

The Council's policy, and the advice and knowledge of staff, demonstrates some understanding of the fundamental principles of participation. However, it is important to

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[5] There are only two Community Boards in Wellington (Tawa, Ohariu/ Makara). The 'inequity' of access to Community Boards has generated criticism from residents in areas which do not have a Board.

recognise that both staff and Councillors change at regular intervals, so the level understanding and action can fluctuate.

4.2.2 Council approach to citizen participation in *Our City ~ Our Future*

Reports on *Our City ~ Our Future* presented to Councillors varied considerably over the course of the process. Initially, detailed reports covered emerging risks and issues, as well as updates on progress, while toward the end of the process only the latter was provided. From written material, it seems Councillors were not involved in the 'nuts and bolts' of the process, although, because oral reports and discussion are not recorded, this is not entirely certain.

The role that Council played in the development of the city-wide strategic plan received some attention. It was recognised by staff that Council would "strongly influence how the process will operate" and it would "...determine the role, membership and means of selection of the City Steering Group" (Strategic Planning 8/12/95: 6). Councillors were presented with a 'continuum of public participation', which ranged from public information/ education to self-determination. Each step along the process increased public decision making authority and public involvement. The options presented as possible roles for the Council were: director; leader of the community; or partner with the community (Strategic Planning 8/12/95: 7). Partnership was dismissed because of potential cost and timing implications, and being director was not seen as being consistent with the Agenda 21 principles of involvement (Strategic Planning 8/12/95: 9). Therefore it was agreed that leadership was the most appropriate approach to take. Council was to "...set the timeframe and other relevant parameters for the process in consultation with a 'guiding' City Steering Group" (Strategic Planning 8/12/95: 9). The CSG would determine the details of the citizen participation process and manage it within set criteria.

The issue of who was controlling the process arose on several occasions. Although the City Steering Group would control the contents of the Strategy, input from the public and organisations would influence the CSG's decision-making. Staff advised Councillors that, should things go wrong, for instance with the selection of CSG

members, then a facilitating role could be taken, and, if need be, final decisions would be made by the Council (Strategic Planning 5/2/96a: 4). Yet, Councillors were also made aware that Council did not have any privileges in the process. It is noted that "Council will have no veto right or special decision-making weighting during the process" (Strategic Planning 5/2/96a: 4).

Council's involvement in strategy development can be seen as that of equal participant. It had opportunities to comment on the Strategy and promote its priorities. Staff involvement in Specialist Working Groups and attendance at 'open houses' in March 1997 were avenues to achieve this, as was the submission process on the draft Strategy (Strategic Planning 11/3/97: 6-7). Just as in strategy development Council was seen as one of many parties, so, too, in implementation Council was not seen as having to take responsibility for full implementation of the Strategy. The Council's response to the Strategy was a matter of 'debate, not dictate'. It was made clear by staff that Council may like to modify or extend parts of the Strategy to fit with its direction (Strategic Planning 5/3/97). The Strategic Plan 1997-1999 reflects Council's ultimate response, as it adopted selectively from the goals in *Our City ~ Our Future: Strategy for the Future of Wellington*.

In the implementation phase of the Strategy from 1998 onwards, both elected representatives and officers and management seem to be shifting from its leadership role to that of being one of many participants. The change in role is signalled in Council consideration of its contribution to *Our City ~ Our Future* implementation. A paper to the Strategy and Major Projects Committee's June meeting was withdrawn, revised and re-submitted to the Strategy Committee's[6] September meeting, therefore suggesting an internal debate about the appropriate role for Council. Initially staff recommended that Council limit its involvement to internal implementation of the Strategy, monitoring of progress toward achievement of goals and limited support from staff (Strategy and Planning 2/6/99: 4-5). It was argued that:

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[6] The Council Committee structure was re-organised in July 1999. The Strategy and Major Projects Committee became the Strategy Committee, with its other business carried out by the City Development and Business Committee. New terms of reference were written for each Committee.

> Council has always proposed that the Advisory group should take ownership of the project. Council is now stepping down as the project manager and becoming an ordinary member of the Advisory Group (Strategy and Planning 2/6/99: 4).

Changes in the Advisory Group structure, with a Charitable Trust close to finalisation, and other factors resulted in a retreat from this position. In a report tabled at the September 1999 Strategy Committee meeting, although staff recommended a less active role for Council with some administrative support, it was also suggested that Council grant the Trust $150,000 over three years (Strategy & Planning 29/8/99). Only partial funding was suggested as the Trust was exploring other options. Councillors were reminded that the *Our City ~ Our Future: Strategy for the Future of Wellington* would be reviewed in 2003 and 2004, which would require additional funds (Strategy & Planning 29/8/99: 5). Deferral of this recommendation by Councillors at the 13 September 1999 Strategy Committee meeting signalled a reluctance by Council to support the *Our City ~ Our Future: Strategy for the Future of Wellington*.

Monitoring the participation process

Some of the problems faced during development of *Our City ~ Our Future* between February 1996 and July 1997 were brought to the elected representatives' attention. Concerns were raised about the process, including: the short timetable for the process; the possibility of Council ignoring the Strategy; lack of representation on City Steering Group by some interests; overlap with other Council planning processes; and availability of funding to support the project (Strategic Planning 24/4/96: 2-3). The response from staff was that "[m]ost of these concerns are being addressed, although a project of this nature is by necessity a series of compromises between aspects such as inclusiveness, effectiveness, making progress, and available resources" (Strategic Planning 24/4/96: 3). Capture by interest groups does not figure prominently as an issue in the Council papers. However, the possibility that interests could be pushed during the implementation phase received passing mention (Strategic Planning 3/12/97: 4; Strategy & Planning 29/8/99: 4).

The representativeness of the process was seen as an important issue. Staff reported on efforts to ensure the process was representative. It is noted that Maaori were consulted

about what role they wanted in the process, and the visioning process was seen as an opportunity for widespread involvement by citizens (Strategic Planning 5/2/96a: 4). Representativeness was seen as a key issue in setting up an ongoing structure for city governance (Strategic Planning 3/12/97: 4).

As well as the need for key external stakeholder involvement, Councillor participation in early stages of *Our City ~ Our Future* was stressed. A number of roles were identified for Councillors including arrangement of meetings, identification of interested parties and liaison with the community. As well as being able to contribute to the process with ideas and skills, Councillors were encouraged to be involved so as to keep up-to-date with community sentiment, and as "...active participation and interest of Councillors will show the community that Council is taking it seriously" (Strategic Planning 5/2/96b: 4) .

Councillors did receive some information about resource and timing implications of the project. Early in the process Councillors were alerted to the likelihood of the project taking longer than expected. Council staff noted that they had clearly told the CSG that resources were limited, and that there was limited prospect of securing additional funds (Strategic Planning 26/6/96: 2). Requests for extensions to funding receive scant mention in Council papers. The issue of funding for the establishment of an ongoing governance body was noted: the resources required were expected to be substantial (Strategic Planning 3/12/97: 4). Initially, cost featured in advice to Council about its future involvement in *Our City ~ Our Future* implementation with savings suggested as a major reason for a reduction in the level of involvement (Strategy and Planning 2/6/99: 5).

One of the issues emerging from the above discussion is that both Councillor and Council staff involvement in *Our City ~ Our Future* fluctuated considerably throughout the course of the process. Two Committees have overseen aspects of the process, Strategy Committee and Communication and Consultation Committee. The Strategy Committee's role was expanded to that of Strategy and Major Projects in November 1997, and reverted to just Strategy in July 1999, with a separate City Development and

Business Committee established. An election in October 1998 changed the composition of the Committee. The Council Unit responsible for *Our City ~ Our Future* has undergone name changes, as well as staff changes. Continuity and a stable environment is not something which *Our City ~ Our Future* has operated in.

4.2.3 Achievement of 'sustainable development'

The emergence of 'sustainable development' in international debates about cities has influenced the Wellington City Council's direction. There is little doubt that the Wellington City Council has adopted at least the rhetoric of 'sustainable development', as is demonstrated in many of its published documents.

As early as 1993 Council was grappling with outcomes of the UN Conference on Environment and Development. Council operating principles refer to efforts to: "Striv[e] to ensure environmentally sustainable outcomes in all areas of operation" (WCC 1993: 6). It was recognised that:

> The Council is a major resource management organisation with a pivotal role to play in managing the local environment and promoting sustainable resource management. The Council must therefore be at the forefront of developing and implementing practical solutions to environmental concerns (WCC 1993: 24).

A series of statements of intent for environmental management were prepared to guide Council activities. Maintaining and enhancing the city's natural features through environmental leadership and development of local, practical solutions to environmental concerns was to be a focus (WCC 1993: 30).

In preparing for its strategic plan the Council envisaged a central role for sustainable development. Its long-term vision statement was to be based on the "2020 Vision statement and sustainable development framework" previously adopted, and indicators to measure progress toward outcomes would include an index of sustainable development (Strategic Planning 27/1/96: 3). This emphasis is confirmed in the Council's Interim Strategic Plan which stated "In June 1995 Council adopted *sustainable development* as the overriding concept for its long-term strategic planning" (WCC 1996b: 18).

A *Sustainable Development Position Paper* prepared in 1997 outlined how various plans and policies within Council impacted on the city's achievement of 'sustainable development'. The definition used clearly acknowledges the need to balance social and economic development with protection of natural resources (WCC 1997e: 2-3). As well as addressing how resources (water, land, energy and waste) are to be managed, the Council's efforts directed at achieving 'sustainable development' are detailed. Initiatives include liaison with Wellington Regional Council and other Councils working on these issues, and leadership "..by example, and through appropriate governance, to help those within Wellington recognise sustainability as the key to appropriate development" (WCC 1997e: 4).

In the Strategic Plan 1997-99, six building blocks for the basic composition of a city were noted, including 'sustainable livelihood'. This is described as "...securing livelihoods for healthy communities of people and other living species (the economy, ecology and community)". It is also noted that "[a]ny significant threat to the foundations of sustainable urban development - the economic and ecological base, and people's access to basic resources - is given highest priority" (WCC 1997c: 9).

Despite this policy, the Council's consideration of 'sustainable development' in the context of the *Our City ~ Our Future* process was extremely limited. As was shown in Chapter Two, the reason that Council facilitated and seed funded *Our City ~ Our Future* was to support its 'sustainable development' approach. Involving citizens in shaping the future of the city was seen as a key component of implementing 'sustainable development' (Strategic Planning 8/12/95: 9). Once the process began emphasis was on development of a strategy, with only passing mention of sustainability. In August 1999, the original purpose for the city-wide strategic planning process was described to Councillors as "defining a community based vision for the future of Wellington" (Strategy & Planning 29/8/99: 2). The reference to sustainability was lost along the way.

4.3 *Our City ~ Our Future* Advisory Group

With the citizen participation phase completed and a final *Strategy for the Future of Wellington* was published, effort shifted to implementation. As is described above, it was the role of the Advisory Group to promote implementation and monitor progress toward achievement of the *Strategy's* goals. This ongoing effort was in the hands of a group of dedicated volunteers. It is the minutes and supporting material for twelve Advisory Group meetings between April 1998 and September 1999 that provide the data for analysis in this section. The caveat noted above regarding CSG minutes applies here: minutes cannot be relied to provide a comprehensive and accurate record of meetings.

4.3.1 Progress toward implementation

The written record clearly sets out the role of the Advisory Group as being that of implementors of the *Our City ~ Our Future* Strategy. This all encompassing role spans many different activities and approaches. Advisory Group operating criteria, which were drafted prior to the formation of the Group, set out what membership would entail. The key tasks noted were to:

- contribute to and provide guidance to the marketing, implementation and monitoring phases of the project
- make recommendations on the implementation and monitoring of the City Strategy for the Future
- work with Council and other groups to initiate and support any special community projects to run in conjunction with the project
- facilitate and encourage people to take initiatives which promote the Vision and Goals (AG paper 4/98: 2).

The role of the Group was discussed at its first meeting, with members agreeing to strengthen community commitment to the Strategy by acting as its champions (AG minutes 1/4/98). The Advisory Group's draft Business Plan, considered in October and November 1998, stressed the role of implementation. To achieve this members would be involved in "assessing the implementation tools used by partners; and evaluating the direction of work done on the implementation" (AG Business Plan 11/98: 3).

Within this broadly defined role, the practice of implementation focused on specific activities which evolved over time. Initially the Advisory Group allocated responsibility to individual members to make contact with groups and promote implementation by organisations (AG minutes 15/7/98: 1). Guidelines were prepared by WCC staff to assist Advisory Group members in their approaches to groups. As well as assessing whether organisations were making progress toward selected goals, Advisory Group members were to encourage groups publicly to state their commitment to Strategy implementation (Woest 18/8/98).

It was an ambitious approach, with over 135 organisations to contact, and progress was slow. At its September 1998 meeting it was clear that the approach was starting to pall. The minutes record that no responses were made to a request for reports on progress contacting groups (AG minutes 16/9/96: 1). The next reference to implementation is in July 1999, when residents associations and other groups were approached with a request to help facilitate implementation (AG minutes 13/7/99: 1).

Rather than focus on implementation and follow-up by Advisory Group members, attention shifted to the establishment of an appropriate structure to effectively promote implementation. The key to this was establishment of a Trust and access to resources for activities, including the appointment of a coordinator (AG minutes 16/9/98: 2). Successful implementation could not rely on voluntary efforts of Advisory Group members, but required a planned and resourced approach. There was a shift toward the Group taking oversight, rather being active front-line implementors. The steps the Advisory Group took are discussed below.

Just as the Advisory Group was stepping back from front-line implementation, so too was the Council. The staff member involved most centrally involved in *Our City ~ Our Future* was shifting to a less direct role. This role would entail ensuring "…that Council implements, within Council, all the things allocated to them in the progress report" and representing Council management on the Advisory Group (AG minutes 18/11/98: 3).

Another of the roles the Advisory Group pursued was attempting to influence Council policy and direction. Success in influencing the Wellington City Council Strategic Plan 1997-99 was cited as example of effective advisory input (AG minutes 18/8/98: 2). Consideration was given to whether all policy could be first vetted by the Group, although no record is made of any follow-up on this. It is unclear whether the Advisory Group had any greater or less access to Council decision-making processes than other groups. The Wellington City Council did acknowledge the importance of the Advisory Group into its review of the 1997-99 Strategic Plan. The Group was briefed on the review process and input into the revision of the Strategy was welcomed (AG minutes 9/6/99: 2). The Advisory Group also agreed to comment on other Council policies, including its Transport Strategy (AG minutes 11/8/99: 1).

4.3.2 Focus on structure

The Advisory Group decided that the establishment of a Trust and securing resources for it was critical to implementation of *Our City ~ Our Future.* However, from the minutes it is observable that efforts at making progress establishing a Trust have been painstakingly slow, and have yet to come to fruition.

The establishment of a Trust was considered prior to the formation of the Advisory Group. It was an option that was dismissed in favour of advisory input from the community by both the Council and the City Steering Group (Strategic Planning 3/12/97). Frustration at slow progress with implementation prompted the re-emergence of the suggestion that a Trust be established (AG minutes 16/9/98: 2). It was agreed that Trust structures be investigated, and the first draft Deed was presented to the Advisory Group in December 1998 (AG minutes 8/12/98: 1). An Advisory Group member volunteered the services of his solicitor and drafting proceeded. A range of issues were given consideration over succeeding months, including community representation, the appropriateness of Executive Trustees, and who the founding Trustees should be (AG minutes 14/4/99: 1). It was not until June 1999 that agreement in principle on a Trust Deed was reached (AG minutes 9/6/99: 2). A month later the Group agreed to seek advice about the Deed from the Inland Revenue Department (AG minutes 13/7/99: 2). A last minute proposal that the Advisory Group consider a Council Settled Trust was not

supported, and the Advisory Group confirmed unanimously to establish an independent trust (AG minutes 11/8/99: 1). A year after first being minuted, Advisory Group members were invited to indicate whether they would be prepared to become Trustees (Prior 1/9/99).

The Trust Deed was not the only issue that proved difficult to advance. The Business Plan was first discussed at the Advisory Group's October 1998 meeting, when a draft was tabled. The document clearly stated what the Advisory Group's role was and what it aimed to achieve (AG Business Plan 11/98). At the same time a Communications Strategy was prepared, and a Job Description for a Coordinator drafted. A month later a modified version was circulated, but progress stopped at that point. The Group decided to delay consideration of the plan, until such time as the Deed, Business Plan and Job Description could be looked at together (AG minutes 8/12/98: 2). The Plan has yet to be reconsidered. A decision was made to draw up a proposal which includes both a budget and objectives (AG minutes 11/8/99: 1), something which has similarities to parts of the draft Business Plan.

The necessity of securing income so that the Group could act independently was a constant concern for the Group. At the Advisory Group's first meeting, it was noted that

> [a]n investigation into resources will be made. A suggestion was made that a fund be set up, and grants made for reimbursements of members [sic] expenses. This, or another fund, could also provide grants for OCOF initiatives in conjunction with the use of the OCOF brand (AG minutes 1/4/98: 2).

It was recognised that Council may not be willing to fund the process. In the draft Business Plan chances of Council funding were seen as being slim (AG Business Plan 11/98: 7). Even the provision of a support person was uncertain (AG minutes 9/6/99: 2) and something that required investigation. Council staff advised the Advisory Group that establishment of a Trust, whether under the auspices of the Council or not, had no guarantee of support. It was noted that "[i]f the Council is to fund the formation of a Trust, the Advisory Group must be able to identify what benefits it will bring" (Woest 8/99: 2). Council was never seen as the sole funder, with sponsorship seen as an essential for *Our City ~ Our Future* implementation. The topic is returned to on several

occasions. However, at the time of writing in September 1999, no sponsorship had been received.

