

Generation Zero



Generation Zero's Submission to:

Future of the Central Library

Generation Zero supports Option C - High Level Remediation to restore Wellington Central Library as Wellington City's most important third place.

Environment and Carbon Emissions

Option C is likely to have the lowest associated carbon emissions as;

1. Strengthening the existing building will mean the embodied emissions of the original building materials are not wasted, and the substantial embodied carbon of the materials required to build a new library can be avoided.
2. This high level of structural remediation improves the library's resilience to future seismic events substantially, which will increase the lifespan of the building and have a positive effect on the overall lifetime emissions of the building. Evidence is emerging in Aotearoa that earthquakes play a big role in the overall life expectancy of buildings which makes a strong impact on total carbon emissions under life cycle assessment as strong buildings last longer and require less maintenance over time.
3. This level of remediation also allows for significant upgrades to the building services, which is an opportunity to significantly improve the energy efficiency of the building and reduce its operational emissions. This will also enable cost savings in operating the building in future.

Reducing emissions associated with buildings across the city is an important part of the council's implementation plan for Te Atakura: First to Zero. If the council intends to encourage and incentivise private building owners to carry out significant work to earthquake strengthen and reduce the operational emissions of their buildings, they must also walk the talk by abiding by these same standards on their own buildings. Wellington Central Library will be an important flagship project for the city, regardless of whether it is retrofitted or rebuilt, and the council must lead by example and set a high standard.

We would like to see the detailed designs for this project take up the opportunity for urban greening and water sensitive design surrounding the building to improve urban ecology, add to the wellbeing of the users, and reduce the urban heat island effect.

Safety and resilience

Option C enables the council to achieve a high level of resilience and make the building safe again, while reducing the carbon emissions of the project. Making a high upfront investment means that the library will be functional for years to come without future closures and remediation work, and the council will be setting a good example for other building owners in the city.

As well as making the building resilient to future seismic events through strengthening and base isolation, this option will build resilience against climate change by raising the ground floor and reducing the potential impact of flooding and sea level rise. Under the current draft spatial plan, the council has identified Te Ngākau civic precinct as an “anchor of resilience”, designated as a recovery hub following large scale hazard events. As such, ensuring its resilience is vital.

Role in the community

Central Library has always been a really important space for the community in Wellington; a third place where people can comfortably spend time together outside of home or work/school without having to spend any money. It was a place where all sections of society could connect and was important for the strength of Wellington’s community. Its closure has been a heavy burden on the city. An advantage of retaining the existing building means the library can be opened sooner and restored as ‘Wellington’s Living Room’.

Option C has the most opportunity to re-configure the library and enhance its relevance and importance to Wellington Residents. We are very supportive of the plans to “activate the edges” of the library by creating more entrances and opening the building to the surrounding area, both physically and visually. This will make it a more welcoming space and integrate it in the precinct, adding vitality to the area.

Re-configuring the library is an opportunity to add new community spaces and services, and modernise its offerings, following the examples set by Waitohi in Johnsonville, and Tūranga in Ōtautahi Christchurch. However, we understand that due to the nature of the existing building, this could be difficult as the collection is large which limits available space for new services without losing anything. We would like to therefore see the continuation of split spaces through the city to ease the burden and increase accessibility. This could be through ongoing use of central pop-ups or maintaining Te Pātaka to manage the full size of the collection.

There is also a significant opportunity to improve the accessibility of the building, through;

1. updating the design by considering the journey through the building for people of all abilities.
2. Engaging with disabled people to ensure the design will suit their accessibility needs
3. integrating with the proposed mass rapid transit route to make the building easily accessed via public transport.

Furthermore, we are pleased to note that the council has further plans to consider how they can work with mana whenua to develop a ‘Māori sense of place’ in the library, and the Te Ngākau civic precinct more widely, through the application of Te Aranga design principles. This is a site of significance to mana whenua and it is important those stories of place are celebrated.

Feedback on the consultation

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in the Future of the Central Library consultation. We would like to take this opportunity to compliment the council officers on the thoroughness of their consideration and the consultation material provided. We have been impressed by the availability of the Council to engage and answer questions throughout this process.

We would note that while it was excellent to see clear considerations being given to the sustainability of the different options, we think that considerations for expected sea level rise in this area and the possibilities for managed retreat could have been more developed and explicit. We understand there has been a lot of work done on this in the background to this consultation and it would have been good to see more details included in the main document.

In addition, while we appreciate it is difficult to do with such high level concepts, we think there should have been some scientific analysis of the carbon costs of each option. We agree with the assumptions made by the officers, but this analysis would have been useful to justify the cost of Option C under the Te Atakura.

We understand that this work is going on in parallel to many other work streams and we would have liked for this consultation to have been extended to the entire civic precinct as a whole, even if the focus remained on the library. We know the council is in the process of planning and implementing a development plan for this whole area, and it would have been good if the consultation documents for the library embedded the options within that framework, as well as the work going on with Planning for Growth, and Let's Get Wellington Moving.

We look forward to seeing this project progress and would like to make an oral submission to the councillors.

Ngā mihi nui,

Generation Zero Wellington



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