



The Future of Play

**PLACES
AND SPACES**
FOR A THRIVING FUTURE



Play makes us feel excited, happy and connected. We often lose track of time when we play.

As adults if we reflect on our own adventures as children, from flying kites to bullrush in the park, biking to friends' houses or playing cops and robbers, many children today don't experience those same simple pleasures we did 'back in our day', with concern about safety or danger of our precious tamariki.

Why is play important?

Play is a term used by Sport New Zealand to support and advocate for our tamariki to be active and support cognitive development.

Play contributes to not only children's lives but also the wellbeing of our whānau and friends, helping to create a healthy and active community. It takes us away from a structured environment and provides a sense of freedom. Play can happen anywhere at any time and by anyone. In Central Hawke's Bay we are fortunate to have a great outdoor playground that includes our rivers, beaches, parks and reserves, providing the opportunity for all ages to participate in play activities.

However, levels of play are declining due to changes all around us in the way that we live - whether the increased busy-ness or impact of roads or parents working long hours.

Not engaging in play can have detrimental effects on the learning, development and health of our tamariki and wider community, and negatively impact on our general health and wellbeing.

Having healthy and well communities is key in supporting a Thriving Central Hawke's Bay!

Isn't play just for kids?

Play is now recognised as one of the most important things communities can do to support young people to lead active and healthy lives, and to help them learn and grow. In later life play also supports our health and sense of 'fun' and wider wellbeing.

With support from Sport New Zealand, Councils all over New Zealand are developing play strategies to ensure simple things like how our tamariki can travel to and from their friends' homes safely, through to how to create more playful environments in communities for people of all ages. This investment recognises the important role that play has in improving our wellbeing in the widest sense.

Why are we having this conversation?

With play and its connections to community sport and being more physically active intricately linked, we're partnering with support and funding from Sport New Zealand and Sport Hawke's Bay to bring play back to our Tamariki of Tamatea - Central Hawke's Bay!

Play is the shared responsibility of everyone. It needs clear and strong leadership from those who can enable play. This includes the views and opinions of young people. It is equally important in the settings of home, school and community.



We have created this discussion document to start the conversation about the future of play across our district. This conversation will take many forms over the the next few months, and we hope that together we can all create a shared vision for the future of play that will guide our investment as a community and help us achieve healthy and active communities.

How play contributes to our Project Thrive outcomes

Connected Citizens	Play is a way in which our tamariki and rangatahi connect with each other, usually on their own terms and usually doing something that is lots of fun!
Proud District	Play provides a reflection of who we are as a community and where we have come from.
Strong Communities	Play helps us to be physically active in a fun way, improve social and emotional connections, improve learning and development skills, and connect with the physical and natural environment. Play is a critical element in improving people's individual wellbeing, as well as being of benefit to our wider community.
Durable Infrastructure	Play opportunities meet the needs of our community today and in the future.

Our Play opportunities now

Council's role in play is primarily through:

- The planning, funding and operation of open spaces, community facilities and active transport routes which enable play, as well as active recreation and sport.
- Support for spaces, places, and initiatives to encourage more people to be more active such as play streets.

Council currently provides six playgrounds and monitor a seventh one that is on Council Road reserve. These are located in Waipukurau (x 2), Waipawa, Otāne, Takapau, Pōrangahau and Kairakau.

Council was recently successful in applying to the Sport Hawke's Bay Tū Manawa Active Aotearoa Fund to obtain funding to build a Play Trailer and a person to promote, educate and encourage the use of the Play Trailer. The purpose of this trailer is to educate and encourage free play across Central Hawke's Bay. The Play Activator will promote the Play Trailer within schools and community and educate about the importance of free play for children. The Play Trailer will then be used by the community as a resource to promote play.

Communities across Central Hawke's Bay are providing their own play opportunities. For example, the hop scotch on the footpath in Pōrangahau, located next to the library fridge. We have been told that one of the most popular play activities for young people in Pōrangahau is to go to the 'third bend' in the river. Schools also provide their own playgrounds and other play opportunities. Our natural environment provides one big play opportunity for so many different play activities from jumping into the river through to building huts in the bush.

During 2021 Sport Hawke's Bay engaged directly with children at primary schools across Central Hawke's Bay District to ask what kind of play they enjoyed and what they needed to play. The results of this survey will help us develop a strategy for the future of play in our district.