4.3.3 Membership of the Advisory Group

Prior to the first Advisory Group meeting several interim City Steering Group meetings considered the issue of who would be involved in the Advisory Group. Invitations to the first Advisory Group meeting were sent to former City Steering Group members who had already volunteered and a number of selected individuals, including representatives from Wellington Polytechnic (now Massey University, Wellington campus), Sport Wellington, NZCCS and the Pacific Training Institute (Mowat 20/3/98). The composition of the Advisory Group was discussed at its first meeting. Gaps in representation were noted with a list compiled of 36 different sectors and organisations not represented. It was agreed that a process be conducted to select the twenty ongoing OCOF Guardians (AG minutes 1/4/98: 2). The process was to incorporate both invitations to individuals suggested by those at the meeting, and advertisements in community papers asking people to volunteer. After receiving applications the Advisory Group would identify any gaps and attempt to fill these. Final selection would be made by the Advisory Group (AG minutes 1/4/98: 2). However, this process is not referred to at any subsequent meeting, and efforts at recruiting additional members from this point on received little attention. The appointment of a Gay and Lesbian representative was successfully followed up (AG minutes 18/8/98: 1), and Youth representation (seen as being critical by the CSG) was discussed (AG minutes 15/7/98: 2), but no appointment was made.

The necessity for the Advisory Group to be representative is stressed in its Business Plan. Listed in the document are organisations and sectors that the Advisory Group wanted to see involved. In addition to a representative spread across gender, disability, ethnicity, age and geography, and social, environment and economic sectoral representation, membership of key implementation organisations was also proposed. Those listed included: local authorities, Police, Welcoss, Capital Coast Health, Chamber of Commerce, Port Wellington, Victoria University of Wellington, Wellington

Polytechnic (now Massey University Wellington campus), Capital Power, Enerco, Tranz Rail, Lambton Harbour and the Youth Forum (AG Business Plan 11/98: 4). Clearly, with this representation configuration a wider governance role was being proposed. Efforts at recruitment stalled while the future structure was addressed.

Involvement by Councillors, key stakeholders in the future of Wellington, was limited. Mayor Blumsky was included on the membership list of the Advisory Group at least up until April 1999. However, he attended only the first meeting and ceased putting in apologies after March 1999. After the departure of Celia Wade-Brown, repeated requests for a Council representative were made (AG minutes 18/8/98; 16/9/98; 18/1/99; 17/3/99; 13/4/99). Councillor Ian Hutchings was appointed in May 1999 as the Council's elected member representative (Prior 6/5/99). He attended the June 1999 Advisory Group meeting but attended neither of the next two meetings. Concerns that *Our City ~ Our Future* was being sidelined by Council were raised by one Advisory Group member. The creation of a 'Wellington Committee' by Council was seen as a replacement of *Our City ~ Our Future* governance structure and it was being "...set up for the same reasons that OCOF was set up originally for" (AG minutes 9/6/99: 2).

4.3.4 Advisory Group dynamics

Attendance of Advisory Group meetings was considerably less than originally planned. Numbers attending ranged from seven to thirteen people, with the average number being 10 Advisory Group members. From the outset three members said they would only participate on a second level, but not attend meetings (AG minutes 1/4/98: 2). The seven non-regular meeting goers only attended one or two meetings. The majority of the work was carried out by a dedicated core of people. Lack of support and visible progress are possible contributing factors to patchy attendance at Advisory Group meetings. Many more meetings were held than originally noted, with 14 meetings scheduled in 18 months rather than meetings every two months proposed in the Operating Criteria.

The absence of a budget to pay member fees, something anticipated in the Operating Criteria for the Advisory Group ("a nominal hourly payment will be made to members of the Advisory Group" (AG paper 4/98: 2)) was just one problem noted. This is an

issue I return to in Chapter Five. Other problems included "uneven implementation approach to implementation parties (both in terms of personal approach and spread through the goals of the strategy", absence of an agreed Communications Strategy, slow implementation progress and the "make up of Advisory Group [was] not representative of all strategy sectors" (Business Plan 10/98: 5).

From the minutes is clear that the Advisory Group struggled to make progress. As is noted above, the Trust Deed is not yet completed a year down the track, nor is a business plan. The issue of Councillor representation required repeated attention. Even an activity seemingly innocuous as securing publicity in Council publications required much effort. A suggestion that an article be published in the Wellington City Council's paper, *Absolutely Positively Wellington*, was raised on four separate occasions (AG minutes 18/11/98; 13/4/99; 9/6/99; 13/7/99). After this prolonged effort, a 200 word article appeared in the August 1999 issue of *Absolutely Positively Wellington.*

Clearly there are reasons for slow progress with *Our City ~ Our Future* implementation to be found in the way that the Advisory Group worked. Progress towards raising funds, setting up a Trust and reaching out to implementation parties are all taking a long time. It must be acknowledged that the Group are volunteers and have a significant workload with very few resources to do the job. The lack of Council support and non-involvement of key stakeholders is another barrier to successful implementation. However, this is only part of the picture. The wider context of the Wellington City Council's role and support from the wider community are critically important. In Chapter Five when I will look at explanations for the stage that implementation has reached, whether a sustainable Wellington will result from the *Our City ~ Our Future* process, and what the options are for the future.

What was said about Our City ~ Our Future?

No single, unified understanding of the effectiveness of the *Our City ~ Our Future* citizen participation process emerged during this study. Interviews with key informants provided a rich source of data from which to help understand the process, but not an unambiguous picture of the *Our City ~ Our Future* process. Tensions are evident in the different perspectives held by respondents on the degree of community or Council control, and on why there has been limited progress with implementation. The contribution *Our City ~ Our Future* has made to 'sustainability' is a theme which seemed to be of minor importance.

The findings of the fieldwork are presented in four parts which are ordered in roughly chronological order, although it was not possible to fit all the relevant data with this sequence. Part one considers respondents' views on the citizen participation process and Strategy development. The next part summarises responses to progress with implementation; then I explore the barriers to Strategy implementation, including the respective roles of the Wellington City Council and the Advisory Group, resourcing, and leadership. Finally, contextual factors, such as local body politics and council restructuring, are covered. Before turning to the findings I will first outline the methodology used for data collection.

Data collection methodology

In trying to understand how well the *Our City ~ Our Future* process was run and whether there are barriers to implementation I sought data that would reveal participants understandings of the *Our City ~ Our Future* process. I elected to conduct five to ten in-depth interviews with key informants. Key themes in these individuals' impresssions would be identified and analysed.

Initially I talked with a number of people involved in *Our City ~ Our Future* to identify a list of possible interview candidates. In this sample I wanted to ensure respondents were representative of key stakeholders who participated (including Council staff, Councillors, community organisations, and business interests), and also representative of gender, ethnicity, age and socio-economic status. I also sought to talk with people whose involvement overlapped both the City Steering Group and Advisory Group. The final selection of interview candidates was influenced by suggestions of potential respondents provided by the people I interviewed.

For the most part the sample reflected the representation I was seeking to achieve.[7] However, representation of all perspectives was not possible. A suitable youth respondent proved difficult to identify so I was not able to include youth in my sample.[8] Representation by people other than Pakeha or Maori, and of lower socio-economic status were other gaps in the sample. In the end I interviewed seven people.[9] These were:

- Carole Donaldson: Public Participation Consultant, designed *Our City ~ Our Future* process on contract
- Cindy Woest: Strategic Advisor, Strategy and Planning, Wellington City Council
- Allan Johnston: Councillor; former chair Strategic Planning Sub-committee, CSG member
- Ann Edge: Team Coach, Community Development Group; CSG member, AG member; former Aro Valley Community Association chairperson
- Ian Cassells: Managing Director, What's New Ltd; CSG member, AG member

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[7] Interviews of people who were not participants would have provided useful data, but it was considered more appropriate to interview those who could help explain internal dynamics, and who were more accessible due to their public support for the project. Interviews of non-participants would be a useful future research activity.

[8] There were four youth representatives on the City Steering Group, but none on the Advisory Group. All CSG youth representatives were students, and in the two years since the Strategy was finalised most have moved on.

[9] Massey University Human Ethics Committee approval was received to conduct this research. Each participant was informed of the research process, and asked to provide written consent. All respondents were given the option of having their identity protected, or having some or all material attributed to them. All respondents were happy to be identified.

- Sally Bowman: Sustainable Wellington Trust, NZAEE; formerly Natural Environment Specialist Working Groups member; AG member
- Liz Mellish: Executive Officer, Wellington Tenths Trust; Trustee Palmerston North Tenths Trust

For the interviews I used non-standardised, open-ended questions. Following Davidson and Tolich (1998), I used question sheets which included key themes identified during background reading and a list of prompts (see Appendix 2). All interviews took place in a location of the interviewees' choice, either at home or their office. Full transcriptions were made of each interview, with respondents provided with an opportunity to review the transcripts and to correct these. A draft Chapter was also sent to respondents to allow them to check any contributions in the context in which they are used.

Analysis of the interview material data entailed coding for key themes. Categories were based on themes that arose from background reading as well as emergent issues. From the 70 pages of transcripts key themes were identified, and are reported on below.

5.1 *Our City ~ Our Future* Strategy development

5.1.1 Enthusiasm for the process

When Wellingtonians were invited to be involved in the city-wide, multi-stakeholder *Our City ~ Our Future* it was something that seems to have been greeted positively. Despite the newness of the visioning approach and strategy development, the process captured the public's imagination. This is evident in all the interviewees' responses, although not all without hesitation. The energy is well captured by Edge, who said:

> We had quite a few good consultations, and I think we had some really neat publicity things: we had design students from Polytechnic or kids from schools doing art work, we had banners in cafes to advertise; we had open houses at one point in the consultation, in different community centres - not a lot of people came to that ... It was something different and new for Wellington. I think it... you could never do something like this and get it right (Edge interview 9/7/99).

Johnston too had a high level of enthusiasm for the process. He stated that:

> Council kept up its commitment to the process, they were strong champions despite doubts. It was seen as an experiment. And on that basis it was very successful. Early on there was a lot of excitement and enthusiasm. The public meetings were outstandingly successful (Johnston interview 1/7/99).

The process used was a challenge to existing local government approaches to planning, and was clearly quite an eye-opener. As Cassells stated:

> I think that it has sparked the idea for a number of people who have become quite enthusiastic about it. I think, most of it is about defeating the inertia of local bodies, and believing that you can participate in the future of your own city. It wasn't obvious that this was possible, but the process offers that (Cassells interview 12/7/99).

A positive aspect of the process was the opportunity it provided for dialogue between people with divergent views and interests. *Our City ~ Our Future* brought people together to sit around a table and work toward a consensus over the future of Wellington, although it was not possible to resolve all conflicts. Respondents had this to say on the emergence of consensus:

> I think the major thing that it has accomplished is that it has got Wellington organisations to think of themselves as having a common future in the city of Wellington. And being able to sit down, with conflicting aims and desires, and being able to discuss it through and come up with a broad outline of what they wanted and where they wanted to go. I think that's the major one (Woest interview 18/6/99).

> Overall, 'Our City ~ Our Future' was a success. Planning for a whole city is a very complex, chaotic process. A group of well meaning people developed some good ideas. It was a revelation for people to be involved in a process which people with different viewpoints worked together. It was quite well facilitated, and it was a good strategic planning process because the document emerged from the organisations and stakeholders rather than being imposed from above. Perhaps the most valuable aspect of the development of Strategy was people understood the need for balance between competing views (Johnston interview 1/7/99).

In principle consensus was seen as being possible but it was something which was not achieved without some difficulty.

5.1.2 Group dynamics

The City Steering Group played an important role in strategy development. It was through this group that an effective citizen participation programme was run, and agreement between competing interests reached. Respondents were generally positive about the group process. The following views were noted about the CSG:

> It did really gel. I thought it was stunning that it did. I mean 36 [sic] is quite a lot for a committee. It's bigger than the city council, and it has trouble. We worked almost, in fact I think we worked entirely in, I'm just trying to think of an example of when we didn't make decisions by consensus. I can't! (Edge interview 9/7/99).

> ... so you've a large number of people involved, so there's going to be some dynamics. I think that through time the groups learnt: firstly, how to hold a meeting; secondly, how to listen to other people - there were some problems in the beginning, but these group dynamics were solved. People learned how to communicate and work through problems without needing to dominate others. I think they were really successful, as much as can be expected (Woest interview 18/6/99).

Despite positive feedback about how the process worked, there was some evidence the process was not problem-free. Donaldson observed:

> ... had I been involved in running that specialist, I mean steering group for a few meetings longer I might have been able to bring them to a more consensual approach. As I understand it, it stayed quite divided in its positions. And certainly, the people that I knew on it were more on the environmental management side, and they felt a bit overpowered by the men in suits (Donaldson interview 4/6/99).

Further, she said:

> ... they went from a participatory approach, from being very open and listening, to that highly structured steering group process where they were under time pressure, the meetings were run like council meetings. They were not what I would call stakeholder meetings. ... The fact that they held them in city hall, is to me a big psychological thing (Donaldson interview 4/6/99).

Another issue raised by one respondent was that not all staff were totally supportive of the process, and they tended to go off and do their own thing and seemed to be unable to understand things from the community's perspective.

A concern raised by more than one respondent was the degree to which those involved in the development of the Strategy attempted to influence it to suit their own interests. This issue of 'capture' is one that was repeated, as the following quotes reflect:

> I think from a democratic perspective it's been a handy lesson for the same people in how not and try influence things to go your way because it actually has a detrimental affect for the group (Woest interview 18/6/99).

> Some people came with a particular interest, and carried that through the whole process without compromising or changing their views about what they wanted to get out of it. But that's natural. I don't think it was done particularly badly, but there was representation that came with an agenda (Cassells interview 12/7/99).

> The way the Council looks at democracy is for active citizens and interest groups to make an appropriate contribution. Capture by a particular vision of the city, such as one promoted by Alliance types, is not what we wanted to see (Johnston interview 1/7/99).

There was a suggestion that interest group 'capture' deterred participation by some groups, for instance, Woest suggested that some groups decided to leave the group in protest (Woest interview 18/6/99). Yet the issue of 'capture' is not something that all respondents recognised. Edge looked at the approach of community groups in a different light. She stated:

> It became a very community project, and there are lots of different interpretations that you could put on that. Maybe cities should be driven by the community, if they feel all this corporate stuff is not relevant to people's lives (Edge interview 9/7/99).

The tension between different views of community involvement is something I will return to below.

Another issue facing the City Steering Group was that it was under considerable pressure to ensure the citizen participation process was completed within the deadlines set for it. The pressure is best expressed by Woest, who noted that:

> Most people recognised that time was of the essence. Time was really important, time was running out. If they were going to do the Strategy they had to do it reasonably quickly. I know that 18 months doesn't sound very quick but for a huge group like that it is actually quite quick (Woest interview 18/6/99).

Mellish actually saw the tight timeframe as an advantage, as it pushed the process to completion (Mellish interview 8/9/99), whereas Donaldson was critical of the pressure on community to conform to deadlines. She stated:

> I suppose my overseas experience shows that these processes take as long as they take, and if you try to fit them into an artificial time-frame then there are a lot of frustrations. Both on the part of people like me who sees that the community is not ready for the next step yet, and you're forcing them, boxing them, and that either walk away or get frustrated and become critics, and lose some allies. It's actually quite a dangerous thing to really push it too fast (Donaldson interview 4/6/99).

It is important to remember that involvement in the City Steering Group was voluntary. The energy and time involved was a big commitment, and is something that most respondents commented on. For instance:

> I'd say that there are some very dedicated people who have put an extraordinary amount of time and energy into this project (Woest interview 18/6/99).

> Being on the steering committee was a fair commitment. A few people dropped off, because, for one thing there were no meeting fees and it was a lot of time. While most people checked up on what the time commitment would be before they put their names forward, it was actually a heap more. In fact, at some parts of it I had weekly meetings, and sometimes there was more than one a week. They were always in the evening of course because people were working. It was quite a big time commitment. But also people got very inspired by it, so that helped (Edge interview 9/7/99).

5.1.3 Project resourcing

A factor that respondents said influenced the process was the availability of resources. Most but not all respondents felt that the process was under-funded. This applied to both the availability of financial and human resources. The Council acknowledged that funding may not have been sufficient. Woest noted that:

> ... no there wasn't sufficient resourcing, no ... you could always use more funding and definitely we found that to be a big problem. The City Council put a lot of money into this project, but tried to keep a distance from it as well, but there were not many other resources from other organisations (Woest interview 18/6/99).

City Steering Group members also perceived lack of funding as a problem. As Edge stated "I was disappointed that the budget was so low for it - which is always what you end up with on the whole" (Edge interview 9/7/99). Based on her experience overseas, Donaldson commented that resourcing was a huge problem, particularly when it came to allocating tasks to staff. In her view, "...resources are an important [issue]... and I don't

think Wellington City put enough human resources into it at the right time, of that consistent type" (Donaldson interview 4/6/99).

