

ARTS, CULTURE & LEISURE STRATEGY DISCUSSION PAPER

PREPARED BY

WELLINGTON SHIRE COUNCIL

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Executive Summary

Wellington Shire Council is developing an Arts, Culture & Leisure Strategy 2027-2037 to establish a shared vision and long-term direction for arts, culture, recreation, leisure and events across the municipality.

Arts, Culture and Leisure are essential to Wellington’s liveability, wellbeing and sense of place. They create opportunities for people to connect, participate, create, learn and celebrate, while strengthening community identity and showcasing local stories, heritage and culture.

The Strategy will provide a framework to guide future investment, partnerships, programs and facilities, ensuring opportunities remain accessible, inclusive and responsive to the needs of Wellington’s diverse and growing communities.

This Discussion Paper has been prepared to inform community and stakeholder consultation and test the proposed future direction for Arts, Culture and Leisure in Wellington Shire. It outlines:

- Why Arts, Culture and Leisure matter
- Opportunities and challenges facing Wellington
- A proposed Vision for 2037
- Proposed CREATE Principles
- Strategic themes and outcomes
- Example actions and priorities
- Discussion questions to support feedback

This is not a draft Strategy.

The ideas presented are intended to encourage discussion and gather feedback. Community input will help shape the final Arts, Culture & Leisure Strategy 2027-2037 and ensure it reflects local aspirations, priorities and opportunities for the decade ahead.



Purpose of this Discussion Paper

The purpose of this paper is to receive feedback around:

- Key themes across Arts, Culture and Leisure
- A proposed vision for Arts, Culture and Leisure into the future.
- A set of proposed strategic outcomes and areas of focus.

Key priorities for the next ten years. All feedback will inform the development of the final Arts, Culture and Leisure Strategy 2027-2037.

The purpose of this Discussion Paper is to explore whether the proposed Vision, Strategic Outcomes, Themes, Pillars and priorities reflect the aspirations, opportunities and challenges facing Wellington Shire’s communities.

Feedback received through this process will help identify gaps, refine priorities and shape the development of the final Arts, Culture & Leisure Strategy 2027-2037.



Why Arts, Culture and Leisure Matter

Arts, Culture and Leisure contribute significantly to community wellbeing, identity and liveability. Wellington Shire supports a diverse range of arts, culture and leisure assets, including; The Wedge Performing Arts Centre, Gippsland Art Gallery, Aqua Energy Leisure Centre and Seasonal Outdoor Pools, Gippsland Regional Sports Complex, Wellington's Library Network, and a variety of parks, reserves and open spaces.

Together, these assets provide opportunities for people to connect, learn, create, participate and celebrate. They also support a vibrant network of artists, performers, volunteers, clubs and community organisations that contribute to Wellington's cultural and community life.

Supporting 'Live Well in Wellington 2025-2029'

Arts, Culture and Leisure also supports and contributes to the aspirations of Wellington's Public Health and Wellbeing Plan '*Live Well in Wellington*' by promoting wellbeing, encouraging participation, strengthening social connections and creating opportunities for people to connect, belong and thrive within their communities.



Why Now?

Wellington Shire is constantly evolving and social, demographic and community needs are changing.

Residents and visitors to the region are increasingly seeking:

- Diverse creative and cultural experiences.
- Accessible recreation opportunities.
- Inclusive and interactive community spaces.
- Opportunities to connect and participate.
- Engaging events and festivals that showcase the Wellington Shire's strengths and built and natural assets.
- Healthy and active lifestyles.
- Flexible and contemporary leisure experiences.

At the same time, Wellington Shire faces challenges including:

- Maintaining community infrastructure.
- Supporting volunteers and community organisations.
- Ensuring accessibility across a large geographic area.
- Responding to changing participation patterns.
- Balancing investment demands against available resources.
- Increasing operational and maintenance costs.

The next decade presents an opportunity to create a shared vision and coordinated approach for arts, culture and leisure across Wellington Shire.



What We Have Heard So Far

Engagement undertaken to date has identified several recurring themes.

The community values:

- Local events and festivals.
- Access to quality facilities and spaces.
- Creative and cultural experiences.
- Recreation and active lifestyles.
- Community participation and volunteering.
- Local identity
- Inclusion and accessibility.
- Vibrant public places and spaces.
- Arts, culture and leisure as contributors to wellbeing.

There is strong recognition that arts, culture and leisure contribute significantly to quality of life, community pride and social connection, and the Shire's economy.



