

TAIRAWHITI

PLAY SPACES PLAN

2018





ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Play Spaces Plan is one of a suite of plans prepared under the Tairāwhiti Community Facilities Strategy.

The development of the Strategy was guided by a governance group of regional stakeholders including:

- ▶ Eastland Community Trust
- ▶ Gisborne art community
- ▶ Gisborne District Council
- ▶ Hiruharama School
- ▶ Sport Gisborne Tairāwhiti
- ▶ Tairāwhiti Cultural Development Trust
- ▶ Te Runanganui o Ngāti Porou
- ▶ Te Runanga o Turanganui a Kiwa
- ▶ Tolaga Bay Area School

Many other organisations and individuals have generously contributed to the Plan through focus groups, meetings and submissions.

Many thanks to all of these people for the time and energy they volunteered to ensure Tairāwhiti has a clear path for our community facilities.

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PLAN ON A PAGE

The Plan on a Page summarises the key parts of the Play Spaces Plan – the key issues and opportunities, the objectives and the actions. Details are in the body of the document.

KEY ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

- ▶ Changes in play provision
- ▶ Distribution and hierarchy
- ▶ Play for all ages and abilities - inclusivity
- ▶ Collaboration and community participation
- ▶ Quality design
- ▶ Maintenance and management
- ▶ Affordability.

OBJECTIVES

Distribution and hierarchy

- ▶ To create a hierarchy of play spaces, based on geographic precincts across the region, to deliver the best play value to the greatest number of people with available resources.

Play for all ages and abilities

- ▶ To ensure that people of all ages (from the very young to the very old) and abilities (physical and intellectual) have access to a wide range of appropriate play activities that encourage easy interaction and uphold the dignity of the individual.

Collaboration and community participation

- ▶ By 2019, Council and the community are working together to bring to bear the resources of the full community in providing, designing, funding and caring for a network of play spaces that meets community needs.

Quality design

- ▶ To ensure a variety of play opportunities in spaces that are sympathetic to the surrounding environment and which our community, particularly our children, love to use.

Financial sustainability

- ▶ To ensure the play spaces network is provided in a way that the community can afford.

Maintenance and management

- ▶ To ensure that play spaces remain safe, in good working, free of hazards and attractive.

Key actions	Partners	Cost (est)	Timeframe
1. Establish a Community Facilities Relationships and Partnerships position responsible for: community partnerships; and alternative funding arrangements	GDC / SGT / ECT	\$90,000 pa	By Jul 2018
2. Develop a play spaces design guide that includes advice on options for safety and security, provision for all ages and abilities etc.	GDC	\$60,000	By Jun 2019
3. Prepare a play spaces development and upgrade programme (considering timing of the planned township plan upgrades)	GDC	Internal	By Jun 2020



INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE

The purpose of this Plan is to enable holistic and innovative thinking around affordable and effective future provision of play spaces within the Tairāwhiti-Gisborne region.

SCOPE

The Plan provides the strategic direction for play spaces in the Tairāwhiti-Gisborne region for the next 20+ years. It is a tool to assist decisions on planning, funding, managing and operating play spaces. This Plan does not replace the need for more detailed site-specific research and analysis during project development.

LIVING DOCUMENT

The Plan has been developed based on current information available. But communities aren't static. The way we view facility provision shouldn't be static either. The Plan needs to be able to 'bend and sway' as information is updated and planning evolves over time. Regular reviews are important.

HOW TO USE THIS PLAN

The document is organised into the following parts:

PART A: Context of play spaces activities and provision

PART B: Issues and opportunities

PART C: Objectives and policies

PART D: The network

PART E: Actions

IMPORTANCE OF PLAY SPACES

Play spaces are important to our Tairāwhiti-Gisborne community.

- ▶ Play is fundamental to the development of every individual to the maximum of their potential. Through independent or cooperative play, children can learn about themselves and their environment, while stimulating their creative, emotional, and physical development.
- ▶ Play is an activity for all ages and abilities, especially children and young people. It encompasses children's behaviour which is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. It is a fundamental and integral part of healthy development - not only for individual children, but also for the society in which they live.
- ▶ While play has a serious role in the development of healthy bodies and minds, it is perhaps the more joyous measure of laughter arising from play that characterises community and individual wellbeing.
- ▶ At its core, play, along with the basic needs of nutrition, health, shelter and education, is vital to develop the potential of all children. At a societal level, play helps bring people together and builds stronger communities.
- ▶ Play benefits all ages in different ways. The greatest benefits are to children through their early development years when the body and mind is growing in response to environmental stimulation amongst other factors. Indeed, play is so important to the development of healthy and resilient children, it has been recognised as a fundamental human right in the Convention on the Rights of the Child - Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which states:

“That every child has the right to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts”.