An impact of limited funding was that some respondents felt that the citizen participation was not conducted as well as it could have been. Some steps were dropped from the process. Donaldson said between the visioning and community forum she would normally have consulted with opinion leaders in the community. This was dropped because it was not budgeted for by Council (Donaldson interview 4/6/99). Publicity at different steps in the process was limited, with only a small budget available for marketing (Edge interview 9/7/99). One respondent observed that the Specialist Working Groups were not able to be fully effective. Efforts to attract people to the Groups were not as extensive as desired because of budget constraints. This point was elaborated on by Edge:

> I had a stand-up argument with the Mayor at one of the meetings about the budget. In the end he actually sent us a copy of the budget, and we did have some money, it wasn't a lot, but it was enough to run it on a shoestring (Edge interview 9/7/99).

However not everybody saw funding as being an issue. One respondent said that resourcing was adequate:

> ... if somebody said 'that you needed to do this, and it is essential to the Strategy that we need to do it, you don't have the money'. I don't think that situation happened too many times. I mean there's been sufficient support... (Cassells interview 12/7/99).

5.1.4 Representativeness of the process

The level of public participation, and particularly the representativeness of involvement, seems to be something which respondents were by and large satisfied with, though the absence of some groups was considered a problem. An exception was Johnston who questioned the degree to which representation was necessary and considered that involving some groups was going too far (Johnston interview 1/7/99). But, as the following comments suggest, representation was generally seen to be adequate:

> ... representation on the steering group, on the surface it wasn't bad, at least the first couple of meetings that I went to I think most of the major groups were covered, and I think they were actually, by and large, well

meaning people who understood their role would be to go back to their community (Donaldson interview 4/6/99).

I think it was very inclusive, extremely inclusive. The approach was pushed so much and trying to get everybody involved that perhaps the focus was lost that could have been gained by using a different approach (Woest interview 18/6/99).

I think it was open... from a Mana Whenua point of view it was open. From the Taura Here that were involved it was open. Whether it was open for ordinary Joe Bloggs on the street: I don't know. I suspect the mandates given to us.... no, we had our own mandate, but I guess Taura Here mandate their own people. So I guess I would have to say 'yes, they were certainly able to participate'. And I know that Taura Here were involved as long as we were. So, that was not an issue to my knowledge (Mellish interview 8/9/99).

Maori involvement was significant, something that was acknowledged by the Wellington Tenths Trust, the representative organisation for Mana Whenua. Mellish said that of particular importance were Council efforts to address its Treaty of Waitangi obligations, and recognition of the Tenths Trust as kaitiaki, or a governance body which was on a par with Council. She stated that:

I believe that we felt very involved. We felt... like anything there are issues because you have got a whole lot of people all with their own particular concerns, but the good thing was that we were consulted, we were in the process from the beginning, which was a rare joy because frequently we are not. But in this instance we were in right form the beginning. And like everybody, we didn't get everything we wanted but at least we had a very strong voice there and there were some positive outcomes from our perspective (Mellish interview 8/9/99).

The appointment of a Maori liaison officer ensured that Maori could be involved throughout the process in a meaningful way. This attracted positive feedback, particularly as it enabled access to other resources including research by policy analysts (Mellish interview 8/9/99).

However, not all stakeholders were well-represented in the process. Representation of economic and business interests was recognised as being problematic by respondents. Although the contributions of those business representatives on the City Steering Group were acknowledged, the absence of the Chamber of Commerce attracted considerable attention from respondents. While explanations for the Chamber's non-involvement vary, it was a matter of concern, as the following remarks indicate:

> When it was suggested that the Chamber of Commerce be involved some of the community representatives were clearly not open to business involvement. The explanation I have for this is because of the political views those people held (Johnston interview 1/7/99).

> We did actually go and talk to businesses. We did have one or two: we had Ian Cassells from What's New Ltd. .... I don't think it was completely missing, but it didn't stand out as being a focus at all. We were very conscious of it actually, especially with Mark as part of the steering group. I think he was concerned about it (Edge interview 9/7/99).

> [Business] didn't get involved because it looked like a bunch of wallies mucking about. Which is a great shame, because business probably has as much to gain as anyone everybody — they'd probably have more to gain in things like this. They're interested in the future of the city, which was what this was all about, so they're pretty stupid business (Cassells interview 12/7/99).

Involvement of youth and ethnic communities was also seen as problematic. Although some high calibre contributions were made by the youth represented on the City Steering Group, those appointed were not seen as being representative of youth in the city. The absence of youth from low income groups was noted. Edge expressed a concern that "I would have liked to see unemployed youth and youth in other kinds of training represented. Anyway, ... it was only Pakeha youth as well" (Edge interview 9/7/99). Another gap noted was the absence of ethnic representation. As Bowman noted "... one area that occurs to me is ethnic diversity. I think there may have been a bit of a deficit there. That can be a bit of a problem. I've been involved in Newtown Residents Association, and they've got something like 42 cultures there" (Bowman interview 2/8/99). Although Woest suggested that the Specialist Working Groups provided an opportunity for any perceived gaps to be filled and balance any over or under representation (Woest interview 18/6/99), the extent to which this occurred is debatable.

5.1.5 Design of the process

Our City ~ Our Future's external advisor, Donaldson, commented on her position as a consultant for the process. Being a consultant created difficulties in terms of her ability to influence the planning and direction of the process. This was particularly important in New Zealand where city-wide, multi-stakeholder planning processes are relatively untried techniques.

Donaldson noted that being a consultant can be problematic because with only a set number of hours being contracted for, the available time was used up before all the necessary work could be completed. Another impact of being a consultant from outside Wellington meant that some things that would usually be addressed with ease by an internal facilitator from the Council's own staff were sometimes not resolved. She noted that:

> ... one of the things that I'm learning is the importance of actually having the person who is designing the process right there because little things are things that can upset the process. And if the staff aren't experienced enough to pick those things up then things can go really awry (Donaldson interview 4/6/99).

In previous city-wide strategic planning processes she had been involved in, Donaldson worked as a member of council staff. With *Our City ~ Our Future* she did not. As a result she was not in a position where advice that she gave would necessarily be followed through on. For instance, she noted:

> All these assumptions that get made [about who will and won't participate], rather than staff putting in the legwork. If [some members of the community] ... decide not to participate then it's their decision, but to have the staff make that decision was a bit of a weakness. This is where as a consultant I can't, I don't have the control. That's what I mean about the control, it's control in the sense 'we will have those people at the table.' It's a kind of a difficult situation (Donaldson interview 4/6/99).

5.1.6 The outcome: a "reasonable" document

After hundreds of hours of effort the Strategy was completed. In general, respondents noted their satisfaction with the final *Our City ~ Our Future: Strategy for the Future of Wellington,* though the final product was not seen in universally positive terms. As Donaldson noted:

> The fact, that despite a lot of hiccups, we came out with a community document, quite a reasonable document. What I don't know is how the steering group felt about the document. As far as stepping back and looking at it, it looks like a reasonable attempt (Donaldson interview 4/6/99).

A similar sentiment was expressed by Edge, who stated:

> Everybody came in with all their baggage, their issues, what they wanted to cover... In the end we came up with something that addresses a lot of the interests and issues that people had in a pretty wholesome way (Edge interview 9/7/99).

There was a high degree of realism about exactly what the Strategy represented. Two members of the Steering Group made similar comments:

> It is a strategy for the future, because it says it is, but not because it is right or has got all the things that should be in it. It's got what people genuinely felt was going to create a good city to live …. It's a really human document (Edge interview 9/7/99).

> I think some of the barriers are the… when you look at the goals and targets I think some aren't realistic. The process was interest group driven and their comprehension of what's possible within a given timeframe may not be realistic — it's the intent that's important. I think that people realise, that because it's community it raises expectations. When you pick up the report and you realise that you can't expect it to be what might really happen. But that's fine, it wouldn't be community if it wasn't. …. it is part of how we feel, this is what we want, then you can go out there and see if the targets aren't being reached, or 'why not?' Is it because it was unrealistic? Does it need to be, does there need to be another approach? And I think that is all part of the process, and that's good (Bowman interview 2/8/99).

A concern noted by more than one respondent was that the Strategy was too broad and did not prioritise between the 102 targets. This was identified by Woest, who stated:

> One thing the Strategy didn't get to, which everyone in the process at the time, including myself, was sorry about, but perhaps it was too much to ask at this point: people didn't get down to prioritising. This actually needed to happen first, which would have led to much more of a focussed approach to the work (Woest interview 18/6/99).

In a similar vein, Mellish commented:

> I suspect that the final document was perhaps a bit too broad. A bit like all things to all people, rather than 'hey, here's the key areas that we've really got to focus on', or 'here's the five areas we've got to focus on' (Mellish interview 8/9/99).

Respondents made some comments about the process of Strategy development which impacted on the final contents of *Our City ~ Our Future*. Different themes were seen as being easier to address than others. Edge noted:

> Some of the themes seemed too big and nebulous really, one of them was education and another one was community. They spent months trying to define what they meant by community. You can imagine what some of the discussions were like - it really was a bit too nebulous, and we had to develop everything from nothing. But I think that was an advantage as well, it just took a lot of time. Whereas other ones like transport, even though it's

big, was a bit more focussed, or …. natural environment, culture were more focussed (Edge interview 9/7/99).

Another concern raised was the way in which the Specialist Working Groups proceeded with their task. Cassells stated:

> … you had these people who were well intentioned, but there were council committees that had been working for five years of the same problems, and had worked through the information and arguments and the issues, then there were these people from outside saying 'you've got to do it this way.' They never really got the specialist working group process right, in my view. Why would you want to replicate what someone else had already been done, especially in areas which require technical expertise. It is a bit much to provide that much responsibilities to amateurs, maybe (Cassells interview 12/7/99).

For some of the Specialist Working Groups major stakeholders were not involved. This was partly due to CSG members being able to put in the effort to attract the right people. Edge made these comments about the Education Specialist Working Group:

> In education, we got a few [organisations involved], but we didn't get people from the university for example 'though we would have liked to. We didn't get the key people really, we got the people from the more, sort of, suburban high schools and things like that…. There were a few people from the polytechnic and places who wanted to be involved but didn't get the time (Edge interview 9/7/99).

As a result the final product did not necessarily reflect what key stakeholders were willing to implement. It is the issue of implementation that I will now explore.

5.2 Progress with *Our City ~ Our Future* implementation

Our City ~ Our Future was seen as initiating some shift toward a desired future for Wellington. Generally, however, respondents were concerned that Strategy implementation was limited. Before turning toward the limitations of Strategy implementation, I will first outline what respondents thought *Our City ~ Our Future* had accomplished. One achievement discussed above is the establishment of a process through which Wellington's future could be discussed and some consensus reached.

A number of specific achievements were recognised, with some new projects and activities initiated as a result of the *Our City ~ Our Future* process. One that is referred

to on several occasions is the Green Centre being established by an independent trust. Partnerships with government agencies and other organisations are also noted. For instance, the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority has initiated partnerships to promote conservation of energy in the city (Woest interview 18/6/99). Mellish noted that for Te Atiawa several specific initiatives had been undertaken, as well as acknowledging a broader recognition of Mana Whenua culture and history. Perhaps more importantly, the process has resulted in a shift in culture at the Council. For Mellish:

> ... things [are] coming out, with names attached and branding and talking about iwi Mana Whenua, [which] raises that level of consciousness. It probably has bigger consequences than anything else from our perspective. I believe that has changed in the city, quite a lot. Not all that people have wanted particularly, but it has changed (Mellish interview 8/9/99).

From a Council perspective progress is being made toward Strategy implementation. The monitoring data collected by Council up to June 1999 led Woest to conclude that progress is definitely being made, though not without difficulty. In summary, she said:

> Although the group is really struggling and is just beginning to set up the Trust and how things are going to work, so it is grappling with all those questions. But already within the last year there have been improvements in those ticks and crosses against whether we are performing or not. The number of organisations taking leadership with the implementation of the targets has increased over the last year. The number of initiatives not having somebody taking leadership has decreased. The number of targets where it wasn't clear who would run with them has also decreased. The number of organisations actively supporting the Strategy has increased, by quite a lot (Woest interview 18/6/99).

One of the important achievements noted by respondents was the Council's response to the final Strategy. It was recognised that the Wellington City Council had incorporated *Our City ~ Our Future* into its own strategic plan. As Edge noted:

> ... out of the *Our City ~ Our Future* project I also spent four months being part of the city council's strategic planning advisory group, which was quite interesting and exciting too. That was when I saw how they really linked it in, I actually saw it in action rather than just coming, I knew it hadn't just been computer-generated (Edge interview 9/7/99).

However, the degree to which incorporation was genuine was questioned. Cassells stated:

Unfortunately, I still think that it is trapped in the bureaucracy. It's been politically correctly adopted by the Wellington City Council, who do a whole lot of things that make it look like they're getting right into it, but really nothing at all is happening apart from some people in some organisations are talking about it to some people in other organisations, ... there's been papers, and plans and strategies, but none of which are really making a lot of difference at the moment. But it will happen. It's just that at the moment it hasn't got blood and guts the way that good ideas need blood and guts (Cassells interview 12/7/99).

A sense of limited implementation was shared by all respondents. The following quotations indicate the range of concerns noted:

It needs success. ... It makes no odds if there are policy documents, strategic papers - there really needs to be something happening! It has to come out into the light of day, and push, push, push. It hasn't kept up with what it could have (Cassells interview 12/7/99).

The 'Our City ~ Our Future' isn't out there, it's behind the scenes. A lot of people think that it has faded out there. Its profile needs to be lifted (Bowman interview 2/8/99).

I suspect that it is sort of sitting there at the moment, rather than being implemented. Although parts of it are being picked up and driven. I guess that's what we knew would happen, that in fact out of that broad document key things would be picked up. And I guess that every document is a living document so it has got to be ready for change (Mellish interview 8/9/99).

So, over the last year, given the resources and the stage within implementation I think that they are doing okay. Obviously, it could have been done better if there were different circumstances. I think given the circumstances, and given the voluntary nature of the project I think that the people working on it need to be commended for the amount of time and energy that they've put in (Woest interview 18/6/99).

At the same time, respondents accepted that there would not be substantial changes overnight: the Strategy was a long-term process with a 20 to 30 year timeframe. Although immediate action was not expected, there was concern that something needed to happen. Limited progress was a cause for concern, as Edge noted:

One of the potential problems with something like this is if you start and don't complete it, you could never do it again. I think that it relies so much, its credibility is so fragile, you would have to do it successfully (Edge interview 9/7/99).

5.3 Barriers to implementation of *Our City ~ Our Future*

5.3.1 Role of the *Our City ~ Our Future* Advisory Group

Many different reasons were given as to why implementation was limited. Gaps in stakeholder participation and reliance on over-stretched volunteers, mentioned above, are seen as contributing to slow progress. Other reasons mentioned by respondents included the lack of leadership, limited access to resources and an uncertain role for the Advisory Group. The role and composition of the Advisory Group is something that also attracted comment.

Woest said that the Advisory Group were not implementors but advisors. She did not see the role of the Group as directly progressing implementation: instead, their role intended was to monitor what was happening and provide advice. Woest stated:

> I think that the level of public participation in implementation is happening at the organisational level, and it's not happening at the Advisory Group level, because it's an <u>advisory</u> group. You know, they are not an implementationary group, they're an advisory group. They're advising organisations on how to implement the strategy. Those organisations are then saying 'Alright, lets do this bit' (Woest interview 18/6/99).

One explanation given for the shift from a process with high levels of participation to one with limited participation was that implementation was considered much more difficult, in the participative sense, than helping to draw up the Strategy (Woest interview 18/6/99).

Even working with community groups in what was considered an 'advisory' capacity was seen as a significant task. Bowman explained that encouraging the adoption of *Our City ~ Our Future: Strategy for the Future of Wellington* by organisations would take a lot of effort. There was a difference between what 'advisory' meant to Bowman from that implied by Woest. Bowman said:

> After I'd been on there a while it became apparent to me, when I saw what they were asking for, from a personal perspective it seemed like it wasn't in an advisory capacity. They were wanting more from us (Bowman interview 2/8/99).

Membership of the Advisory Group was considered a big commitment, around which some confusion existed. The voluntary nature of the work was a source of tension, as the following comment indicated:

> ... some people on the committee had been told that they were going to be paid to be on that group. .... It didn't bother me at the time, but I think that is quite a good idea because it was quite a big commitment. It wasn't just going along to meetings, there was a lot of time that you could put if you were doing what you were meant to be doing (Bowman interview 2/8/99).

Another issue raised in relation to the role of the Advisory Group was its composition. Cassells was of the view that the Group did not have to be representative. He stated:

> Implementation is done by implementors, who are probably not all the people that were involved. It doesn't matter, as long as the Strategy is followed, it doesn't matter who those people are. In the end, you don't need representation on every bloody thing that's happening. If you want to get it done, get it done by people who are keen to do it! The first qualification for someone coming onto the Advisory Group is them saying 'I'm going to make sure it is done' (Cassells interview 12/7/99).

5.3.2 Who is directing the process?

A theme running through all the interviews was that of the respective roles of the Council and the City Steering Group/ Advisory Group. The question of who was directing the process attracted considerable commentary from respondents, in relation to both the Strategy development phase and the implementation phase. I will explore this issue at this point, because understanding the relationship between Council and community control is of critical importance to the implementation of *Our City ~ Our Future*. What is clear is that there is no uniform approach taken by respondents.

The view of the Council Strategic Planning Unit was that the project was community driven. The following two quotes give a good indication of the official Council line on the process:

> It has been a good lesson to the Council, this is the first project in New Zealand to be totally written by the community. At the Council we helped that to happen but we made a huge effort in not imposing our beliefs or what we wanted to happen to come through in the document at all. We weren't involved in any of that at all. We weren't involved in any of the writing, or steering the Strategy in one direction (Woest interview 18/6/99).