Opportunities & Challenges

Wellington Shire has many existing strengths that provide a strong foundation for the future development of arts, culture and leisure across the municipality. Building on these strengths while responding to emerging challenges will be critical to ensuring arts, culture and leisure continue to enrich lives, strengthen communities and enhance wellbeing over the coming decade.

OPPORTUNITIES

Strong Mix of Arts, Culture, Recreation and Event Offerings

Wellington Shire provides a broad range of opportunities for participation, creativity, recreation and community engagement. It is well known for blockbuster arts exhibitions, events and productions, as well as smaller-scale programs that reach communities beyond the larger towns.

Established Community Facilities

Wellington Shire benefits from a significant network of community infrastructure, including:

- The Wedge Performing Arts Centre
- Gippsland Art Gallery
- Aqua Energy and outdoor pools
- Gippsland Regional Sports Complex
- Libraries
- Community halls
- Parks and reserves
- Great Southern Rail Trail, Gippsland Plains Rail Trail, walking trails and open spaces

These facilities provide a strong platform for future participation, programming, community connection and place activation.

Strong Community Participation and Pride

Community groups, volunteers and residents play a vital role in delivering activities and experiences across the municipality. Their contribution helps build strong, connected and resilient communities.

Events that Activate Places

Events and festivals promote participation, visitation and community connection. Several events are recognised well beyond Wellington Shire and attract visitors who contribute to the local economy and experience the region. There is an opportunity to further strengthen these experiences and encourage increased overnight visitation.



Opportunities & Challenges CONTINUATION

Diverse and Creative Community Organisations

A wide range of community organisations, clubs, artists, performers and volunteers contribute to Wellington’s arts, culture and leisure landscape, creating opportunities for participation, creativity and community development.

Growth in Cultural Tourism and Regional Visitation

Arts, culture, heritage and events provide opportunities to attract visitors, strengthen Wellington’s identity and support local businesses and communities.

Increased Collaboration and Partnership Arrangements

Stronger partnerships between Council, community organisations, artists, businesses, educational institutions and government agencies can increase capacity and improve outcomes.

Leveraging Technology and Digital Engagement

Technology provides opportunities to increase access, participation, promotion and community engagement across arts, culture and leisure activities.

External Funding and Investment and Sponsorship

Strategic partnerships and project development may unlock external funding opportunities to support infrastructure, facilities, programs and initiatives.

Health, Wellbeing and Active Lifestyles

Growing recognition of the value of arts, culture and leisure in supporting health and wellbeing presents opportunities to strengthen participation and community outcomes.

Venue and Place Activation

Community facilities, public spaces, parks, trails and town centres present significant opportunities for activation through arts, culture, leisure and events. By making greater use of these spaces, Wellington can create more vibrant places, encourage participation, strengthen community identity and improve visitor experiences.



Opportunities & Challenges CONTINUATION

OUR CHALLENGES



Limited Funding and Competing Priorities

Resources are finite and competition for external funding continues to increase.



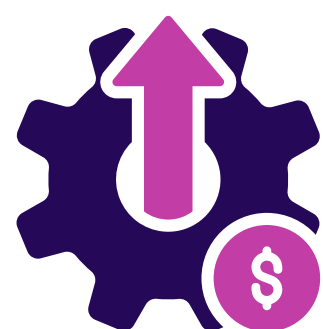
Uneven Access Across the Municipality

Distance and location can create barriers to participation for some communities.



Cost of Living Pressures

Increasing household costs may impact participation and affordability.



Rising Operational and Infrastructure Costs

The cost of maintaining and operating facilities continues to grow.



Competition from Larger Regional Centres

Wellington competes with larger municipalities for events, visitors and investment.



Changing Community Expectations

Participation trends and community expectations continue to evolve.

Proposed Vision

A vibrant, creative and connected Wellington where **arts, culture and leisure** celebrate our people, places and stories, enrich lives, strengthen communities and enhance wellbeing for all.

Our Guiding Principles

These principles will guide decision-making, investment and implementation of the Strategy.



Community Focus

We listen to and respond to the needs, aspirations and priorities of the community.



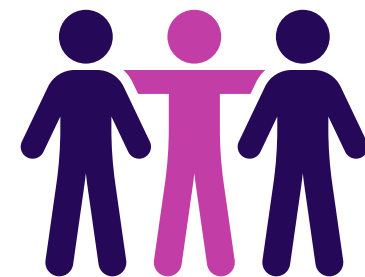
Balanced Financial Responsibility

We make responsible financial decisions and prioritise investments that deliver the greatest value and lasting benefits to our community.



