



CASE STUDY

8 Willis Street, Wellington

Design-led regeneration of a Wellington landmark

Client	Argosy Property Limited
Tenants	Stats NZ Tauranga Aoteroa
Location	8 Willis Street, Wellington CBD
Completion	2022
Scale	12 levels ~13,300 m ²

Challenge

By 2018, 8 Willis Street no longer met market expectations. The existing B-grade commercial tower was hampered by poor seismic performance, ageing building services, limited natural light, and building amenity didn't meet modern commercial office requirements. Demolition was an option on the table, but our client, Argosy, had a more ambitious vision.

Argosy sought an outcome that would minimise embodied carbon, strengthen long-term commercial value, and deliver a resilient, high-quality workplace for major government tenants. Achieving that required overcoming significant complexity:

- A tightly constrained inner-city site with continuous pedestrian and vehicle movement
- Integration of the heritage-listed Category II Stewart Dawson's façade
- Ambitious seismic and sustainability performance targets
- The addition of three new levels to the existing structure

Our approach

Our role extended well beyond construction delivery. Engaged early as a multi-disciplined design-and-build partner with deep knowledge of Wellington's built environment, we worked alongside Architecture Plus, Beca, and the wider engineering team from the outset — contributing technical judgement across structural strategy, buildability, and programme sequencing.

This early involvement aligned design intent with practical delivery from day one, providing the expertise and collaborative framework needed to navigate the complexity of a project of this scale and nature.

90%
of construction waste
diverted from landfill

1904
tonnes of embodied
carbon savings
through adaptive
reuse

6 Green Star
Office built rated
refurbishment

130%
New Building Standard
(NBS) seismic
performance





Why it matters

Adaptive reuse — A commercially and environmentally sound decision

Rather than demolish and rebuild, we supported a strategy to retain the majority of the existing concrete frame. Independent lifecycle assessments confirmed carbon savings of more than 1,904 tonnes compared to a full rebuild — a compelling environmental outcome that also reduced foundation risk and lowered overall project cost.

World-leading seismic performance

In close collaboration with Beca, we designed and delivered an innovative retrofit using 12 strategically placed viscous dampers, achieving 130% New Building Standard (NBS) while enabling three additional levels to be added above the existing structure. The solution preserved open, flexible floor plates without intrusive bracing, with the Beca Mood approach delivering a highly efficient damper configuration that minimised structural intervention without compromising performance.

Sustainability delivered — Not just designed

Sustainability was embedded in how the project was built, not just specified. On-site solar generation, rainwater harvesting, full electrification, and diversion of approximately 90% of construction waste from landfill translated design intent into measurable outcomes — contributing directly to the building achieving 6 Green Star – Office Built certification, the first refurbishment of its kind in Wellington.

Heritage integration

The project required careful protection and seamless integration of the historic Stewart Dawson's façade alongside refurbishment of the existing tower and construction of a new second tower. We coordinated strengthening works, temporary structures, and façade protection simultaneously — working in close partnership with heritage specialists and council authorities — without compromising public safety or the building's heritage values.

Outcomes & Impact

For Argosy

- B-grade asset repositioned as a premium, government-grade office building
- Long-term tenants secured: Stats NZ | Tauranga Aotearoa
- Lower carbon footprint — a genuine differentiator in the market
- Reduced foundation and ground-risk costs through frame retention
- Highly innovative, sustainable and resilient building, positioned well for the future.

For Tenants

- Large, flexible floor plates with high ceilings and excellent natural light
- Activity-based working supported by shared spaces and visual connectivity
- 130% NBS — resilience that supports uninterrupted public services in Wellington's high-risk seismic environment
- Fully electric, energy-efficient building aligned with government ESG commitments
- Reduced operational energy and organisational carbon footprint

“ Encompassing learnings from Argosy's previous Green Star projects, the design team and contractor McKee Fehl pushed the boundaries, implementing innovations and strategies for decarbonisation, seismic resilience and heritage adaptation. ”

Saatyesh Bhana, Head of Sustainability, Argosy Property



Recognition

One of the most recognised project in 2024, receiving Property Council New Zealand’s highest honour alongside multiple category wins — recognition across sustainability, heritage, seismic performance, and commercial excellence.

Property Council New Zealand

- Rider Levett Bucknall Supreme Award — Overall National Winner, 2024
- Best in Category — RCP Commercial Office Property Award
- Best in Category — Naylor Love Heritage & Adaptive Reuse Property Award
- Excellence Award — Resene Sustainable Building Property Award

New Zealand Institute of Architects Kāhui Whaihanga (NZIA)

- 2023 Wellington Architecture Award - Heritage
- 2023 Wellington Architecture Award - Commercial

NZ Commercial Project

- National Category Winner, Commercial
- Gold Award, Heritage & Restoration
- Gold Award, Commercial

Window and Glass Association (WGANZ)

- 2023 Sustainability Award
- 2023 Commercial Award
- 2023 Overall Winner

Stand-alone awards

- 2023 NZ Society for Earthquake Engineering - John Hollings Seismic Resilience in Practice Award
- 2023 The Institute of Structural Engineers Structural awards - Award for Innovation in Seismic Retrofil for improved resilience
- 2023 Council of Tall Buildings & Urban Habitat Structure - Award of excellence
- Finalist for the 2024 World Green Building Council Asia Pacific Network (APN) awards (WorldGBC APN Awards)

Project collaborators

The success of 8 Willis Street reflects the quality of collaboration across the entire project team. We are proud to have worked alongside:

Client	Argosy Property Limited
Tenants	Stats NZ Tauranga Aoteroa
Design Architect	Architecture Plus
Structural Engineer	Beca
Services Engineering	Wider specialist engineering team
Heritage Specialist	Ian Bowman