> We try to support it as a Council, but at the same time not dominate. By giving it perhaps too much support when there isn't support from other organisations, we might lose that impartiality that we've been structurally trying to create all this time (Woest interview 18/6/99).

In support of this position Woest said that Councillors back the process: "...there is half and half support, or enough support" (Woest interview 18/6/99). Edge, relating an experience she had with the Council Strategy Committee, stated that:

> ...three of us went to the council, and I was one of them, and gave a presentation about how the process had gone so far. We actually got a standing ovation from the council. I mean, I've been to lots of council meetings but I've never seen that happen. But that was a real indication to me that the council were keen to see it succeed (Edge interview 9/7/99).

This support was seen as being critical as it conferred legitimation on the project. Council support was important because "...after all it is the city council not some sort of splinter group or cult group or little interest group" (Edge interview 9/7/99).

Some respondents actually questioned how much independence the Council wanted the project to have. The Council was seen to be setting the agenda. Johnston acknowledged that "...the process was driven by the Wellington City Council. It came from within council" and Council could ultimately determine membership of the CSG, even though the CSG did select who the additional members were (Johnston interview 1/7/99). Even at an early stage in the process the Council was seen to be playing a dominant role:

> That's another part of the problem, I think that Wellington as a Council had pre-conceived ideas of what it wanted out of the process, and was not able or not willing - I don't know which - to move with the community groups. It's a bit of dance - you have to move sideways to move forwards sometimes (Donaldson interview 4/6/99).

As well as questioning the Council's role, respondents questioned the level of Council support for the project. During the early stages Donaldson did not think political buy-in existed, and nor was senior management supportive. She said that "The CEO, I think she saw it as a flavour of the month thing, that perhaps they, we'd get over in time" (Donaldson interview 4/6/99). Now that the process has moved into implementation Council support is not seen to be forthcoming. As Cassells noted, "I also think that the Wellington City Council have lost a bit of interest in it" (Cassells interview 12/7/99). In Bowman's view Council seemed to be stepping back. She noted:

I know that the City Council wants to see us sort of separate, but I really think it should be more of a partnership, and for them to show a bit more interest in it. There's people out there... I've [talked to] a couple of possible implementors and they've been very critical of Council. They're saying to the City Council, it's a big ask and they feel they don't want to be part of it. There's just so many expectations on the community again. They feel they should have some more support, there's a few ideas about that. What it could involve is some moral support. They need to be seen to believe in it (Bowman interview 2/8/99).

Bowman also commented on Councillor support for *Our City ~ Our Future*, something that was seen to be declining:

I think some of the strengths were that the council seemed to be behind it, and I think gave people some confidence and hope. I think that since then there hasn't been that... I've been to advisory group meetings and you don't really see councillors there, and that's a problem (Bowman interview 2/8/99).

Respondents perceived a decline in the degree of support from Council as it explored other options for providing direction for the city. New governance structures were being looked into, as the following points suggest:

I'm aware that corporately and politically that whole area has changed, and it may be that the drive is to begin afresh (Mellish interview 8/9/99).

Mark Blumsky is now looking at a new model for leadership in the city. This is a business oriented model, with an overview function (Johnston interview 1/7/99).

At the same time as Advisory Group members wanted some level of Council involvement, a need was seen for the Group to be independent (Johnston interview 1/7/99; Cassells interview 12/7/99). The relationship between Council and the Advisory Group is a complex one, but one that is at the heart of making progress with implementation of the Strategy.

5.3.3 Leadership of *Our City ~ Our Future*

Leadership in some form was clearly seen as being necessary to progress implementation of *Our City ~ Our Future*. Yet, with the issue of who directed and owned *Our City ~ Our Future* unresolved, providing leadership was going to be difficult. There was a problem in that nobody was able to provide direction that was

necessary. Woest acknowledged that leadership in implementation was lacking. She stated:

> Hopefully, once you've got a Trust, you can then establish a centre which can provide the leadership and ongoing support to actually keep the thing going. You've got to start two steps back, you can identify that there isn't the leadership, but the group is already working towards that. It's a long lead-in time to get things going (Woest interview 18/6/99).

This view is shared by other respondents. For instance, Bowman said "...like I was saying, I think one of the big barriers is not having someone out there driving it" (Interview 2/8/99).

Another issue related to leadership is that the respondents did not have a common definition of leadership. While definitions vary, this does not necessarily mean that they are incompatible, but it does suggest that confusion could arise. According to Johnston, leadership is something an individual would bring to the project. He stated that "what was missing was someone substantial, respected in the community to drive the process. There was a real lack of leadership" (Johnston interview 1/7/99). The chairing or facilitation of meetings is another aspect which Johnston refers to when discussing leadership. He noted that the decision to rotate chairing of meetings did not work. Donaldson makes a reference to leadership residing with the project management team (Donaldson interview 4/6/99). This implies that those with experience and training were expected to guide the process, rather than Councillors or the CSG. For Woest, leadership is used in more than one sense. At one point she refers to "genuine leadership" being provided by strong, guiding objectives and priorities. So it is ideas, rather than people, in which this quality resides. Another meaning is suggested when she talks about leadership being reliant on time and energy. She stated: "There is the leadership as well. Because they are all people who are unpaid voluntary workers they don't have the time, and they've fitted it in between this and between that" (Woest interview 18/6/99). This is a topic that will be considered in more detail in Chapter Six.

5.3.4 Resources for implementation

Limited access to resources to fund *Our City ~ Our Future* implementation was viewed with concern by respondents. The need to set up the Advisory Group as a Trust, with

independence from Council, was seen as a priority. Central to this was the appointment of a coordinator to push implementation, along with outreach into the community using a mass communications campaign. There was evident tension around the resourcing issue, as the following comments suggest:

> The Advisory Group has not managed to raise external funding. There is a need for resources, time and money and people to get people interested (Woest interview 18/6/99).

> I suppose a big [barrier to implementation] ... is money. That's an obvious one I guess (Mellish interview 8/9/99).

> The group was quite small, the advisory group, in comparison to the work that was being asked. I felt that it really needed somebody full-time, and I felt that they should find some resources from somewhere (Bowman interview 2/8/99).

> One gap was a budget to market it. There has been quite a lot of work done on that, people who have been involved were pretty into it anyway (Edge interview 9/7/99).

The Council was seen as one potential source of funding. This is something several respondents commented on, though full funding was neither expected nor considered desirable (Bowman interview 2/8/99; Cassells interview 12/7/99). Woest made it clear that she thought that the Wellington City Council should not be the sole funder, rather she favoured the Council supporting *Our City ~ Our Future* in partnership with other organisations (Woest interview 18/6/99). The resourcing issue was one which Donaldson suggested was a litmus test of Council commitment. She stated:

> I never believe the resources aren't there, I think it's how you prioritise what council does. I don't see that most people have had much of say in setting priorities for council. I refuse to believe it is resources, and that's partly because I have engaged with councils who have changed their priorities to make sure that implementing some of these things actually happens. They do it without raising rates, which is a big fear - it's always a big fear (Donaldson interview 4/6/99).

If Council was not prepared or able to fund the entire project then respondents agreed that funding needed to be found elsewhere. This was considered difficult to do because:

> Whatever needs to be done needs money, and the things that need to be done fall within the parameter of an organisation. A lot of these things don't fall within one organisation, they straddle different organisations. That's what the Strategy identified needed to be done. But because they

> straddle different organisations there isn't really funding available to try
> and do those objectives (Woest interview 18/6/99).

One Advisory Group member was confident that sources of financial support could be found. She said:

> I think that if people feel something is worthwhile, that, and they feel that
> something is going to come of it, they get behind it with some funds. There
> is money out there (Bowman interview 2/8/99).

Another commented that "Because business felt alienated, for whatever reason, it did not fund [an independent *Our City ~ Our Future*]... office" (Johnston interview 1/7/99). No clear resolution for funding was advanced by respondents, and it remains a critical issue for the implementation of *Our City ~ Our Future*.

5.4   Other key issues raised by participants

These are issues which do not fit easily into the categories of development or implementation already discussed. In this final section, I will explore respondent's views on the role of staff, the political context and how sustainability was addressed.

5.4.1 Role of staff in *Our City ~ Our Future*

Although, in general, respondents were positive about the role that staff played, there were some exceptions. It is a sensitive issue, and any comments on staffing are not intended to be critical of particular individuals, but it is a theme that cannot be ignored. This is particularly important when considering the contextual factors which impact on the ability of staff to undertake citizen participation processes.

As is noted above, Wellington City Council went through successive restructurings between 1996 and 1998. This was seen to influence how staff related to the community. One view is that of Mellish: "Within the Council there has been a lot of restructuring and a change of personnel so, you lose some of that corporate knowledge" (Mellish interview 8/9/99). An empowered and motivated work-force is something that Donaldson believed was crucial for effective citizen participation. This was something she did not think was present at the Council:

> Right now the workers don't feel like that, they've been reorganised so many times, and they've never had any say in that re-organisation... so the workers, the staff themselves are feeling disempowered so can you actually send them out to empower others. It's a kinda gap in the system or processes that I see at the moment. I don't think the Wellington case study is any different to that. The people there were certainly unsure which end was up half of the time. Looming over us at that time was another re-organisation process where people had just given up. They said 'ah well, they'll just let us know when they've made the decisions'. .... so when you send them out to try and excite and motivate a community to become involved and they don't actually have the right mind-set to do it. It's a bit of a fundamental (Donaldson interview 4/6/99).

Donaldson noted a number of other factors that impacted on the ability of staff to carry out the participation process effectively. Pressure of workloads, with *Our City ~ Our Future* duties added to existing work commitments, with the result that tasks were not always completed on time, nor to the standard expected. Adequate training was not offered. Therefore, staff were not always able to provide the level of support which would have helped to avoid problems that arose. And staff changes undermined understanding and commitment to the process. Donaldson observed that:

> Other barriers or limitations to implementation are that the staff run out of steam or change. The new staff coming in have no history of the project, therefore have very little buy-in or incentive to actually keep pushing for some of the things that are in there (Donaldson interview 4/6/99).

One respondent noted concerns about the attitudes of key staff. Rather than being open to the community determining the direction of the project, influence was seen to be exerted to shape the direction of the project and push a particular agenda. There was also a tendency for the community views to be dismissed. It was noted that:

> .... one thing that you need with these sort of community processes is lots of patience and tolerance of other views, and whatever. I'm not convinced [.] had enough of that. [ ] was very good at [ ] job but I don't think that [ ] had the empathy you need to work in these sort of processes.

5.4.2 Impact of politics

It was obvious from the interviews that *Our City ~ Our Future: Strategy for the Future of Wellington* development and implementation cannot be seen in isolation from wider council politics. The relationship between representative and participative processes is something that is commented on by several respondents. The idealism of *Our City ~*

Our Future is seen to be in conflict with the political reality of the Council's role providing basic services such as roading, water and sewage. Johnston captured this conflict well when he stated:

> In local government politics is central, and this can be a problem. There are trade-offs and compromises that need to be made all the time. 'Our City ~ Our Future' has a wish list aspect to it, however at the end of the day people have to pay for what they want. So, there will always have to be some trade-off between competing viewpoints (Johnston interview 1/7/99).

There is evidence of scepticism about whether *Our City ~ Our Future: Strategy for the Future of Wellington* would make a lasting impact. Three respondents recognised that Council support can dramatically change. Bowman noted that although currently *Our City ~ Our Future* is integrated into the WCC strategic plan, the "rules can change very easily and quickly" (Bowman interview 2/8/99). Mellish raised a similar concern:

> Probably one of the weaknesses was that in the end, the process was somewhat hampered by the political process. Elections every three years means it is very difficult to vision out to the future when you're due for re-election every three years. So pragmatism takes over, and then the council changes (Mellish interview 8/9/99).

Comments by Edge acknowledged a similar reality. She stated that "...if there had been a change of council, and if Mark Blumsky had not really supported it, there was a risk that it would just be ditched" (Edge interview 9/7/99). There was no guarantee that *Our City ~ Our Future* would be implemented: rather, it was seen as being something that would be addressed in the context of shifting political sands.

5.4.3 Where does sustainability fit in?

Somewhat surprisingly, sustainability or 'sustainable development' did not emerge as a central issue for respondents. There were, however, two distinct responses taken to sustainability.

One view was articulated by Cassells, who said that sustainability was not at the core of *Our City ~ Our Future*. His view was that if people wanted to use *Our City ~ Our Future* to pursue this they could, but this was not a necessity. He stated:

> I've got a slight problem with the word sustainability - I like it, it fits pretty well with a whole lot of ideas - but sustainability was never a given in terms of this process. It was a good process, a democratic process, it talks

about 50 years so it is certainly medium term. So it implies effectively, sustainable policies. But sustainability is a whole focus and discipline. It's quite correct to say that 'Our City ~ Our Future' will take some lessons from that. It isn't as if sustainability is the issue. The beauty of 'Our City ~ Our Future' lies in that it is for all members of society.... It wasn't as if we had to define a sustainable future for Wellington: we wanted to work out what our future was and find out if that was sustainable. .... And if it was a sustainable project then it should have been called a sustainable project, but it was an 'Our City ~ Our Future' project with a combined vision that democratically organised group of people created (Cassells interview 12/7/99).

On the other hand Bowman said she only got involved in the process because she considered it to be explicitly about creating a more sustainable Wellington. She stated that *Our City ~ Our Future* was one way the city could meet its Agenda 21 obligations. Some problems were noted with how *Our City ~ Our Future* addressed the issue, and Bowman noted:

There's all sorts of possibilities and ways of understanding sustainability, I don't think it is being expressed as well as it could be through the 'Our City ~ Our Future'. I think the basic idea was there, but it needs to be out front. And because the concept of sustainability has been abused so much by various organisations, it needs to be kept on being reinforced what it means. It's almost like taking ownership of it again, and saying 'this is what it meant, this is what it can be.' And also making it very accessible to people, because it is quite a big word to some people. It can be expressed in different ways, it can be done at a level which people can relate to (Bowman interview 2/8/99).

The different approaches to sustainability extend beyond how it fitted in with *Our City ~ Our Future* to an understanding of its meaning. In short, respondents recognised that the meaning of sustainability was something that was contestable.

It is important to acknowledge the contributions of those involved in *Our City ~ Our Future: Strategy for the Future of Wellington* development. One of the key themes that emerges from respondents' comments is the dedication and commitment of volunteers tasked with developing and implementing the Strategy. In the next Chapter I will explore in further detail many of the issues raised above. Of particular importance are concerns about the slow progress with implementation and the barriers that need to be

overcome. Funding and moral commitment are recognised as being of great importance. The lack of shared understanding of the citizen and Council roles also requires exploration. Access to expertise and knowledge necessary for effective citizen participation also needs to be addressed. In the next chapter I will draw together the various threads of my research, and seek to understand what *Our City ~ Our Future* has achieved, particularly as it relates to making Wellington a sustainable city.

Discussing the findings

Debate about changes in the role of local authorities and the nature of citizen participation in Wellington is taking place within the context of wider international interest in the topic. Speaking at the OCED Ministerial Symposium on the Future of Public Services Rizland (1996) stressed that "there was a clear recognition that real change will not occur without political leadership, vision and a longer-term view, rather than ad-hoc reactions". Not only are Wellington City Councillors confronted by the need to adopt a governance role, but they must also grapple with the complications presented by the broad challenge of sustainability. Citizen participation in this is essential to ensure changes in citizen attitudes and behaviour, and to tap their energy. As has been described above, *Our City ~ Our Future* was a complex and dynamic process which sought to address this challenge. In this Chapter the findings of this study will be discussed, particularly in regard to what it means for urban sustainability in Wellington. It is important not to be too hasty in judging progress with *Our City ~ Our Future,* given that the Strategy was only recently completed. It is, however, necessary to discuss emergent trends which may impact on the long-term effectiveness of the Strategy.

The analysis in this Chapter will form the basis for recommendations to ensure public participation is maximised and actions of the Strategy are implemented which will be discussed in the final chapter. In part one evaluation of citizen participation exercises is discussed. The second part details the relationship between Council and citizen control, including reflections on the ladder of participation. This is followed by analysis of the effectiveness of the citizen participation process. The limited implementation of the strategy is then discussed. Finally, I consider to what extent *Our City ~ Our Future* is currently contributing, and will contribute, to urban sustainability.

6.1   Evaluation of citizen participation

Monitoring of progress toward achievement of the Strategy's goals, targets and initiatives is something that has been comprehensively addressed in the *Our City ~ Our Future* process. Reports on progress have already been published with the compilation of further reports planned. This monitoring is, however, distinct from evaluation of the effectiveness of citizen participation in the process, though evaluation may incorporate results of progress toward targets. There has been no systematic and all-encompassing evaluation of *Our City ~ Our Future*. Obviously, there was some ongoing analysis of the level and nature of involvement by the CSG which fed into modifications of the process. However, a formal summative evaluation did not take place. This is surprising considering that the need for a evaluation was included in the original design for the process. As is noted in Chapter Three, in 1995 the 2020 Taskforce proposed criteria by which the citizen participation process could be reviewed.