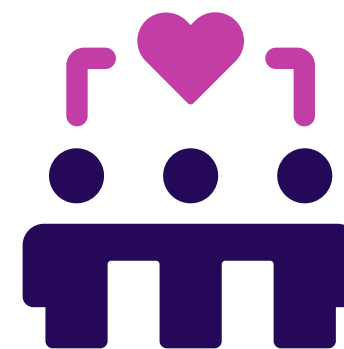
Partnerships and Shared Responsibility

We collaborate with businesses, community groups, government agencies and other stakeholders to achieve shared outcomes.



Leveraging Local Strengths

We build on our unique natural places, assets, people and communities to maximise opportunities across Wellington Shire.



Enabling Growth and Participation

We create opportunities by building capability, fostering connections and supporting individuals, organisations and communities to succeed.



Strong Communities and Places

We support initiatives that strengthen participation, belonging, liveability, visitation and community pride.

Strategic Outcomes (CREATE Principles Framework)

The CREATE Principles Framework provides the foundation for Wellington Shire’s Arts, Culture and Leisure Strategy 2027-2037. The framework identifies the key principles and aspirations that will guide future planning, investment, partnerships and decision-making across arts, culture and leisure. Together, the CREATE Principles describe the outcomes we want to achieve for our communities over the next decade.



CONNECT

Strong and Connected Communities

Arts, culture and leisure create opportunities for people to come together through shared experiences, participation, volunteering and community celebration.

We aim to strengthen social connections, build community pride and foster a sense of belonging.



RESPECT

Celebrating People, Places and Stories

Wellington’s people, places, stories, cultures and heritage are valued, recognised and celebrated.

We aim to honour local identity, showcase creative and cultural expression, and strengthen appreciation of the unique character of our communities.



ENGAGE

Participation and Access for All

People of all ages, abilities and backgrounds have opportunities to participate in arts, culture and leisure activities.

We aim to reduce barriers, improve accessibility and encourage lifelong participation across the municipality.



ACTIVATE

Vibrant Places and Experiences

Arts, culture, leisure and events bring life to community facilities, public spaces and townships.

We aim to activate venues and places, create memorable experiences and enhance the vibrancy of Wellington’s communities.



THRIVE

Wellbeing and Liveability

Arts, culture and leisure make an important contribution to health, wellbeing, liveability and community resilience.

We aim to support thriving communities where people feel connected, active, creative and engaged.



ENABLE

Sustainable Futures

Strong facilities, organisations, partnerships and investment help create the conditions for arts, culture and leisure to flourish.

We aim to build capacity, encourage innovation, strengthen partnerships and support sustainable opportunities that enable arts, culture and leisure to grow and respond to the changing needs of our communities.

Proposed Strategic Themes

The following themes apply across the entire Strategy and will guide future planning, investment and decision-making.



Participation and Access

Supporting equitable opportunities for people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds to participate in arts, culture and leisure experiences.



Community Wellbeing

Recognising the important contribution arts, culture and leisure make to physical, social, emotional and mental wellbeing.



Connected Communities

Creating opportunities for people to come together through shared experiences, volunteering, recreation, creativity and community events.



Venue and Place Activation

Activating community facilities, public spaces and places through arts, culture, leisure and events.



Partnerships and Collaboration

Working together with community groups, artists, businesses, schools, sporting organisations, volunteers and government agencies to achieve shared outcomes.



Inclusion and Belonging

Creating environments where everyone feels welcome, respected, represented and able to participate.

Strategic Pillars

The Strategy is proposed to be delivered through four strategic pillars.

Arts, Culture & Leisure Strategy

KEY Pillars

Vibrant Community | Creative Identity | Wellbeing | Economic Growth



PERFORMING ARTS

Supporting theatre, music, dance and live performance that inspire, entertain and connect our community.



VISUAL ARTS

Nurturing creativity, celebrating our stories, and showcasing talent through visual expression.



LEISURE

Promoting active lifestyles, recreation and access to quality facilities and spaces for all ages and abilities.