BENEFITS OF PLAY

- ▶ Develops physical fitness, strength and agility. Provides health benefits that come with being active, include combatting ill-health including obesity. Builds fine and gross motor skills.
- ▶ Play allows children to assess danger and navigate risk and to solve problems through understanding cause and effect. This leads to more resilience and better decision making. It allows the development of proprioceptive ability – the awareness of one's own body in space – as well as balance and co-ordination
- ▶ Play provides for fun, laughter and a sense of joy. It provides a sense of freedom and autonomy and helps create a sense of belonging.
- ▶ Play spaces provide opportunities for social interaction and to build relationships and community connections. It encourages cooperative behaviour and tolerance of diversity through side-by-side interaction in neutral space. It helps develop personal virtues such as sharing and compassion.
- ▶ Following the Canterbury earthquakes and subsequent rebuild activities, the Canterbury DHB Wellbeing Survey revealed a significant increase in the sense of well-being amongst Cantabrians because of having greater access to parks and events, including the newly opened Takaro-a-Poi/Margaret Mahy Family Playground.
- ▶ Play spaces are a centre of attraction. They create a vibrancy and energy that contributes positively to local sense of place, identity and image.

PLAY SPACES AT A GLANCE

Tairāwhiti-Gisborne has 44 playgrounds in the Council's ownership. Of the 44 playgrounds, there are:

- ▶ 4 Adventure/Destination playgrounds
- ▶ 9 playgrounds that also include skateparks and/or basketball halfcourts
- ▶ 5 skateparks (some with halfcourts) that have no playground equipment
- ▶ 26 conventional playgrounds with play modules and proprietary play equipment.

There are 14 rural playgrounds, the other 30 are within the city.

The equipment condition of the 44 playgrounds are variable:

- ▶ 29 playgrounds are in a good to excellent condition
- ▶ 2 playgrounds are in a very poor to poor condition
- ▶ 13 playgrounds have equipment that varies between very poor to excellent.

There are other playgrounds that are not in the Council's ownership (i.e. schools and marae) that contribute to the region's available play assets. If these are made accessible to the public this would contribute further to the play network.



ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

CHANGES IN PLAY PROVISION

- ▶ The approach to play provision in New Zealand is changing. We have moved from a risk-averse era to a period when managed risk is understood to be important for children. Through negotiating risk, children test and develop their abilities and become more confident and competent adults. This is evident in the recent review of the NZ Playground Equipment and Surfacing Standards NZS:5828 2015 which balances the need to offer risk with the need to keep children safe from serious harm.
- ▶ Changes to the standards to enable greater levels of risk is resulting in play apparatus becoming more challenging for children. We are starting to see taller, faster, more stimulating and exciting play equipment appear in playgrounds around New Zealand.
- ▶ Other trends are emerging around less reliance on off-the-shelf apparatus in a park to deliver play. For instance, natural play environments, digitally enhanced play games, and use of a wider network of diverse spaces than parks and schools are starting to emerge as future trends.
- ▶ An emerging school of thought is around the concept of neighbourhoods as the play venue. The phrase “playbourhood” was coined by parent Mike Lanza and describes a move back to neighbourhoods where children are encouraged to play freely between backyards, streets, transitional spaces such as streets and public open spaces. It involves creating opportunities to extend play spaces outside of traditional parks. Play can and does occur anywhere. It is the activity itself that defines play, not the location or structures. There are opportunities for diverse and connected play experiences beyond parks.
- ▶ Play environments within New Zealand and globally are changing as we come to appreciate more about the needs of children, the value of exposing children to managed risk, and the diverse opportunities available to provide for play. Consequently, we are seeing the evolution of more diverse play environments that don't necessarily fit the traditional perception of a play space as a set of off-the-shelf equipment.
- ▶ There is a growing understanding that play benefits people of all ages from the very young to seniors, although research shows that the greatest benefits of play are derived during the formative years. There is sound reasoning therefore to continue to focus the provision of play on young children while taking a more holistic approach of spreading the play investment across all ages.