Evaluation is something that a report by the UK Department of Environment, Transport and Regions (1998: 4.6) noted is often overlooked. A reason given for this is that "…formal evaluation when dealing with messy and informal processes often associated with public participation can appear pointless" (DETR 1998: 4.6). However, evaluation is important, particularly as it can feed into a local authority's overall approach to public participation. Lessons from one exercise can be used to inform future citizen participation exercises. A range of measures to assess the different characteristics of participation are available, including input, activity, output or outcome measures (DERT 1998: 4.6). If evaluation is going to be undertaken then it is important that this be planned from the outset and that data is collected as the process unfolds. For instance, assessment of citizen participation in 'Choices for Bristol' community visioning entailed self-administered surveys of workshop participants and participant observation at public meetings (Burton 1997: 28).

There is increasing interest in assessing the effectiveness of citizen participation in, and action resulting from, Local Agenda 21 in the UK. Tuxworth (1999) reports on some initial steps taken to develop an evaluation framework. He suggests that evidence of progress be organised under five headings: internal performance; community

involvement; strategic links; principles of sustainable development; and implementation (Tuxworth 1999: 12). His discussion of assessment criteria centres on the need for clear objectives, a simple, iterative and adequately resourced process which is open to public scrutiny and which fits in with existing government assessment and covers all contributions, not just of those of the local authority (ibid). Such a complex process, which is being developed as a nationwide framework in the UK, is probably too extensive for a single council to develop. The point that needs to be taken from this is that evaluation is a critical element of citizen participation processes and needs to be built in from the outset, and resourced at an appropriate level.

6.2 Citizen or council control: exploring the issues

In reviewing the role of the various players in the *Our City ~ Our Future* process the intention is not to imply judgement about Council or other actors, but to understand the process. As is noted above, *Our City ~ Our Future* was a significant innovation in New Zealand, so both those who facilitated the process and participants had no notable precedents of city-wide strategic planning. There was no suggestion that the people involved expected to get everything right first off as comments recorded in Chapter Five indicate. There was an expectation that people would learn from what had happened and build on this in future processes. As Freeman *et al* (1996: 77) state "…if some fumble and even make mistakes along the way, then this must be seen as a sign of their own learning process, not a symptom of failure". Webster (1998: 193) describes the need for new citizen participation processes to be a "learning and developing experience". It is from this learning perspective that I will examine the roles and attitudes of various players.

Any citizen participation exercise involves multi-sided relationships, with lots of give-and-take necessary between the various participants. The issue of long-term commitment to engaging citizens is as important as particular exercises, and is something which is a key theme running through this discussion. Another theme is the tension between citizen and council control. I refer below to the ladder of participation to help understand what happened in the case of *Our City ~ Our Future*.

6.2.1 What was the Council's role?

Over the course of *Our City ~ Our Future* the role of Wellington City Council has vacillated. Initially, the Council consciously adopted a 'leadership role' when it agreed to undertake a city-wide strategic planning process in December 1995 (see Chapter Four). It was decided at this point that Council would seed-fund and facilitate the process, so implying a time-limited role. After the Strategy was finalised in August 1997, a gradual shift in attitude becomes apparent. One of the milestones of this shift was a change in role signalled by the Strategic Advisor in November 1998. Rather than project management by Council, the role was shifting to that of monitoring and in-house implementation (see Chapter Four). By the time a new Council considered its support for *Our City ~ Our Future* implementation through the Advisory Group in September 1999, the time had clearly come for Council involvement to be reduced in scale. At this point Council saw itself as one of many stakeholders in the process. The level of financial support for the project has diminished over this period.

The way the Council's role is described is the subject of some disagreement. Council did not see itself as controlling the process, or as Woest put it, "we try to support it as a Council, but at the same time not dominate". It was a self-conscious decision that Council would not interfere in the Strategy development, which was to be "...guided and developed by a group of community representatives" (WCC 1997b: 6). Yet despite this intention, there is evidence that suggests that in practice the degree of independence was not as great as described. Johnston clearly believed that Council set the agenda, and Donaldson stated that Council came to the process with preconceived ideas. After all, Council staff did initiate the process, and even though there were key community stakeholders on the 2020 Taskforce, it was overwhelmingly Council staff which dominated the Taskforce. A project brief was devised by Council staff, then agreed to by Councillors. This included terms of reference and membership criteria for the CSG and a timetable and outline for the process. Should it prove necessary, Councillors were ready to intervene if CSG establishment went awry. The CSG accepted that it would work to this pre-set agenda. In essence, the CSG was working within a framework which it had limited ability to change. Decision-making on budgets and an extension of the timeframe was something that was the domain of the elected representatives.

The role of staff was of critical importance in terms of the CSG's independence. There is some evidence that staff exerted considerable influence on the direction of the process. One respondent observed that key staff did not have the patience or tolerance to let community do its own thing. An examination of CSG minutes revealed that on many occasions the CSG merely signed off on activities pre-determined by staff. Facilitation of meetings is arena where power relationships can be evident with professionals steering the process. For instance in the UK, Burton (1997:22) recorded concerns about staff selectively releasing information and taking on inappropriate roles during development of 'Choices for Bristol'.

Nevertheless, who actually controlled the process cannot be determined with absolute certainty; the different perspectives are compelling. As Rippingale (1997a: 6) described the relationship between WCC and *Our City ~ Our Future*, "[i]t was something of a halfway house between complete autonomy, with the risk of divergent developments that might lose Council support, and a Council-controlled process, that might risk lack of buy-in from the community". The process in Wellington seems similar to that in Atalanta City, USA, as described by Helling (1998: 344):

> Though ARC [Atlanta Regional Commission] staff at all levels maintained they had wanted there to be community control and responsibility, and that too much has ended up 'on ARC's plate', the stakeholders interviewed pointed to various indications that the process 'belonged' to the ARC.

Ownership and control are important issues, and it is probably accurate to say that the truth lies somewhere in the middle. The issue of the appropriate role for Council is addressed in relation to Local Agenda 21 by Freeman *et al* (1996: 68), who state:

> [t]he difficulty lies in establishing the relative balance between delegation and control which can create a strategy ... yet lay the groundwork for effective structures which will allow LA21 to develop its own momentum in the longer term.

The Council's efforts at creating an "impartial look" were not entirely successful. Although this may not have necessarily had an impact on the contents of the Strategy, it is important for future citizen participation exercises and ongoing citizen involvement in implementation.

6.2.2 Councillor support for *Our City ~ Our Future*

A possible reason for Council's hands-off approach since the Strategy was finalised was the election of a new Council in October 1998. Early in the process there was a high level of support from elected representatives. There were some staunch proponents for the process on Council, including two CSG members, Celia Wade-Brown and Allan Johnston, and the Mayor, who was a vocal front-person (though he was absent at some important junctures). As is recorded in Chapter Four, a presentation to the WCC Strategy Committee in October 1995 by CSG members was warmly received. However, the level of support was never total and it certainly has not been maintained. Some Councillors were vocally opposed to the process. A decision to explore an alternative governance structure for the city, such as one modelled on Birmingham's "CityPride Board", suggests that faith in *Our City ~ Our Future* was not strong. The new Council has not really engaged with *Our City ~ Our Future,* and support is described by Woest as being '50/50', which may be an overstatement of the level of support. The new Council did not appoint a representative to the Advisory Group until five months after being elected in the 1998 local body elections, despite repeated requests from the Group for the Council to do so. Between May 1999 and September 1999 the new representative attended only one meeting. The Mayor, a founding member of the Group, has stopped attending its meetings. A request for ongoing support for the *Our City ~ Our Future* Trust was not accepted by the Strategy Committee in September 1999, although there is a chance this will be forthcoming.

Strong civic leadership is considered an important contributor to the success of any citizen participation process. Elected representatives must maintain support for the process. A guide to the preparation of Local Agenda 21s stresses that "[i]f the strategy is to work it needs commitment from the top - both from leaders and other local authority members, and from Chief Executives" (DETR 1998b: 1.3). It is something that Wheeland (1993: 12) emphasised in his comments on Rock Hill's Empowering the Vision, concluding that public leadership to a city-wide process is of critical importance to city-wide visioning processes. The Advisory Group has recognised that support for *Our City ~ Our Future* from Councillors needed to be bolstered. An ongoing relationship with Council is expected —Wellington City Council is seen as a key player

rather than one among many. As Bowman suggested, the Advisory Group would like to see a move toward a 'partnership' with the Council.

There are good reasons for Council involvement, particularly at the outset. In research on Reading's 'sustainable development' initiatives, the local authority was seen as being the only organisation that could provide the "gravitas, resources, position, and respect" to embark on these types of processes (Selman 1998b: 544). The issue of the Wellington City Council providing legitimation to a novel and untried process is one that Edge noted with relation to *Our City ~ Our Future*. In the absence of Council support there was a danger the process would be seen as 'airy-fairy'. Ongoing involvement is also necessary to assist with translation of strategy into practice. Because of the pre-eminent policy and service delivery role of the local authority within the city it is critical that it be involved. As Selman (1998a: 17) puts it:

> ...the local authority is the key player, with a huge workforce, wide ranging responsibilities and major budgets, able to exert significant influence on behalf of its citizens even on issues outside its statutory powers.

Council involvement is also critical as a counterweight where there is potential capture by unrepresentative organisations. A recurrent concern with *Our City ~ Our Future* was that interest groups were using it as a platform to push their particular agendas. Different views exist as to which groups captured the process, but Alliance supporters and anti-car, anti-road activists are two commonly-cited groups. Processes can give excessive weight to dogmatic views, or it can result in "...narrow-mindedness, parochial concerns and short-termism" (Levett and Christie 1998: 34). The risk of unelected activists and narrow interest groups dominating Local Agenda 21 development led Selman (1996: 148) to conclude that it is critical for elected representatives to ensure that citizen participation is democratic. Discussing concerns about the risks of capture posed by public choice theorists, Boston *et al* (1996) highlight the need to ensure any participation processes are representative. In the view of these authors it is preferable to ensure "...that the decision-making arrangements are open, democratic, and fair (i.e that they provide an opportunity for all interests to be adequately represented)" rather than attempting to "immunize the political system" (Boston *et al* 1996: 32). It is important to recognise that participation is not a replacement for the exercise of judgement by

councillors. In response to proposals that arise through participation processes, elected members will sometimes have to rebut them. It is also important to note that participation should not displace other goals, such as equity, which should stand alongside participation. These tensions are a source of difficulty but should not be resiled from.

It is perhaps worth noting at this point that the threat of capture can be overstated — communities do not necessarily seek full acceptance of their positions. As Edge and Bowman both suggested, when interviewed, the community is not fixed to set positions, but would be willing to negotiate on goals, particularly to ensure they were pursued as timing and funding permitted. Research on citizen participation suggests the members of the community will not abuse opportunities for input into decision-making. Indeed, research cited by Forgie *et al* (1999: 15) suggests "...that problems arising from public participation are fewer and of lesser consequence than those arising from lack of involvement". When given a say about initiatives and priorities, those proposed by the community are not necessarily unrealistic, neither being high cost nor politically controversial. There is also a danger that the criticisms of capture can be used to mask opposition to the actual stances being taken. Even if capture by interest groups is considered a risk there are, according to Selman and Parker (1997: 178), ways of managing it.

The Council's change in role from being leader to being one of many partners was not unexpected; indeed, it was signalled from the outset. However, the timing and the way that Council has shifted its position is something that is having a significant impact on *Our City ~ Our Future*. As one of the respondents noted, the process is vulnerable: if *Our City ~ Our Future* does not work, community support is unlikely to be forthcoming again. One of dangers councils face with citizen participation processes is that expectations of citizens can rise, and if these are not met then relationships can be damaged and the legitimacy of the local authority will be undermined. As Webster (1998: 184) put it, the community asks that its views be listened to and valued, and that action result. This creates a dilemma as some policies that arise from citizen

participation processes will be contrary to existing ones, or require new funding and structures. It is something which Young (1996: 30-31) recognises:

> there are concerns that the conclusions likely to emerge from the visioning exercises will not fit easily with existing budgets and the Council's likely approach to the updating of the existing statutory plan.

This is an issue which Wellington City Council has yet to effectively confront. Adoption of *Our City ~ Our Future* by the Council is considered as being superficial, and incomplete. As is discussed below, its efforts at implementation are also seen to fall short of what is desired.

6.2.3 Internal Council support for *Our City ~ Our Future*

The internal machinations of Wellington City Council have had a significant impact on *Our City ~ Our Future*. The degree to which Council management has supported the project is open to question. There are contrasting views as to whether there was internal support for *Our City ~ Our Future* and for participatory techniques in general. As is noted above, Woest, a Council Strategic Advisor, and Councillor Johnston said they thought there was internal support, whereas other respondents were not so confident of this. Donaldson stated that while the CEO ostensibly supported *Our City ~ Our Future*, this was not genuine. There is also a question over the current Chief Executive's, Garry Poole, level of support for *Our City ~ Our Future* (Wade-Brown 1999: pers. comm).

The need for corporate support is an often cited success factor for citizen participation exercises. Management support is seen as being a key determinant in both developing strategy and implementing it. Research by Tuxworth (1996: 292) concluded that corporate commitment is vital to delivery of all aspects of Local Agenda 21. There are many ways in which this can be achieved, with cross-departmental teams a common suggestion. For instance, implementation of the 2020 Vision in the Canadian City, of Hamilton-Wentworth was spear-headed by an interdepartmental team with management representation from every department in the region (Hamilton-Wentworth n.d: para 3). In contrast, Wellington City Council has made available a part-time advisor and some administrative support, although initially a cross-departmental team worked on the process.

There is evidence that financial imperatives have a strong influence within Wellington City Council, therefore skewing policy making away from strategy to financial considerations. There is a view that contract managers are dominant within the City Council, with commissioning playing a dominant role within the organisation (Zöllner 1999: pers. comm.). Driven by a need to secure scarce resources there is competition between different internal departments, with the result that there is patch protection, and resistance to integration of strategy at the contract level. Also impacting on this is the lack of appropriate mechanisms by which to ensure contracts are consistent with strategy. Contract specification and enforcement mechanisms seem to be absent. In this context the goals of *Our City ~ Our Future* are isolated from service delivery. That this is the case is no surprise, as the legislative framework for local government promotes financial management at the expense of planning. The heavy reliance on statutory prescription for consultation "...reflects elements of a managerial model emphasising accountable financial performance rather than aimed at better decisions and better resource use" (Forgie *et al* 1999: 84). There are limits to what contracting can achieve within organisations, as Boston (1999: 23) argues: "[i]t does not, for instance, reduce conflicts over resource allocation, or assist with priority setting, or overcome difficulties of view over what tasks should be undertaken or by whom". Resolution of these issues needs to occur within the context of long-term strategy. It also worthwhile noting a trend identified internationally in a review of local authorities responses to Agenda 21 that:

> [d]uring the past five years, the sustainable development strategies and projects of local governments have generally been isolated from overall municipal budgeting, local development planning, land-use control, and economic development activities (ICLEI 1997b: exec summary).

There is no guarantee that long-term strategy will influence service delivery by local authorities.

The ability of staff to contribute to the city-wide strategy development process was impinged upon by a working environment that was in a constant state of flux as a result of three Council restructurings between 1996 and 1998. With staff changes and considerable effort going into internal processes, there is evidence that morale was low and enthusiasm for any initiatives was weak. As Donaldson noted, if staff are

disempowered in the workplace by constant change which they are unable to influence then it is very difficult for them to go out into the community and motivate groups and individuals to engage in strategy development. The time available for completing *Our City ~ Our Future* tasks seems to have been an issue at times, quite likely the result of citizen participation being on top of already stretched workloads.

6.2.4 *Our City ~ Our Future* and the ladder of participation

The *Our City ~ Our Future* process was the culmination of Wellington City Council interest and initiative, and strong citizen support. Each party had much to offer, and the process could not have occurred without the other party. Overly strong citizen influence was likely to alienate politicians and thus council funding and backing, while the absence of community buy-in would put in jeopardy citizen contributions toward strategy development and implementation. Finding a balance between the two was necessary. As there were changes in the approach taken by Council, along with fluctuating levels of community control, it is not possible to definitively state where *Our City ~ Our Future* sits on the ladder of participation. This is something that changed over time, and will continue to do so. What can be concluded is that the Wellington City Council's approach to participation is ambiguous.

Four different levels of participation are outlined in the Wellington City Council Consultation policy (1996a) — only half those included in Arnstein's original ladder discussed in Chapter Two. The upper reaches of the ladder (citizen control) and manipulation do not feature in the WCC policy. A participation ladder presented to the Democracy Sub-committee was also an amended version (again manipulation, therapy and citizen control were omitted, and placation replaced by advisory bodies). On this latter ladder, discussed in Chapter Four, the *Our City ~ Our Future* Advisory Group is placed in the middle, while the process itself is described as fitting between delegated power and partnership. Using either of these ladders a shift to citizen control is precluded. Neither of the ladders includes the two other elements of citizen participation, described by Burns *et al* (1994) as delegated control or limited decentralised decision-making. These omissions raise questions as to what Council staff and elected members understand by citizen participation.

Understanding the role of the Advisory Group as being about more than consultation but less than partnership is probably quite useful. The Group can initiate projects so is therefore a decision-making body. However, because of a lack of resources and its heavy reliance on Council staff to achieve anything, its ability to give effect to decisions is highly curtailed. The CSG faced a similar dilemma. The main thing that the CSG could decide was the contents of the Strategy, but this does not equate to a transfer of power to the Group because of its inability to implement the Strategy. In addition, Council could pick and chose as to what it would adopt in its own Strategic Plan, and it did choose to only partially incorporate *Our City ~ Our Future* when the time came. Although Council stressed the independence of the process, it exerted considerable control.

