



February 17, 2005

Submission on the DRAFT BUILT HERITAGE STRATEGY

This submission is made on behalf of an organisation, Mt Victoria Historical Society Inc.

It is an incorporated society with the aims of researching and sharing the history of the suburb of Mt Victoria and promoting interest in, and preservation of, its unique heritage. We therefore have a keen interest in the Draft Built Heritage Strategy.

We do not wish to speak to our submission.

We strongly support the motivation behind the Draft Built Heritage Strategy as set out in the introduction to the public document, and the key initiatives included in it, namely:

- Reviewing the heritage rules
- Establishing a new heritage incentive fund
- Enhancing the heritage list.

Mt Victoria is under intense pressure from development, yet is essential to Wellington's unique sense of place. Not only for visitors is it an easily-visited, small and uniquely historic suburb, but for Wellingtonian's it represents a concrete and living memory of its origins and history. It is also very visible from most parts of the city and iconic - images of Mt Victoria are frequently used in tourist or city publicity to convey our uniqueness.

We believe that historical integrity of buildings needs to be much more strongly protected under the new strategy. We appreciate the need for sustainable development but unsympathetic rooftop additions, such as those on the former BNZ building on the corner of Manners and Cuba Streets, the top of the art deco City Hotel on Kent Terrace and the apartments on top of the building on the corner of Blair and Wakefield Street, should not be allowed. Heritage value is also destroyed in the practice of retaining only the facades of buildings.

As part of the goal of enhancing the heritage list, it is important that buildings should no longer be able to be removed from Heritage Inventory without public consultation. Such cases may be deserving of access to the heritage incentive fund.

We very much support the fact that implementation of the Strategy will involve allocation of resources and integration. We urge real commitment to this so that those who value heritage are given equal consideration and weight in decision making as developers. Adequate resource also needs to be applied to checking the veracity of developers' claims and monitoring their actions.

Comments relating to specific aspects of some Objectives are set out below:

Objective 1

Wellington City Council must be adequately funded to undertake the research required to identify places with significant heritage value. Organisations such as Mt Victoria Historical Society are very willing to assist where possible but, as all work is done by a very small number of volunteers, there is limited capacity.

Objective 2

We are very pleased with the stated goals of the Protection objective. Again, Council must be given the resource and power to enforce these provisions. Decisions relating to the District Plan must be informed by good research and, if there is any debate about the appropriate course of action, by both sides equally and acknowledging the lack of resources of community organisations.

Objective 3

We encourage the development of links and consultation with relevant community groups, such as the Mt Victoria Historical Society, because it has been difficult in the past to get community initiatives recognised. Mt Victoria Historical Society, for instance, has in the past raised the idea of historical street signs for the suburb and could find no channel at Council. We would also be very keen to work with Council on heritage trails, having developed and run a number in the area for the public. The processes and contacts for this type of involvement need to be clearly communicated.

Objective 5

We are very much in favour of promoting sustainable use, but not at the expense of historical, architectural or cultural integrity. This applies not only to buildings but also to statues and other features of the built environment.

Implementation Plan

Many of the items in the implementation plan are followed by "(ongoing)". We would be interested to know whether these activities are to receive increased funding under the new Strategy.

Objective 1:

Again, we would ask that adequate funding be provided to implement this strategy.

We also believe that more archaeological assessments should be considered before major construction on inner city sites, as part of identifying and recognising our heritage. We understand, for instance, that the development behind the Museum Hotel is on the site of the Te Aro railway station and that the remnants of it were clearly seen before construction began.

Objective 2:

We strongly support the review of other policies and rules to ensure consistency with heritage objectives, policies and rules. Currently, there often appears to be a conflict.

There is no explanation of what is meant by “review parking requirements . . .”. We therefore look forward to being directly advised and consulted on this in due course.

Objective 3:

Mt Victoria Historical Society would be particularly keen to be involved in such things as developing signage and heritage trails for Mt Victoria. We are also happy to assist in other areas where possible.

Objective 5:

We strongly approve of the idea of incentives, particularly for rewarding those who do a good job of preserving built heritage.

Mt Victoria Historical Society