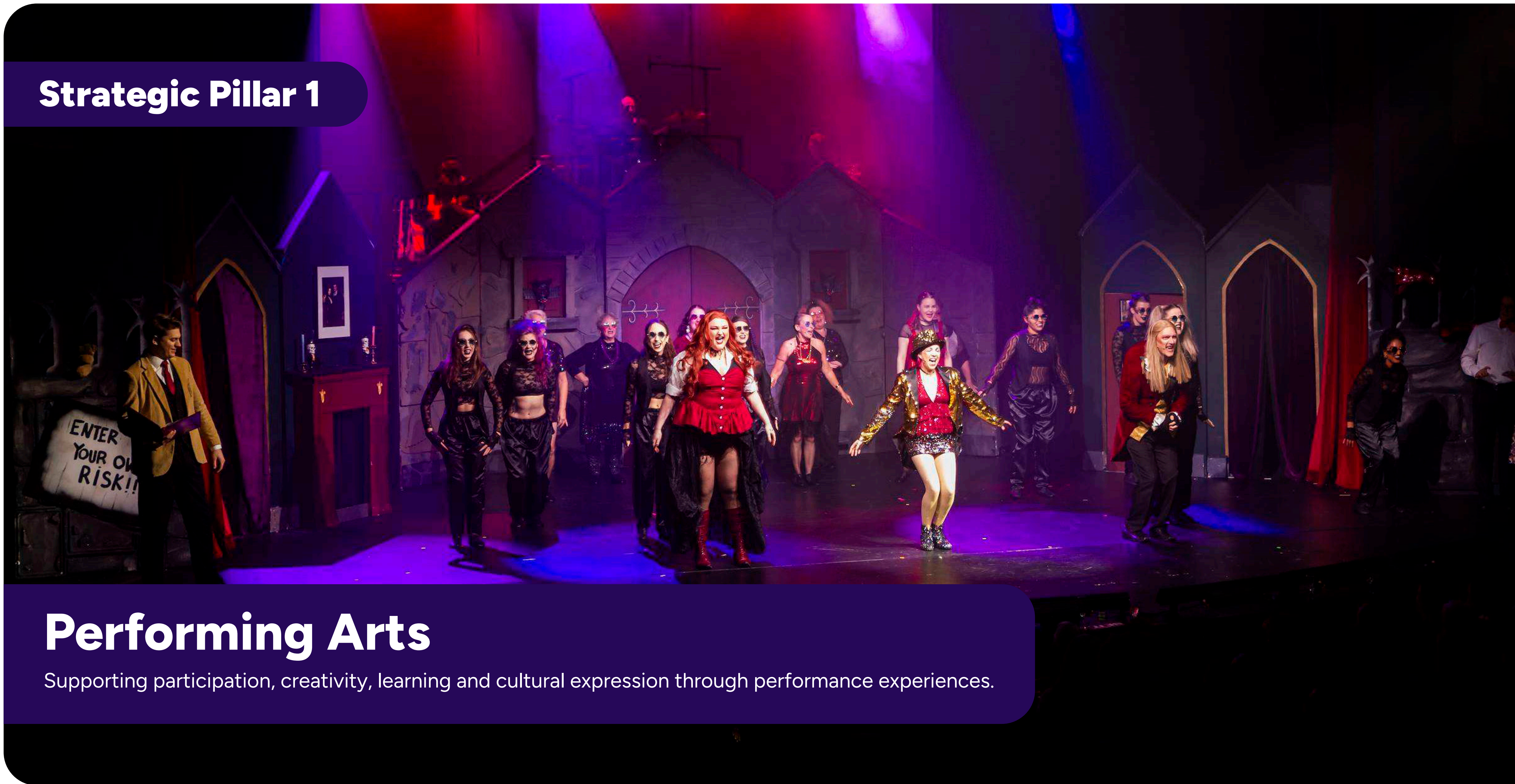


MAJOR EVENTS & FESTIVALS

Delivering and supporting events and festivals that celebrate culture, attract visitors and strengthen our community.

Strong Foundations | Connected Community | Bright Future

Strategic Pillar 1



Performing Arts

Supporting participation, creativity, learning and cultural expression through performance experiences.

Strategic Pillar 1



EXAMPLE PRIORITY 1.1

Participation and Audience Development

Creating opportunities for people to participate in and experience performing arts.

Example Initiatives for Discussion

- Community theatre programs.
- Touring performances to smaller communities.
- School partnerships.
- Partner with industry agencies and community groups to offer youth performing arts programs.
- Community performance opportunities.



EXAMPLE PRIORITY 1.2

Creative and Talent Development

Supporting local performers and emerging creative talent.

Example Initiatives for Discussion

- Partner with industry agencies and community groups to offer Artist mentoring programs.
- Performance showcases.
- Partner with industry agencies to offer Professional development.
- Networking opportunities.
- Youth creative pathways.



EXAMPLE PRIORITY 1.3

Diverse Programming and Experiences

Providing engaging and diverse performing arts experiences.

Example Initiatives for Discussion

- Partner with industry agencies and community groups to offer expanded programming.
- Community productions.
- Cultural performance initiatives.
- Audience development programs.