Selman (1998b) has observed a similar situation with citizen participation exercises in the UK. He has concluded that the debate as to whether strategy development is 'top-down or bottom-up' is showing signs of sterility. Rather than understanding this in terms of "either/or", it is necessary to adopt a 'sandwich' approach (Selman 1998b: 551). The centrality of Council to the process is evident, and movement away from the process potentially compromises its initial motives. So while the Wellington City Council may be experiencing nervousness or uneasiness about *Our City ~ Our Future* as a citizen participation exercise, as overseas examples also show, what is important is that the council 'shouldn't let go'. A strong reason for this is "… that the 'capacity for continuance' on which the future of LA21 depends will come from structured external support as much as from spontaneous internal dynamics" (Selman 1998a: 17). The expertise and knowledge of staff, the legitimacy provided by Council, and support for volunteers, as discussed below, are critical to effective citizen participation.

6.2.5 External stakeholder involvement

Engagement of key stakeholders in strategic planning is an important element in the effectiveness of any strategic planning exercise. It was an issue that attracted considerable attention from the City Steering Group. The process needed to be broadly representative of communities in Wellington and a number of stakeholders were identified that were seen as being essential to smooth running of the process. Amongst

these were Mana Whenua, the Wellington Regional Council and business/economic interests. Not all of these groups engaged in the process, and there were other gaps in participation, including the Victoria University of Wellington and relevant central government agencies, such as the Department of Internal Affairs with its missions of building stronger communities.

Despite extensive efforts at meaningfully involving these groups, the CSG was only partially successful at working with all groups. Involvement of Mana Whenua and Taura Here was heralded as being very effective, particularly because of the appointment of a Maaori liaison officer. However, the absence of Chamber of Commerce and big economic interests from the process was a fundamental flaw. Not only did the Chamber of Commerce not get involved, but it was highly critical of the process. It is questionable whether the CSG genuinely wanted to make space for business elements. The Chamber of Commerce's appointed representative attended only one meeting for reasons that remain obscure. Members of the community involved in the CSG suggest that they were happy to see *Our City ~ Our Future* as a 'grassroots' statement of Wellington's future and were not willing to compromise this by including business sector ambitions. Community buy-in was not to be sacrificed to the altar of business as usual. The CSG eschewed direct organisational representation in the process, preferring instead for individuals to bring their ideas, networks and enthusiasm. As one respondent noted, this was perhaps particularly difficult for business members who were used to having a formal seat around the table, and were not expected to be involved on their merits.

The non-involvement of business was an important issue for elected representatives, who typically see themselves as primarily representing local business interests. Given this is the case it likely provided a further justification to step away from the outcomes of the process and ongoing support for it. One perspective on this is the finding that:

> [i]rrespective of the level of business organisation within the political system or its presence as a lobby, the 'structural' power of business means that public policy-makers will be keen not to damage business performance through their actions (Forgie *et al* 1999: 65).

A factor which could help explain why business did not actively participate is they could not see what they would get out of it. As Helling (1998: 345) suggests with regard to the Atlanta 2020 process, there were neither the pressures nor incentives for participation or change by key stakeholders. In some of the community visioning processes in overseas studies, there were compelling social or economic issues which required resolution. An often-quoted success story is that of Chattanooga, USA (Walker 1998: case study 4), which turned itself around from a highly polluted city facing economic decline to a place with a clean environment and a vital economy. Hamilton-Wentworth was also experiencing high level of economic decline, which was addressed using a visioning process by galvanising collaborative action. In Wellington no such dynamic existed, as the city is comparatively prosperous and relatively clean.

6.3   Effectiveness of citizen participation

The effectiveness of *Our City ~ Our Future* as a citizen participation exercise is something that I will now scrutinise. There are a number of factors which contribute to effectiveness, including resourcing, representativeness, timing, outreach, and the dynamics of the steering group.

6.3.1 Citizen involvement in *Our City ~ Our Future*

The representativeness of the process is something that attracted considerable attention from the steering group. It was considered important to ensure participation of as many sectors of the community as possible. There were two aspects to this: membership of the CSG, and involvement in the citizen participation process. The CSG devoted quite a bit of time to considering its own membership and taking steps to address this. On the whole the Group was satisfied with membership. As is noted above, its efforts at involving business were limited, and other gaps were only partially resolved. Youth involvement was discussed on several occasions, but ultimately the representativeness of this sector was not satisfactorily resolved. As well as nominal representativeness, there is the question of who actually attended the meetings. Pacific Island, youth and business interests achieved lowest rates of participation in the CSG. The effectiveness of

one remedy discussed by the CSG, "... build[ing] an awareness of other people's interest and consider what their views would be if they were present" (CSG minutes 9/10/96: 2), is open to question.

The representativeness of the wider process was referred to only in passing by the CSG, and statistics do not seem to have been kept on who actually got involved. There is no record of concerns being raised about the socio-economic status of participants, or efforts made to attract those who also typically find barriers to citizen participation processes, including solo parents, the unemployed and elderly. What is clear is that there were opportunities for involvement on a variety of different levels including: visioning workshops, submissions, open homes, attending Steering Group and Specialist Working Groups meetings and invitations to contact the CSG.

There is evidence of high levels of engagement and enthusiasm in *Our City ~ Our Future*. The seventy visioning workshops, a substantial increase over the five initially planned, were not enough to cater for demand. Numbers attending the "Focus on the Future" week activities were in the hundreds, satisfying the organisers' expectations. The draft *Our City ~ Our Future: Strategy for the Future of Wellington* attracted 230 submissions and was considered a highly satisfactory response. Efforts were made to inform the public and encourage participation. For instance, posters and displays were put up around Wellington, and a brochure was sent to all households. A second print run of the draft *Our City ~ Our Future: Strategy for the Future of Wellington* was printed and distributed, although this was only 4,000 copies.

Impressive as these figures may seem, efforts to engage the wider population, particularly in the shift to more sustainable ways of living, were not necessarily successful. Ultimately *Our City ~ Our Future* cannot be considered a mass participation exercise. An observation from Local Agenda 21 in the United Kingdom is relevant here: "... there is a long way to go before the hearts and minds of the majority are truly won" (Selman and Parker 1999: 59). How to involve the wider public in change is a difficult issue to grapple with, but one which cannot be ignored. A new approach to citizen engagement is required, one which extends beyond those already supportive of change.

It is important to recognise that not everyone has the motivation or interest to get involved. Family, work and leisure commitments do not leave much time for involvement in democratic processes, something increasingly influenced by socio-economic factors, such as people working more than one job, and/or working long hours. What is important is that people have an opportunity to participate at a level which suits their situation. Wilcox (1994) observed that "…participation may work best for all concerned when each of the key interests - the stakeholders - is satisfied with the level of participation at which they are involved". Jackson (1999: 14) expands on this, recommending that involvement include overlapping cycles of participation offering opportunities for information, education and decision-making simultaneously. Following this argument, some people will be happy to let the 'meeting junkies' make the effort to develop and implement strategy.

A central concern with any citizen participation process is to maintain momentum but not at the expense of overburdening the community. One of the key issues contributing to this is the imposition of a tight timetable on the process. Donaldson clearly believed that the community was being pushed beyond its limits. Community processes are complex, as sufficient time needs to be allowed to enable consultation, debate and feedback: all of which are done on a voluntary basis, squeezed between a multitude of commitments (eg family, work, leisure). On the other hand, if a process takes too long momentum can be lost. Some members of the Steering Group thought that the process was too long and consequently risked not achieving objectives set for it.

It is difficult to be definitive about timeframes, as overseas experience has indicated timing varies widely. Walker (1998: 14) stresses the point that sufficient time must be allowed "…to allow local support to build up. This increases the sense of ownership and willingness to be involved". He cites the case of the Canadian Municipality of Hamilton-Wentworth, which produced "Vision 2020: the Sustainable Region" and "Implementing the Vision 2020", where the process was spread over almost two-and-a-half years from initiation to adoption by the local authority (Walker 1998: 25). In contrast, in Chattanooga ReVision 2000 took a year to plan, but just three months to

complete (Walker 1998: case study 4, 4). It is an issue which requires careful attention, but there is no single 'right' answer.

6.3.2 Understanding the City Steering Group

The CSG played an important role in ensuring the effectiveness of citizen participation in *Our City ~ Our Future*. Two key factors influenced the ability to this group: (1) its self-management processes, and (2) reliance on over-committed volunteers. From appearances, communication between CSG members seemed to be effective but this was not necessarily the case. Clearly, there was antagonism between different groups represented, and some members of voluntary organisations expressed a concern about the domination of business perspectives, while the business sector tended to see community-based interest groups' as dominating. Donaldson questioned whether the group was able to address conflict. This was something that CSG member Wade-Brown referred to, suggesting that the CSG "…milled about just as Carole Donaldson's 'forming, performing' models said we would, but lacked the real facilitation to bring the diverse ingredients together" (1999 pers comm). Rippingale (1997b: 6) observed that greater attention to "team bonding" would have sped up the group process. In discussing conflicts that arise in advisory group meetings, Wilcox (1994) suggests that groups need to "[s]pend more time in workshop sessions and informal meetings to develop a shared vision and mutual understanding". The issue of consensus is one to which I return below.

The voluntary contributions of CSG members were widely acknowledged, including a formal presentation of an award by Council to CSG members as noted in Chapter Four. They were clearly a dedicated and committed group of people without whose effort the process would not have occurred. Not only did they oversee the process, but they also ensured knowledge was shared with relevant communities and networks. This reliance on a few people is something that other similar processes have experienced. The issue of volunteer contributions is something recognised by Selman as being of critical important for ongoing Local Agenda 21 effectiveness. In the UK the work of Local Agenda 21 was typically carried out by the "local champions and the green brigade" who were often already over-committed. Addressing this issue, he suggests that:

..the energy, knowledge and enthusiasm of 'sustainability people' is pivotal to the momentum of local sustainability. They must be adequately supported if their emotional bank accounts are not to be overdrawn and, if a key person moves on, there must be structural mechanisms in place to ensure continuity (Selman 1999: 9).

Indeed, support for key "pivotal stakeholders" is considered as one the most important components of ongoing efforts aimed at sustainability (Selman & Parker 1997: 181). In Wellington there is high level of reliance on the a small group of dedicated volunteers, with a relatively low level of support available. This is something that has implications for ongoing leadership of *Our City ~ Our Future* as I will discuss below.

6.3.3 Availability of resources for the development of *Our City ~ Our Future*

Funding for citizen participation is a recurrent theme in the literature on city-wide strategic planning. As Sorkin *et al.* argue "...shortcut approaches to strategic planning are likely to fall short of the mark" (cited in Wheeland 1993: 4). The adequacy of resources to carry out citizen participation processes is something that was considered in detail by the *Our City ~ Our Future* Steering Group and mentioned by all respondents. One conclusion that can be drawn from this is that, on the whole, funding was not considered adequate to ensure all steps of the process could be undertaken. The extent of effort attracting people to Specialist Working Groups was limited, and outreach was not as extensive as intended (see Chapter Five). The budget process was not entirely transparent and something which the CSG did not have a lot of control over, though the Group was regularly updated on spending. This was evidently a source of frustration, as comments by Edge suggest (see Chapter Five). As will be discussed below, funding continues to be an issue and is having a considerable impact on implementation.

The source of funding and other resources was paid a lot of attention by the City Steering Group. It was acknowledged that Wellington City Council would not be the sole funder of *Our City ~ Our Future*. As well as Council seed-funding, other parties were expected to contribute. This approach is similar to that advocated in community visionsing literature. According to one manual "[s]uccessful visioning efforts have made a point of gathering financial and other resources in cooperative fashion from throughout the community to ensure broad ownership of the project" (National Civic

League 1995: Ch 2). It is also useful to note Allen's (1997: 3) comment that "...whilst the lack of financial support is clearly a barrier to development and implementation, it has also given rise to some innovation, leading to more creative partnerships and ways of working in some places". The importance of approaching stakeholders for contributions of resources was recognised by the CSG. Ostensibly, the CSG put in considerable effort to secure sponsorship, yet, in the end, only a few sponsors were listed in the *Our City ~ Our Future: Strategy for the Future of Wellington* document. The relative absence of the business sector from *Our City ~ Our Future* is likely to have curtailed what could have been a significant source of funding and in-kind support.

6.4 Outcomes of Our City ~ Our Future

Having put an enormous amount of effort into producing *Our City ~ Our Future: Strategy for the Future of Wellington* it is important to understand what has happened as a result of this effort. The stated aim for the process was to respond to the question: "What could, or should, Wellington be like next century and beyond?" (WCC 1997b: 6). The need for sustainability is part of this. As discussed in the Introduction, the shift to urban sustainability is reliant on reducing pollution, not depleting natural resources and improving quality of life. I will now address the extent to which *Our City ~ Our Future* will contribute to shaping Wellington's future, and whether it will ensure the City is a sustainable city.

6.4.1 *Our City ~ Our Future: Strategy for the Future of Wellington*

As has been demonstrated above, there was a high degree of satisfaction expressed by participants with the final *Our City ~ Our Future* document. Most respondents thought that the Strategy captured a vision and goals that they thought were reasonable. The opportunity presented to look beyond current conflicts and issues enabled people to envision a future which stressed lots of green space; a clean, unpolluted environment; cultural diversity; a reduction in resources use; and access to a high quality of life. It was a major achievement and the Strategy is a balance between being non-prescriptive to the point of being vague and, on the other hand, being overly prescriptive, though, as

noted below, there are some concerns with the document. The Strategy is being widely distributed, and it can be accessed using the world wide web. Not all suggestions to promote its accessibility were achieved, for instance the translation of the vision into Maaori did not happen.

One of the concerns with similar visioning exercises is that hundreds of ideas are generated, but many of them are lost or not used. In the case of *Our City ~ Our Future* 6,000 units of information were recorded. There was no clear policy of how this was to be used, though each Specialist Working Group did consider thematic contributions in their work. This concern was raised by Street (1997: 153), who noted: "...the methodology only allowed a certain number of those ideas to be taken up, and this seemed wasteful; it should be possible to incorporate these or build on them at a later stage".

Consensus on all goals was not achieved, so some targets were not acceptable to all stakeholders. Partly this is a consequence of non-involvement of key stakeholders in the development process. One instance of this was in the Education, Information and Technology theme where some key stakeholders, including Victoria University of Wellington and the Wellington Polytechnic (now Massey University Wellington campus), were not present. Development of goals and targets by volunteers on the SWG was seen as duplicating the efforts of Council committees that had been working on issues for many years. A similar issue came up with regard to Atlanta 2020 where there was a question as to whether sufficient attention was paid to expert knowledge, with decisions being made on the basis of partial, biased perspectives of participants (Helling 1998: 345). Another concern raised is that *Our City ~ Our Future* listed 102 targets without a ranking, thus making the task of implementation difficult. Some sense of prioritisation would assist making decisions on where to invest scarce resources and energy. This is something that is recognised as being necessary when the Strategy is revised. Notwithstanding these concerns, *Our City ~ Our Future: Strategy for the Future of Wellington* received a positive response.

6.4.2 Other outcomes of *Our City ~ Our Future*

As well as a widely accepted agenda for the future of Wellington, one of the major gains recognised by many participants is that *Our City ~ Our Future* has established a forum through which a consensus could be reached on the future of Wellington. As discussed above, respondents considered *Our City ~ Our Future* a useful means to reconcile competing interests. This outcome is something that has been noted in other similar exercises. For instance, Helling (1998: 342) concluded from her study of Atlanta 2020 that an increase in desirable networking was considered one of the major achievements of the process. Relationships established during the process were maintained after the completion of the strategy, enabling ongoing communication about issues facing the region. There is some question as to whether a consensus process really eventuated. Jackson (1999: 13) talks of consensus as a process in which "[i]nput is offered to and becomes an asset of the group, rather than being maintained and defended by an individual". Rather than arriving at the table with fixed positions to defend, consensus works best when people start with an clean slate. It is not clear that this happened with *Our City ~ Our Future*, as criticisms of the process being used to promote sectoral interests have been made. Robinson (1998: 2) noted concerns about interest groups and has argued that a:

> ... key feature required for a successful city-wide forum is that it must operate in practise as a *"forum"* (enabling the discussion of issues from a range of perspectives) and not as a *"platform"* for the presentation of pre-determined positions" (emphasis in original).

Even if a consensus process is used, it is clear that is not always straightforward. As Helling (1998: 345) found "...coupling consensus with the long-range focus of the process and voluntary participation made it easy to drop issues that proved difficult to resolve, and easy for proponents to opt out of the process".

A concern that has been raised in relation to Local Agenda 21 development in the UK is that process has been focused on at the expense of concrete policies. This has led one commentator to note:

> ... processual approaches can become ends in themselves, courting the risk of being owned by everybody and nobody, and containing generalized principles and statements which lack political credibility of strong commitment (Selman 1998b: 541).

This is something that is a potential hazard in Wellington. Some groups are critical of the goals and targets; therefore, they are unwilling to sign up to them.