DISTRIBUTION AND HIERARCHY

- ▶ There is no evidence of a planned network (distribution and hierarchy) of play spaces across the region based on geographic spread and population density. There is no clear guidance for what level of investment and where will have the most bang for its buck.
- ▶ Each of the major destination play spaces are concentrated in Gisborne City while the other areas are not serviced to the same level. While destination play spaces are higher cost and cannot be justified for all townships, there is a need to consider how to provide across the region.

PLAY FOR ALL AGES AND ABILITIES - INCLUSIVITY

- ▶ Playgrounds are most successful when they cater for the widest range of people across the spectrum of social, cognitive and physical ability. Many of the playgrounds in Tairāwhiti are not accessible for all abilities. For instance, they have physical edge barriers which prevent wheelchairs from moving into the space, surfaces are not firm and easily negotiated and routes are not visibly legible for people who have sight impairment. They also do not provide for the intellectually disabled.
- ▶ People of all ages can and do play. There needs to be attractions, activities and facilities for people of all ages, including older people, to partake in and/or observe. Supporting infrastructure is also important to provide for associated activities such as gathering and picnicking, and for comfort.
- ▶ There is a need to cater for an increasing young population, to ensure all children have access to play to build social, cognitive and physical competence. Note that the region has a high youth (aged under 15 years) population (24.6%) when compared to all of New Zealand (20.4%). Gisborne has the second highest total fertility rate in New Zealand (2.4 births per woman).
- ▶ Play takes on a different purpose as children become teenagers. Youth benefit from adaptable spaces that may not look like a play space. Important considerations are that these spaces support safe social interaction and allow age-appropriate activity eg skating, free-running. A few key items such as swings, ball courts and benches for gathering in different sized groups is a good basis for youth related spaces.
- ▶ Adults too need spaces in which they can play. There is an increasing understanding of how play can support cognitive, physical and behavioural functions into the older years of life. There is growing interest in how our public spaces can provide for the play needs of older people with spaces set aside for outdoor gyms and exercise equipment as well as more passive recreation such as chess and board games.

COLLABORATION AND COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

- ▶ Many play spaces do not appear to reflect a community character and sense of place. They are often off-the-shelf apparatus that are standard form and function. There are opportunities to engage communities in the design and planning of play spaces. The benefits of doing so include greater certainty that the play space will meet community needs; potential to harness community resources in delivery and care of play spaces; and greater likelihood that play spaces reflect local identity.
- ▶ Play spaces are typically stand-alone facilities. There is an opportunity to partner with school and marae trustees to offer play hubs – catering for play-based learning (innovative learning environments). It is noted that the Ministry of Education is moving away from cellular learning and using diverse environments for teaching/learning.
- ▶ Play spaces need to be relevant to the community they serve. With a high Maori population, it is suggested that a Mana Mātauranga approach could provide a relevant framework for community-based, place-based play environments. For instance, partnering with Ngāti Porou's Pou Hakinakina advisors for play spaces in their rohe, Rongowhakaata for development of play spaces in the area between Waikanae and Waipaoa and Ngāti Oneone for development of play on Titirangi.



QUALITY DESIGN

- ▶ Play spaces are generally comprised of proprietary play equipment located in parks on an area of cushionfall under surfacing. Generally, they are not well integrated into their surrounding environment. There could be greater consideration given to wider connections and holistic aesthetic appearance.
- ▶ Quality design has the potential to resolve and prevent issues from personal security to safety (particularly of young children near roads and waterways) to catering for diverse needs. It is important that design is done well to ensure all aspects of a site and needs of all users are considered.
- ▶ Play value is the measure of stimulation and challenge offered through the play environment. Many of the region's play spaces possess limited play value and are not very exciting.

MAINTENANCE AND MANAGEMENT

- ▶ Ongoing operational and renewal cost is a major consideration for Council. An annual condition audit is undertaken and identifies the play elements that are in poor condition, ageing and non-complying with the playground and under surfacing standards in NZS5828.

- ▶ A review of the 2016 playground audit for Tairāwhiti shows that many play equipment parts, impact-attenuation surfaces and edging materials are sub-standard. In places, equipment is dangerous as it is close to the failure point. In other instances, under surfacing material (predominantly cushion fall woodchip) has been scuffed away and no longer meets the impact absorption requirements. In some instances, equipment has entrapment areas and snags that could cause serious harm to children.