Through this engagement, our tamariki have told us about their play preferences. We know their views on accessibility and connections, safety, barriers to play, where they go to hang out, what their favourite places to play are, and what we can do to help make it easier to play. We also know that some schools want to participate more in this process to determine the future of play in Central Hawke's Bay.

Some national trends around the future of play include (sourced from Sport New Zealand):

The Active New Zealand Survey identifies that 76% of young people participate in play, active recreation and sport for the purpose of having fun. 53% of young people's physical activity comes from play. The positive benefits of play include:

- Being physically active in a fun way that develops fundamental movement skills
- Encouraging self-directed creativity and innovation

- Improving social and emotional connection
- Improving a young person's understanding of their relationship with the physical environment
- Improving resilience, independence and leadership by determining their own outcomes
- Aiding better decision-making based around elements of challenge and risk.

Sport New Zealand have confirmed that their efforts over the period of 2020-24 will be focused on tamariki (5-11 year olds) and rangatahi (12-18 year olds). With tamariki, the major focus will be through Play and Physical Education and with rangatahi it will be Active Recreation and Sport. In doing so, Sport New Zealand aspire to reduce the drop off in activity levels of rangatahi from age 12-18 and increase the levels of activity for those tamariki and rangatahi who are less active.

Play presents a significant opportunity for us to support the Government's goal for Aotearoa New Zealand to be the best country in the world to be a child. The lockdowns have forced most whānau with tamariki to be creative about their play opportunities and environments. With public playgrounds closed, being playful and active with their tamariki was challenging for a great number of whānau. We have knowledge and experience to activate play in communities across Aotearoa New Zealand.

We think that the key principles guiding the future of play in our district could be:

- Play is something that every single one can and should engage in.
- Play is a vital part of our community and we want all our tamariki and rangatahi to experience fun, joy and laughter through play.
- Play is the shared responsibility of everyone in our community.
- All young people should have access to enriched and varied playful experiences within their local environments.

The opportunities we have identified so far include:

- We have a really good starting point in understanding what our children's play needs are through the Play Survey. We can now look at how we can empower our communities to increase access to play experiences for our tamariki and rangatahi.
- We know that play for tamariki and rangatahi is a priority nationally, and that there are opportunities to access funding to get some really good play outcomes for our community.
- Given the extent of infrastructure provided by Council, there is an ability for Council to influence play in a broader way through a commitment to reflect a fun, playful, flexible approach in all our places and spaces.
- How might we leverage technology in our community to enhance play experiences? For example, through enabling connection, creativity, learning and relaxation utilising technology?
- How might we recognise and celebrate our culture, local stories and unique ways of playing within our district?
- How might we create a healthier balance between learning risks and child safety?
- How might we create public play spaces and opportunities that everyone can enjoy?
- Our natural environment is a strong enabler for play, how can we ensure our tamariki and rangatahi continue to feel connected to the great outdoors for their play opportunities?

The challenges we have identified so far include:

- Population growth will see more tamariki and rangatahi wanting to access play opportunities as well as expectations of what is available. The increased busy-ness of urban and rural areas, as a result of growth, may mean there is less space for play or young people don't feel as safe in public areas eg. ability to safely cross a busy road to access play opportunities.
- Young people can feel isolated in rural areas with no public transport to get to urban areas that have specific play facilities; however, they do have greater access to the outdoor environment at their back door. How do we create equitable access to play opportunities across our district, while recognising the different characteristics of our communities?

- Play is deeply influenced by our culture and whānau experiences and expectations of play. There is a need to gain more insights into the multi-cultural perspectives of play to better understand what the barriers and opportunities for play are, especially for our young Māori and Pasifika people.
- The increased focus on safety and the resulting restrictions on play activities leaves less room for children to develop fundamental skills and confidence through risk-taking. Are we providing enough opportunities for unstructured play or play that enables young people to experience elements of risk?
- National benchmarking of playground provision highlights that our district is well below what other similar sized districts provide. We have two playgrounds per 1,000 children and the national median is over four playgrounds per 1,000 children. The five smallest councils participating in this benchmarking exercise (all under 25,000 population) have 5 playgrounds per 1,000 children.

Let us know your ideas?

We're still in the early phases of this work, however we are keen to hear your ideas to support Play in Tamatea - Central Hawke's Bay. You can do this by completing our online survey at www.chbdc.govt.nz/thriving-places-and-spaces or emailing us on thrivingplacesandspaces@chbdc.govt.nz