6.4.3 Limited implementation of *Our City ~ Our Future*

It is still very early on in the implementation phase for the Strategy, so radical change overnight is not a reasonable expectation. Long-term change is what the Strategy is aiming for. However, there is a widespread expectation that more progress would have been made to date than actually has. From all accounts, progress is limited. As discussed above, respondents thought implementation was limited. A widely-held view is that the Strategy has dropped from view and momentum is being lost. Even by the Advisory Group's own admission, *Our City ~ Our Future: Strategy for the Future of Wellington* is hard to implement. Monitoring figures collected by the Council tend to confirm this picture, as is set out in Chapter Three. There have been some projects and activities initiated under the guise of *Our City ~ Our Future*. Attribution of projects is, however, problematic as it is not possible to say with absolute certainty that the process arose as a result of the Strategy. Walker noted that "Gloucestershire [Vision 21] note even outputs can be hard to attribute. Vision 21 does not usually know how these projects originated. It therefore knows of only a few projects that resulted directly from visioning" (Walker 1998: 24). It is also observed that some activities may have happened anyway. One way this occurs is suggested by Voisey *et al* (1996: 34), who comment: "...it is possible that initiatives already in place or planned are simply repackaged under the name of LA21". It is possible that some of initiatives occurring in Wellington may have happened anyway.

It shouldn't be any surprise that implementation is proving problematic. The Strategy is ambitious, and will require enormous effort to make progress. An observation from overseas experience is, that "[t]he single most common criticism of a community visioning process is the lack of successful follow through" (Oregon Chapter APA 1993: 20). I will now discuss the reasons for this.

A common theme in strategic planning literature is that implementation should be addressed early in the process. How to translate words into action needs to happen at an early point. Crawley (1995: 11) has the following advice:

> Implementation of a strategic plan starts from the day you enter the process. This is particularly true if you see strategic planning as a process for effecting change, rather than the production of a plan.

The City Steering Group were aware of the need to address implementation. The Specialist Working Groups were directed to identify both initiatives and implementation parties that would take the Strategy forward. The Advisory Peer Review Group stressed the need for one or two projects to be selected for action. And the CSG itself sought to undertake a symbolic project to get things happening. The latter was unsuccessful, therefore there was not a tangible demonstration project able to provide motivation and help maintain and generate new participation. It is also difficult to see the Strategy as action planning, which entails developing project briefs specifying timeframes and resource requirements (Walzer 1996: 190). Pressure to complete the Strategy overwhelmed attention to how implementation would be addressed.

The Advisory Group, whose role it is to oversee implementation, has struggled with the task before it. There are a number of reasons for this, including the non-involvement of key stakeholders, patchy attendance by members and the lack of a budget. Lack of resources has meant that the appointment of a Co-ordinator to carry out the day-to-day work of approaching potential implementors, first raised in late 1998, has not been possible. The Group continues to rely heavily on the input of voluntary members, whose work on *Our City ~ Our Future* is in addition to their other commitments. Support from Council has been limited to administration and advice, and Councillors have not been active participants. In turn, these factors have impinged on the ability of the Group to effectively address issues that have emerged. For instance, at the time of writing, the issue of establishment of a Trust has not been resolved after a year of deliberations.

There are many options available to pursue implementation. The range of options identified by Ames (1997: para 59) includes "...forming action teams to implement key strategies, securing the support of important 'stakeholders', or concentrating on

immediate, short-term successes. In the end, such details may mean the difference between failure and success". Walker (1998: 22) stresses the need to attract new people to the process, which can be achieved by providing different opportunities such as strategy review days. Another point raised by Walker is to allow for involvement in a variety of ways, for example "[p]eople may also want to act as individuals or as households instead of groups. [Blueprint for] Leicester realised this and developed an initiative called 'Turning the Tide' to show what specific actions citizens could take" (ibid).

6.4 Sustainability and the wider picture

The central focus of this thesis is to determine whether *Our City ~ Our Future* is contributing to a more sustainable Wellington. Clearly opportunities for citizen participation in democratic processes and decision-making have been enhanced. This is a key aspect of any shift to a sustainable city. However, progress toward achieving other aspects of sustainability, such as reduced resource use, are difficult to establish with any certainty.

It is perhaps too early to determine trends for Wellington's shift to becoming a sustainable city. There is a relative absence of data with which to make such an assessment. This reflects the relative lack of importance of the issue of sustainability, in comparison to economic data for which much information is available. There is limited monitoring of environmental trends. Considering progress towards *Our City ~ Our Future* targets, there is very little information on which to reach any conclusions. What can be established is that of the twenty-four targets for which monitoring data was reported in *How Far, How Fast* (WCC 1998c) only eight relate in any way to sustainability.[10] This presents a difficulty in coming to any conclusion, although in time as more information is collected, it will be possible to identify trends.

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[10] The relevant indicators are: per capita energy use; satisfaction with council decision-making; residents involved in the annual plan; per capita solid waste generation; fossil fuel sales; and people cycling, walking or using public transport.

In the absence of concrete data, it is useful to discuss contextual factors surrounding the place of sustainability in *Our City ~ Our Future*. The prominence given to sustainability in *Our City ~ Our Future* is something that has decreased as the process has developed. Initially, sustainability was seen as a central issue for the city-wide strategic planning exercise. The initiative was based on shifting to a sustainable city, and was driven from within the Environment Division of Council. Since this early stage limited attention has been paid directly to sustainability in the process. At two different points requests were made to the City Steering Group to assess the Strategy for its consistency with sustainability criteria, neither of which were acted on. It is also worth noting a point raised by Cassells, in an interview conducted for this research, that he did not see the process as being specifically about creating a more sustainable Wellington, although if this was a by-product of the process then that was okay.

The Council has highlighted its adherence to 'sustainable development', and the concept is reflected in a variety of documents, including the *WCC Strategic Plan 1997-1999*. It is beyond this scope of this study to determine how genuine the Council policy is, and whether steps are being taken to act on this policy. However, Councillors' support for 'sustainable development' could be subject to question. For instance, Tuxworth (1999: 6) suggests the following way of assessing implementation of sustainability under Local Agenda 21, noting whether there is:

> ... a growing number of involved partners and be clearly connected to other strategies within the authority and amongst partners. A stand alone sustainable development budget would be a sign of an early stage of implementation, more advanced authorities would have sustainability fully integrated into all financial decisions.

The challenge is a big one which requires more than rhetorical commitments to acceptance of 'sustainable development' in policy documents.

A trend that can be identified in some overseas initiatives is that easier issues are tackled first. Indeed, Allen (1997: 3) suggests there is a temptation for local authorities to undertake activities which are in effect a green veneer, such as tree planting, but at the same time pursue plans for new roads and rubbish incinerators. Responding to issues of sustainability does not sit easily with day-to-day political reality. As Tuxwoth (1996: 294-95) suggests:

> ...attempts to address hard sustainability is only just beginning, and the challenge is enormous, not least because the sustainability transition will require every organisation (and every individual) to reinvent itself in the light of new objectives, constraints and opportunities.

Individual behaviourial change is a critical issue, and one which faces many barriers. The ill-defined and theoretical nature of sustainability is something which leads Selman (1998b: 547) to suggest that important stepping-stones are highly localised issues such as dealing with litter and dog-mess. An easy entry point into sustainability needs to be made. Changing attitudes is a long-term process which will require ongoing effort at finding new ways of engaging citizens. For Moore (1997: 174-75), awareness raising is not enough, but change must extend to active involvement. To engage citizens it is necessary to provide:

> ...opportunities for experimentation with alternatives and provid[e] a variety of choices which enable citizens to tailor particular alternatives to meet their own needs and situations are fundamental elements in bridging the gap that exists between knowledge and action.

The responsibility for this behaviour change needs to be shared by the community, non-governmental organisations, other stakeholders and local and central government.

Attempts to engage citizens occur within a social, political and economic environment which is not conducive to radical change, particularly toward urban sustainability. At its heart, sustainability implies a dramatic reduction in consumption and resource use and a redistribution of wealth. This conflicts with the core values of the current economic-political paradigm. In this context, business could be seen to lose from sustainability, as society imposes constraints on unfettered commercial activity. As a result business tends to oppose the tenets of sustainability, although there is growing interest in socially responsible business.

The role of central government in the shift to sustainability is also important. There are many issues outside the jurisdiction of local authorities. The economic framework has a pervasive influence on society and constrains action by councils. Semi-constitutional statutes create macro-economic settings in which sustainability is not a consideration. For instance, although the principles of the Fiscal Responsibility Act 1994 may aim to reduce and maintain Crown debt at a prudent level, promote prudent management of the

fiscal risks facing the Crown and policies which ensure stable and predictable tax rates (Boston *et al* 1996: 285), there is no reference to 'sustainable development'. A similar situation has been noted with regard to government social policy making, in which social policy goals "...are subordinated or flow from economic goals" (Cheyne *et al* 1997: 144).When turning to key government goals and priorities, economic policy is emphasised. In the current government's strategic priorities (NZ Government 1998), the need to balance social, environmental and economic values signalled by the concept 'sustainable development' is not mentioned, while building a strong economy is stressed as the over-riding goal. Environment is only described in terms of protection of indigenous biodiversity, rather than addressing resource use or consumption patterns.

This ambivalence to 'sustainable development' extends to the Ministry for the Environment. In *Making a Difference for the Environment* (MfE 1999), the Ministry reflects the Government's narrow view of the environment; there is no mention of 'sustainable development' in the document. Instead, the Ministry's job is limited to advice to government on the state of our environment, resource management, land, air and water quality, waste, hazardous substances and contaminated sites, protection of the ozone layer and climate change (MfE 1999: 7). The Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment (1996: 67), whose views on the adoption of Agenda 21 in New Zealand are noted in Chapter One, has concluded that:

> [t]he concept of sustainable development has not been widely adopted or implemented in New Zealand despite the enormous influence of the RMA and the concept is not 'owned' by many politicians and key government agencies. The broad goals of sustainable development (in contrast to sustainable management) are not a feature of any legislation or policy...

There is evidence emerging internationally which gives credence to this perspective. The ICLEI highlighted several critical issues faced by local authorities in the pursuit of 'sustainable development'. It was noted that:

> ... reduced or poor national-level regulation of economic activities is weakening the ability of local governments to hold local businesses and other institutions (including themselves) accountable for the negative environmental and social impacts of their activities (ICLEI 1997b: exec summary).

Until some of these wider factors are addressed, the prospects for the shift to a sustainable city at the local level are limited.

As discussed above, there are many variables that impact on the effectiveness of citizen participation in *Our City ~ Our Future* and a shift to urban sustainability. The evidence presented above does not point to a neat and consistent conclusion about the process and its outcomes. Given the circumstances, *Our City ~ Our Future* was a positive first step towards developing a reasonable Strategy, engaging a significant number of citizens and creating a forum for ongoing debate about the future of Wellington. There are many ways the process could have been enhanced. There is a question about ongoing implementation of the Strategy, and what can be done to strengthen this. At this point I will briefly summarise the key points which will be addressed in the concluding Chapter, with a view to making recommendations on implementation and design of future processes. The key areas to be covered are:

- stakeholder buy-in, particularly the business community
- the role of council and its level of commitment
- resourcing of the Advisory Group
- public outreach
- shifting to sustainability
- role of central government and local authority associations.

Areas where further research would be useful will also be signalled.

Conclusion: options and recommendations

D espite the enormous amount of effort devoted to understanding 'sustainable development', there is no simple, agreed path that can be followed to bring about a sustainable city. Notwithstanding that, there are some activities which are considered essential if cities are to reduce their impact on the environment and improve the quality of life of their citizens. The central theme of this study is that citizen participation is a critical activity. As Roseland (1998: 212) puts it, *"Public participation is itself a sustainable development strategy:* To a considerable extent, the environmental crisis is a creativity crisis" (emphasis in original). A measure of the shift to sustainability is the effectiveness of citizen participation processes. In this study I have addressed the question of the effectiveness of citizen participation in the *Our City ~ Our Future* Strategy development process and its ongoing implementation and the potential of the process in the shift of Wellington to a sustainable city. Based on findings presented above it is clear that citizen participation is not reaching its potential in Wellington. The potential of *Our City ~ Our Future* to contribute to sustainability is something I will address in the recommendations below.

In this concluding chapter I will consider recommendations in two parts: firstly, in relation to urban sustainability; and secondly, in relation to citizen participation processes. Whilst these recommendations are derived from this study of *Our City ~ Our Future*, many of them are relevant, useful and transferable beyond Wellington. Some suggestions of areas for further research will also be noted.

In setting out to understand the contribution of *Our City ~ Our Future* to making Wellington a sustainable city two primary research methods were employed. The initial literature review generated theoretical insights and preliminary themes as a guide for further investigation. Analysis of published and unpublished papers related to *Our City*

~ *Our Future* was used in two ways: firstly, to prepare a chronological summary of the process and a preliminary assessment of the degree to which the Strategy is being implemented; and secondly, summarising of key themes as emerged from the data. The latter ensures the roles of the City Steering Group, Wellington City Council staff, its elected representatives and the Advisory Group could be explored. The second data collection method was seven in-depth interviews with key participants in the *Our City ~ Our Future* process. This data enabled understanding of the process, particularly barriers to Strategy implementation, to be considered. It is from this research that the following recommendations are based.

7.1 Recommendations on urban sustainability

As is discussed above, the prominence given to sustainability within *Our City ~ Our Future* has diminished over time. At the outset 'sustainable development' was a primary motivating force, whereas at the implementation stage only limited attention is being explicitly paid to it. Under the *Our City ~ Our Future* umbrella a number of initiatives are being pursued with minimal resources. However, it is not enough to rely on voluntary initiatives. As Selman (1998a: 17) points out, the 'sustainability transition' "...cannot be accomplished solely by a motley of local projects and 'green codes', but rather requires concerted and often painful actions aimed at scything our present 'ecological footprint'". Wellington City Council has debated the concept of 'sustainable development' and incorporated it into its policy process, but changes in activities and approach required are not evident. Teasing out the painful actions alluded to by Selman remains a pressing task.

A first step in doing this is promoting greater understanding of why the shift to a sustainable city is necessary and what can be done to achieve this. In the absence of information about sustainability, citizens, elected members and council staff are unlikely to change their attitudes and behaviour. As Warburton (1998: 28) suggests "... if ordinary people do not care about development being sustainable, and change their attitudes and behaviour, any amount of policy programmes will fail". An education process could address concerns of councillors who are critical of sustainability because

of its potentially negative impacts on business. Research indicates that the triple bottom-line of meeting social, economic and environmental targets is realistic.

Good information about environmental, social and economic trends is also important in making decisions about sustainability. Indicators of sustainability feed into policy-making and action. Without information on the need for change it is difficult to determine priorities for action. The development of sustainability indicators and frequent reporting is urgently required. This need was identified by the 2020 Task Group in 1995, and, despite some preliminary steps, the Wellington City Council has not finalised indicators for the city. There is a trend overseas for indicators to be developed through citizen involvement, with ongoing monitoring and data collection also being undertaken by residents. The development of indicators has powerful educational benefits.

The nature of the wider political-economic framework has important implications for 'sustainable development'. The laws and climate created by central government has a significant impact on the ability of local authorities to pursue sustainability initiatives. It is important for central government to actively support 'sustainable development'. Among the ways that have been recommended for this to occur in New Zealand include development of a national 'sustainable development' strategy, establishment of a government unit or agency with oversight for urban sustainability and improved partnerships with local government to assist with implementation of Agenda 21 (PCE 1998: 67-68). Research and policy development are other areas which also need to be addressed, including the impact of the New Public Management agenda on sustainability initiatives. In the UK it is mandatory for local authorities to prepare Local Agenda 21 plans. By 1998 73% were pursuing LA21 (Percy 1998: 19). There are calls for a statutory duty of 'sustainable development' to be placed on UK councils (Levett and Christie 1998: 29). The role of central government requires further investigation.

There are some practical measures which would assist councils undertaking sustainability work. Networks to promote and share good practice, preparation of guides, running seminars, developing evaluation frameworks and fostering debate are all

key activities. Central government funding for innovative approaches and pilot projects could encourage reluctant councils. The networking required to promote this could be undertaken by central government, as proposed by the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment, who suggests an agency be required (1998a: 68) "...to focus on the management of the urban environment including the provision of information to local government, businesses and communities on actions to progress urban sustainability". Alternatively, coordination could be undertaken by a network, perhaps organised by Local Government New Zealand, as suggested at the Royal Society's "Forging Links: Social and Environmental Sustainability and Social Science Research" seminar in August 1999. These types of activities could equally well be applied to enhancing the use of participation techniques.

7.2 Recommendations on citizen participation

The development of *Our City ~ Our Future: Strategy for the Future of Wellington* using a citizen participation technique offers several lessons for future city-wide strategy development processes and implementation. The recommendations that follow are not intended to duplicate what is already included in the numerous guides on participation that are already available (Wilcox 1994; DETR 1998; Forgie *et al* 1999), but my intention is to focus on critical issues faced in Wellington which require emphasis. There are a number of practical issues which I will also address in brief.

7.2.1 The role of council and its level of commitment

As has been described above, Wellington City Council has taken a great interest in citizen participation processes. *Our City ~ Our Future* is just one of many exercises that the Council has experimented with. It is a source of pride to the Council that this was the first process of its type in New Zealand. Other innovative techniques have included a citizens jury and a range of community forums. A recent council report listed a total of 26 ongoing citizen liaison bodies (Democratic Services 9/6/99). Despite this high level of interest there is a question of the degree to which WCC is genuinely committed to citizen participation. There is a danger of embarking on citizen participation and thereby

raising expectations of citizens which, if the local authority is not committed to the outcomes of participation, then it is likely to leave citizens disillusioned. This lessens the likelihood of future interest in opportunities for engagement, thus undermining trust in the authority and diminishing social capital. Citizens are rightly concerned whether the Council is genuinely interested in listening to what they have to say.