AFFORDABILITY

- ▶ Playgrounds comprised of proprietary equipment can be expensive. A standard off-the-shelf playground with associated under surfacing, shade and edge barriers will cost \$50,000 for a very modest installation and often much more. Furthermore, the existing 44 playgrounds in the region require ongoing maintenance, replacement and upgrading.
- ▶ Because of the high cost of supplying and maintaining play spaces, not all playgrounds in the region are being renewed and maintained to provide an adequate level of service. Sites such as Titirangi and many of the township playgrounds need capital investment to bring them up to standard.



PART C: OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

DISTRIBUTION AND HIERARCHY

OBJECTIVE

- ▶ To create a hierarchy of play spaces, based on geographic precincts across the region, to deliver the best play value to the greatest number of people with available resources.

POLICIES

- ▶ Provision of play spaces will take a precinct-based approach and be based on three tiers:
 - Tier one (Destination) play spaces to be located in places of greatest population and attraction, where they are most likely to create spill over effects
 - Tier two (Local) play spaces to be located in every township and every precinct as defined in the Parks and Open Spaces Plan
- Tier three (Activated) play spaces to be integrated throughout the region's urban settlements, townships and rural areas.
- ▶ The nature of provision for all tiers will take into account the community to be serviced, the needs to be met, geographic spread, access to transport networks (including walk and cycleways) and costs of provision. The specifications and levels of service for the three tiers are outlined in this Plan.
- ▶ Streets will be designed to support playful interventions and safe transitions throughout towns and neighbourhoods.
- ▶ New neighbourhoods and revitalisation of existing places will look for opportunities to develop along the lines of a 'playbourhood' where streets, backyards and parks become the integrated play venue without the need for adult supervision.

PLAY FOR ALL AGES AND ABILITIES

OBJECTIVE

- ▶ To ensure that people of all ages (from the very young to the very old) and abilities (physical and intellectual) have access to a wide range of appropriate play activities that encourage easy interaction and uphold the dignity of the individual.

POLICIES

- ▶ Play spaces will be designed based on careful consideration of play values that are age-appropriate for the community demographics. Not all play spaces will be suitable for all ages, however within the play spaces network there will be play opportunities for all.
- ▶ Play spaces will be as inclusive and accessible as possible including:
 - avoiding barriers for people with social, cognitive and physical disabilities
 - providing relevant supporting infrastructure such as mobility carparking and accessible toilets
 - providing opportunities for activity and stimulation for all ranges of social, cognitive and physical ability
 - providing for the distinctive needs of people of different age groups.



COLLABORATION AND COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

OBJECTIVE

- ▶ By 2019, Council and the community are working together to bring to bear the resources of the full community in providing, designing, funding and caring for a network of play spaces that meets community needs.

POLICIES

- ▶ Council will collaborate with communities, including mana whenua, agencies, schools, community groups and funders to provide, fund and manage the play spaces network and to ensure spaces are shared to a greater extent for benefit to the wider region.
- ▶ The type and scale of Council's contribution to play spaces will reflect the priorities in this Plan and:
 - be consistent with the investment framework in the Community Facilities Strategy
 - be aligned with Council's strategic framework (vision, values, community outcomes, strategic priorities, strategies and policies).
- ▶ Council will work with local communities to identify opportunities to develop neighbourhood play spaces

consistent with the intention of this Plan. This is on the basis that local communities are best place to understand local needs and have untapped potential to contribute to design and maintenance of play spaces. Council will adopt a case-by-case approach to developing local play spaces so that local community needs and aspirations can be reflected.

- ▶ Council will work together with partners such as mana whenua, schools and private landowners to consider shared provision and management of play spaces consistent with the intention of this Plan.
- ▶ Council will work with mana whenua to ensure that mana whenua values are reflected in the planning, design and management of play spaces including reflecting tikanga Maori, integrating traditional forms of Maori play and activities and being sympathetic to cultural practices. Opportunities will be sought to integrate elements that express the unique relation of mana whenua with play sites, including through planting, interpretive elements and thematic styling.
- ▶ Council will foster voluntary community involvement in the care of our play spaces (subject to being able to meet health and safety requirements) through a programme of "care groups".



QUALITY DESIGN

OBJECTIVE

- ▶ To provide a variety of healthy play opportunities in spaces that are sympathetic to the surrounding environment and which our community, particularly our children, love to use.