Strategic Pillar 2

Visual Arts

Supporting creativity, artistic expression and storytelling.

Strategic Pillar 2



EXAMPLE PRIORITY 2.1

Artist and Creative Development

Supporting artists and creative practitioners to develop and thrive.

Example Initiatives for Discussion

- Partner with industry agencies and community groups to offer artist development programs.
- Partner with industry agencies and community groups to offer Workshops and masterclasses.
- Mentoring opportunities.
- Partner with Industry and Government agencies to offer creative networking.
- Emerging artist support.



EXAMPLE PRIORITY 2.2

Public Art and Creative Places

Using visual arts to activate places and celebrate identity.

Example Initiatives for Discussion

- Partner with industry agencies and community groups to explore public art projects.
- Creative place-making initiatives.
- Partner with industry agencies and community groups to offer Temporary art installations.



EXAMPLE PRIORITY 3.3

Arts Participation and Experiences

Increasing opportunities for communities to engage with visual arts.

Example Initiatives for Discussion

- Partner with industry agencies and community groups to explore Community exhibitions.
- Support community arts projects.
- Partner with industry agencies and community groups to offer Creative workshops.
- Partner with Industry and Government agencies to explore regional collaborations.

Strategic Pillar 3

Leisure

Supporting healthy, active and connected communities.

Strategic Pillar 3



EXAMPLE PRIORITY 3.1

Active and Healthy Communities

Increasing participation in leisure and recreation opportunities.

Example Initiatives for Discussion

- Partner with industry agencies and community groups to increase recreation participation programs.
- Partner with industry agencies and community groups to offer Community wellbeing programs.
- Healthy lifestyle programs.
- Outdoor recreation opportunities.



EXAMPLE PRIORITY 3.2

Accessible and Inclusive Recreation

Reducing barriers and improving access to participation.

Example Initiatives for Discussion

- Partner with industry agencies and community groups to offer Inclusive recreation programs.
- Accessibility improvements.
- Partner with industry agencies and community groups to increase programs for underrepresented groups.
- Flexible participation opportunities.
- Community partnerships.



EXAMPLE PRIORITY 3.3

Parks, Spaces and Community Activation

Making greater use of public spaces for recreation and community connection.

Example Initiatives for Discussion

- Partner with industry agencies and community groups to increase park activation programs.
- Outdoor community activities.
- Temporary activation projects.

Strategic Pillar 4

Major Events and Festivals

Supporting events that celebrate community, activate places and attract visitors.

Strategic Pillar 4



EXAMPLE PRIORITY 4.1

Signature Events and Experiences

Growing events that enhance Wellington’s profile and visitor appeal.

Example Initiatives for Discussion

- Partner with Industry and Government agencies to explore regional festivals opportunities.
- Seasonal events.
- Partner with Industry and Government agencies to explore Arts and cultural festivals.
- Destination experiences.
- Tourism-focused programming.



EXAMPLE PRIORITY 4.2

Place Activation and Community Celebration

Using events to activate public spaces and strengthen community identity.

Example Initiatives for Discussion

- Town centre (eg. Port of Sale) activation.
- Community celebrations.
- Outdoor cultural experiences.
- Public space programming.

Wellington in 2037

Imagine Wellington in 2037.

A place where:

- Creativity is visible and celebrated.
- Public spaces are vibrant and activated.
- Community facilities are welcoming and well used.
- People of all ages participate in arts, culture and leisure.
- Festivals and events bring communities together.
- Young people have opportunities to create and lead.
- Local stories are celebrated.

Have Your Say

Council wants to hear from you.

Discussion Questions

1. What do you value most about arts, culture and leisure in Wellington?
2. Does the proposed vision reflect the future you would like to see?
3. Do the proposed strategic outcomes capture what is important?
4. Do the strategic themes reflect Wellington’s key opportunities and challenges?
5. Are the four pillars the right areas of focus?
6. Which proposed priorities should Council focus on first?
7. What opportunities are missing?
8. What barriers prevent participation?
9. What should Wellington be known for in 2037?
10. How can arts, culture and leisure better support health and wellbeing?
11. Is there anything else Council should consider?

Next Steps

Feedback received through this Discussion Paper will help refine the Vision, Outcomes, Themes, Pillars, Priorities and future actions that will form Wellington Shire's Arts, Culture and Leisure Strategy 2027–2037.

Together, we can help shape a vibrant, creative and connected Wellington where arts, culture and leisure continue to enrich lives, strengthen communities and enhance.