The evidence that Wellington City Council has an ambiguous approach to citizen participation is compelling. The use of a shortened ladder of participation is an indication of this, as is its exploration of an alternative city governance structure which would in effect replace *Our City ~ Our Future*. The autonomy and independence of the City Steering Group, and now the Advisory Group, is questionable. As is noted of *Our City ~ Our Future*, it "...began as a Council initiative but there was some uncertainty in the community when the vision statement was produced as to whether this was a statement about Wellington 'City' or for Wellington 'Council'" (Robinson 1998: 28). The lack of clarity round roles, purpose and membership is problematic.

Support for the *Our City ~ Our Future* Advisory Group further demonstrates the Council's ambivalence. Council's approach is currently characterised by limited Councillor involvement and provision of minimal financial support. The Advisory Group is a creature of a Wellington City Council initiative, and it is important for the Council to maintain its involvement until such time as the group is ready to make its own way. There is a strong willingness on behalf of the Advisory Group to establish a Trust and find means of supporting itself, but in this period of transition Council support is needed.

Absence of commitment can also be seen in the Council's efforts at *Our City ~ Our Future* Strategy implementation. As Wade-Brown argues, "WCC need to take a lead role, not just a facilitating one and "brand" more of its initiatives as OCOF ones" (1999: pers. comm.). There is a danger that Wellington City Council is letting go too soon when it needs to take a leadership role. Council should not decline to take on this role in the absence of others willing or able to play a leadership role, but "...develop their capacity by linking their leadership role to participation" (DETR 1998a: 7.2). Setting

aside complications created by the short-term election cycle, it is the issue of commitment which is paramount. Addressing the challenge of effective governance is an issue that will continue to be pertinent to Wellington City Council's elected representatives regardless of whether *Our City ~ Our Future* is supported or not. Some form of governance structure is necessary, and it is likely that issues of the tension between participatory and representative democracy will surface amongst elected representatives if a new structure is established. As Reid (1994: 5) noted, "[t]he concept of 'governance' provides a positive agenda for local government, one that cannot be 'contracted out', delegated to an appointed board of management, or ultimately privatised". Councillors do not have to go it alone; as citizen involvement in some form is critical, however they do have to take a lead.

Encouragement of participation relies on more than just using different means of engagement. There is a danger that structures will be focused on at the expense of genuine commitment. Robinson commented about Wellington City Council that "[i]n general officers (and some Councillors) seemed more interested in inventing new structures with new names - Capital Forum, City Pride, OCOF, etc - than in getting an understanding of the underlying processes" (Robinson 1999: pers. comm.). What was lacking was understanding of the importance of fostering good relationships, irrespective of structure. Commitment to participation requires understanding to be shared throughout the whole organisation. As Donaldson (1998: 4) reasons, organisations which are committed to citizen participation are those in which "... individuals within the organisation believe that involving communities actually *adds value* to the process of decision-making" (emphasis in original).

Councillors can demonstrate commitment to citizen participation by investing in the development of the professional competence of staff and councillors. Levett and Christie (1998: 32) argue that elected representatives need to be upskilled in partnership development, in participative techniques and in the "...application of holistic governance ideas". For staff, there is a need to develop the "new professionalism that is required to involve the community successfully" (Donaldson 1998: 4). I also comment below on the need to also provide capacity building for citizens.

One suggestion worth further exploration is the need for an exchange of views between citizens and councillors on their preferred approach to decision-making. Christie (1999: 4) suggests opening up "... new fora for debate on the balance to be struck between representative and participatory democracy: when do community fora and the like *complement* representative democratic processes?" (emphasis in original). This has particular relevance as decisions have yet to be made about how *Our City ~ Our Future* will be reviewed in 2003. Rather than Council being all powerful and deciding on everything on behalf of citizens of Wellington, these decisions should be arrived at jointly.

The challenge of commitment is addressed by Robinson (1998: 4) who suggests taking some relatively simple procedural steps, including: "Council responds to all contacts, clear options are always presented in all negotiations, partnerships are openly negotiated, decisions are made transparently and communicated to the public". His suggestions that a discussion space at Council meetings and easily identifiable contact points have been adopted. The former suggestion is heavily reliant on being interactive to provide a meaningful opportunity for public input.

7.2.2 Stakeholder involvement

The importance of involving all key stakeholders needs to be stressed. Non-participation by any sector can seriously weaken the outcome of a citizen participation exercise. As is demonstrated above, the non-involvement of the formal business sector has had profound consequences for *Our City ~ Our Future*. The Chamber of Commerce was openly critical of the final document, and, in general, business has not stepped forward as implementors or funders of *Our City ~ Our Future*. Deprived of a potential source of income, *Our City ~ Our Future* is dependent on Council support, putting pressure on an already tenuous relationship. The lesson from this is that efforts must be taken to ensure key stakeholders are involved.

If some stakeholders are reluctant to get involved, ways need to be found to overcome real or perceived barriers. In the case of business, using alternative means of

participation have been suggested. Selman (1998b: 551) outlines a number of different ways, including "...working parties concerned with issues of real importance to local business" such as energy conservation, and networks which promote innovation and good practice, such as the Lancashire Centres of Environmental Excellence.

7.2.3 Resourcing for participation

What is evident is that implementation is relying on the dedicated efforts of volunteers. As is noted above in Chapter Five, this runs the risk of individual burn-out so that means of supporting the work of these volunteers needs to be found. This could entail provision of administrative and organisational support, and it also relies on finding people to take on some of the work. An adequate budget, which provides for meeting attendance fees and the expenses of the Advisory Group, is essential.

There is also the issue of citizens being able to contribute to participation opportunities. To encourage involvement one step would be to establish "[r]esource centres and other support networks [that] can provide part of the infrastructure necessary for groups of people to organise and make their views known" (DETR 6.2.3). Related to this is the ability of non-governmental organisations to do their work. As Robinson (1998: 4) reported:

> Increased funding for community groups was raise frequently as being an important element of building their capacity to participate in Council affairs. Any review of funding should also consider other Council resources such as community development assistance and administration of meetings.

It is also important that Council support and encourage citizens and non-governmental organisations to develop their capacity. Rather than looking at a series of one-off participation exercises, it is important to look at these as a whole and identify what skills and knowledge would contribute to their effectiveness. This was something stressed at a workshop for Wellington City Councillors as Robinson noted. It was suggested that "[i]n order for community groups to go beyond using participation forums as a platform to present pre-determined positions to becoming involved in meaningful discussion and deliberation training in alternative forms of meeting

procedures is required" (Robinson 1998: 4). There is also a need to develop planning, strategy development skills and the ability to frame and analyse issues.

Another aspect of building capacity is a wider interest in 'citizenship education'. This could take on several forms; a focus on youth and schools is one potential approach, including support for a youth council. Ways of taking citizenship education to a wider audience also need to be found. In the UK Christie (1999: 4) suggests holding an annual "festival of democracy", which could include the creation of a temporary House of Local Commons.

7.2.4 Public outreach

Implementation of the vision at the heart of *Our City ~ Our Future* is something that will require action by the wider population of Wellington, not just a small group of already active people. Winning over the 'hearts and minds' of citizens is a key to success at shifting to sustainability which will require a redefinition of citizenship. For Selman (1998a: 16), whose concept of the environmental citizen is outlined in Chapter Two, "[c]itizenship must be construed and activated in other ways — ways perhaps without historical precedent — rather than anticipating the emergence of new platoons of active volunteers". Changing behaviour and attitudes is dependent on creative and experimental approaches, which rely on resourcing. The lack of resources is acknowledged by *Our City ~ Our Future* Advisory Group members to be constraining outreach activities and funding sources urgently need to be found.

As well as education on sustainability, referred to above, other outreach activities need to be developed. Reaching the diverse cultures and communities in Wellington means developing approaches relevant to particular groups. For instance, 'sustainable raves', and youth councils could be used to reach the youth sector.

7.2.5 Other recommendations

Throughout the discussion above a number of issues have emerged which relate to the practice of citizen participation. Addressing these issues would help to ensure the effectiveness of participation techniques. Key issues to be addressed include:

- *prioritisation of goals*: having a long list of unranked targets has proved difficult when considering implementation. Setting priorities would make implementation easier.
- *action focus*: attention to how the Strategy is implemented must be addressed at the time goals and targets are developed, with action planning being one possible option.
- *representation*: effort needs to be made to ensure representation reflects communities and sectors in the city, this may mean making special efforts to attract those groups who are systematically unrepresented, such as the unemployed and solo-mothers. The socio-economic status of participants is something that was not visibly addressed in *Our City ~ Our Future*, but needs to be.
- *resources*: adequate resourcing needs to be provided.
- *summative evaluation*: it is necessary to incorporate a means of learning from the process and assessing if participation has been effective. Evaluation needs to be planned from the outset to ensure collection of data and so that refinements to the process can be made.
- *group process*: steering group and working group need to invest time and energy building effective self-management processes. Team bonding and facilitation skill development are two areas which deserve attention.

7.3 Further research

This study begs a number of questions that require further research. The transition to 'sustainable development' is a wide field, but one in which the practical application of this is still in its nascent stages. The following areas of research could make a useful contribution to the shift to sustainability:

- local authority understanding and commitment to sustainability
- the role of central government in creating conditions for 'sustainable development'
- participatory approaches to the development of sustainability indicators
- effectiveness of new or innovative participation techniques

- effectiveness of strategic planning to influence change.

The research undertaken for this study indicates the enormous magnitude of the task ahead if Wellington and other urban local authorities in New Zealand are to shift to being sustainable cities. Although the role of citizen participation is recognised as being necessary, the practice still has some way to go. The efforts of voluntary steering group and advisory group leaders are truly impressive, particularly in the face of the ambiguous approach by the Council and a lack of resources. Wellington City Councillors are not alone in facing the challenge of providing effective governance. Councils are being challenged to step beyond service delivery, to leadership and facilitation of fragmented governing bodies. In grappling with issues that arise, it crucial that citizens are able to effectively participate. For this to happen the Council must demonstrate greater understanding of and commitment to participation. There are a number of ways through which this commitment could be shown, including funding of capacity building and training for councillors and council staff.

Relying on citizens and councils alone will not prove adequate, as the discussion of wider economic and political forces indicates. The setting in which local sustainability initiatives are pursued is profoundly influenced by central government policy and levels of support. Without strong central government backing, local initiatives face insurmountable hurdles.

A central theme of this study is that the shift to sustainability can only happen when we have a vibrant and healthy democracy. Citizen participation can and must be used to tap into the energy, skills and commitment of citizens. As *Our City ~ Our Future* has shown, there is a real willingness on the part of citizens to get involved and the outcome of the process is a good first step. As we turn to implementation it is obvious that many barriers are faced. Determining whether these barriers can be addressed will ultimately determine whether Wellington makes the shift to being a sustainable city.

Appendices

Appendix 1: List of City Steering Group members

Membership as at 15 April 1996

Chair
Mark Blumsky, Mayor

City Council Representatives
Cr Allan Johnston
Cr Celia Wade-Brown

Community liaison representatives
Chris Calvi-Freeman (Eastern suburbs) - Hataitai Residents Association President
Susan Elliot (Western suburbs) - community worker; coordinator, Wellington Multicultural Centre for Learning and Support Services
Debbie Iversen (Northern suburbs) - mother; Plunket member; Ngaio New Mother Support Group member; Ngaio Cell Site Action Group member; ex-Ministry for the Environment instructing solicitor, specialising in the Resource Management Act
Vicki Tohill (Southern suburbs) - community development and social worker, based at the Newtown Community and Cultural Centre
Robert Tredger (Tawa) - Tawa Community Board member

Sector groups

Business/ economic
Ian Cassels - inner-city residential developer
Daryl Narain - Managing director, Newlands Coach Service Ltd
Rama Ramanathan - senior agent, AMP Society; Ethnic Affairs Council chair
Roy Salmon - small businessman; Chamber of Commerce

Social/ cultural
Ann Edge - Co-chair, Aro Valley Community Council; human resources co-ordinator Family Planning Association; mediator, facilitator, educator
Con Flinkenberg - Wellington Chair, Historic Places Trust; committee member, Oriental Bay Residents Association
Eric Lepionka - Chairman, Refugee and Migrant Service Commission; foundation Chairman, Wellington Ethnic Affairs Council; founding member, Access Radio; Polish community leader
Brian Turner - Wesley Wellington Mission

Environmental

Bronwen Evans - journalist, broadcaster; interested in planning issues and the link between the environment and the economy

Chris Horne - Wellington Botanical Society; member of various environmental groups; interested in sustainable transport systems

Jim Lynch - Chairman, Wellington Branch, Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society

Roland Sapsford - inner-city resident; co-chair, Aro Valley Community Council; co-convenor, Campaign for a Better City; experienced facilitator

Tangata whenua

representatives to be confirmed

Youth - interim representatives

Amy Churchouse - Queen Margaret College

Fiona Rutherford - Onslow College

Barnaby Weir - Wellington College

(Strategic Planning Unit 24 April 1996: 4-5)

Later appointments included:

Nigel Gould, businessman; Chamber of Commerce

Anna Gribble, geology/geography student, Victoria University

Ripeka Healey, Maori liaison

Helen Johnson, Maori liaison

Raureti Korako, Maori liaison

James Palmer, editor, Salient, Victoria University

Mailo Pesamino (supported by Mangila Annandale), Pacific Island liaison

Karen Smyth, project experience with social service providers to replace Brian Turner

Billie Tait-Jones, Maori liaison

Appendix 2: Interview questions sheet

Note: each question sheet was modified so that the questions asked were appropriate for each respondent. The following are the core questions.

Could you outline your involvement in *Our City ~ Our Future*?

What do you think that *Our City ~ Our Future* has accomplished?

What do you think were the strengths and weaknesses of the *Our City ~ Our Future* strategy development process?

What do you think are some of the barriers to, and the factors facilitating implementation?

Was implementation addressed during the Strategy development phase?

How would you describe the nature of citizen participation in implementation?

Do you think it is easy for organisations to implement the strategy?

Themes:

Resourcing	Evaluation
Internal support	Group dynamics
Representation	Levels of participation
Councillor involvement	Communication
Process issues, eg facilitation	Staff expertise
Stakeholder involvement	

Prompts:

Can you give me an example of that?

Is that something that happens often?

How does this compare with your experience elsewhere?

Tell me more.

I don't understand.

Could you elaborate or be more specific?

When? How?

I didn't realise that.

Shifting to an ecologically sustainable city: can citizen participation fulfil its potential?

Information Sheet

Who is the researcher?

My name is Stephen Blyth. I am an extramural masterate student at the School of Social Policy and Social Work at Massey University. I also work part time as an Advisor for the Community Development Group at the Department of Internal Affairs. In a voluntary capacity I am on the executive committee of Environment & Conservation Organisations of NZ (ECO), New Zealand's national network of environment groups. It is on urban sustainability, transport policy and climate change issues that I am most active. I have links with campaigners working on these issues locally and nationally.

I am researching the role of public participation in achieving sustainable development, with a focus on the 'Our City ~ Our Future' Strategy. Although both the Department and ECO have interests in public participation and sustainability, I am undertaking this research independently.

My contact details are as follows: ph 04 494 0580 (wk), ▇▇▇▇▇▇ (hm), email: blithe@nznet.gen.nz Either of my two research supervisors can be contacted: Christine Cheyne: ph 06 350 4300, email: C.M.Cheyne@massey.ac.nz; or Martin Sullivan: ph 06 350 4307, email: M.J.Sullivan@Massey.ac.nz.

What is the study about?

This study will focus on the degree to which actions identified in the 'Our City ~ Our Future' Strategy are being implemented, and the level of public participation in implementation.

The purpose of the study is to:
- identify barriers to public participation in and limited implementation of the 'Our City ~ Our Future' strategy
- look at options for overcoming barriers to participation and steps to implement actions identified in the strategy
- make recommendations to enhance public participation in implementation of the strategy and to make progress with implementation of the Strategy.

What will participants be invited to do?

From public records I have identified members of the City Steering Group, Advisory Group and Council staff as potential participants for this study. I am inviting a small number of people from the groups listed above to be interviewed. You have the right to decline to participate.

If you agree to participate in the study you will be invited to meet with me for an interview to discuss issues relating to the development and implementation of the 'Our City ~ Our Future' Strategy. The interview will take place at a time and place that is convenient to you. With the written consent of participants interviews will be audio-taped. It is anticipated that interviews will last up to an hour and a half.

What can participants expect from the researcher?

Should you agree to participate in this study you can choose to have any information you provide treated with utmost confidentiality. Although every effort will be made to protect the confidentiality of participants, it must be acknowledged that anonymity will be difficult to guarantee because of the small number of people who are involved in Strategy development and implementation, the relative closeness of the community, and the small sample size.

During the interview process you have the right to:
- refuse to answer any particular question
- to withdraw from the process at any time
- to ask any questions about the study at any time during participation
- to provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher.

The transcriber of the audio tapes will enter into a confidentiality agreement. Participants will be offered the opportunity to review the transcripts of interview material, and to correct these. If you give consent for the information you provide to be directly attributed to you in the thesis, you will be given an opportunity to check any contributions in the context in which they are used.

All participants will be sent a summary of the findings of the study on its completion. Material gathered for the purpose of and contained in the thesis will be used to promote opportunities for public participation in the 'Our City ~ Our Future'. There may be lessons which are relevant, useful and transferable beyond Wellington. This may entail publication in academic and mainstream media.

20 May 1999

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