POLICIES

- ▶ Play spaces will have high play values that cater for all ages and abilities and will:
 - be unique, stimulating, imaginative and challenging
 - provide a variety of play experiences including individual, social, active and creative play types
 - provide for rocking, spinning, sliding, tunnels and squeeze experiences and activities that promote gross motor skills such as climbing
 - provide diverse sensory stimulation e.g. sounds, textures, smells, taste, visual interest
 - be designed for safety while providing managed risk and challenge, through a series of graduated play experiences, to create confidence and competence within children.
- ▶ Play spaces will be designed to fit with the surrounding environment and incorporate local values and aspirations.
- ▶ Play space design considers flexibility in provision of play opportunities beyond traditional fixed equipment. It considers the potential for:
 - mobile play facilities contained in transportable containers that can be shifted from site to site
 - pop-up events - adult-curated play programmes of a temporary nature
 - loose parts play, contained on site or nearby, that can be packed in and out under supervision
 - the use of the natural environment as wild spaces with non-proprietary play interventions including tree climbing, scrambling, digging areas, hut building
 - Interactive Augmented Reality (IAR) and digital games using hand held devices to create fantasy play in parks and other areas in the open space network
 - water play
 - play trails.
- ▶ Play spaces will provide suitable infrastructure (such as shade and drinking fountains) to support enjoyable, safe and fun experience for the whole family. To ensure this, soft and natural infrastructure that is well placed and designed will be used instead of hard structures such as fences and shade structures where practicable.
- ▶ Design ensures that the investment has a balanced approach to the provision of play value and does not involve undue expenditure on associated elements that are not essential to the play experience.



FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

OBJECTIVE

- ▶ To ensure the play spaces network is provided in a way that the community can afford.

POLICIES:

- ▶ Decisions on investment in play spaces consider the whole of life costs when selecting proprietary apparatus. Decisions on apparatus and materials will consider the whole of life costs of maintaining the fixtures and facilities rather than a lowest up-front cost approach.
- ▶ Council will look beyond proprietary equipment to

deliver play experiences and consider how the natural environment can be harnessed to provide more durable options eg trees for climbing and rocks for jumping off

- ▶ Council recognises that community needs and preferences for play spaces are diverse and changing, and will adopt an evidence based approach to determining priorities and updating investment plans.

MAINTENANCE AND MANAGEMENT

OBJECTIVE

- ▶ To ensure that play spaces remain safe, in good working, free of hazards and attractive

POLICY

- ▶ Council will maintain, and frequently review, a comprehensive asset management plan for its play spaces network and actively encourage and support other providers to do the same, particularly where Council is sharing provision and management with others.



PART D: THE NETWORK

The key to a successful network is to view the full range of community needs for play spaces across the region and the full gamut of potential providers. Decisions on investment in play facilities can be taken with the big picture in mind and avoiding the over or under investing that comes with ad hoc and silo provision.

HIERARCHY OF FACILITIES

The play spaces network is considered based on the following tiers:

- ▶ destination play spaces (tier 1)
- ▶ local play spaces (tier 2)
- ▶ activated play spaces (tier 3).

LEVELS OF SERVICE

Tier One (Destination) play spaces will comprise the following characteristics:

- ▶ Provide high levels of play value for all ages and all abilities aimed at supporting a half-day visit
- ▶ Custom designed permanent equipment which offers unique play opportunities and a distinctive look and feel
- ▶ Space for temporary play programmes
- ▶ Be large in size
- ▶ Offer associated amenities including toilets and vendor opportunities to increase visitation and support extended stays
- ▶ Be located on good transport networks
- ▶ Be part of network of destination play spaces, each with a different character suited to local context and offering a different experience, for instance water play, nature, play, urban
- ▶ Include toilets, drinking fountains, power points, shade, seating, picnic tables, waste bins, wide paths and soft landscape areas as a minimum.

Tier Two (Local) play spaces will comprise the following characteristics:

- ▶ Provide a moderate level of play value for all ages and abilities aimed at supporting an hour-long visit
- ▶ Contain mostly proprietary and some customised permanent equipment
- ▶ Be moderate in size
- ▶ Mostly located in neighbourhood parks
- ▶ Provide basic amenities including seating, paths, bins
- ▶ Be within a 10-minute walking distance of home
- ▶ Be part of a network of local parks, each with a different offering and character suited to local context
- ▶ Include seating, paths, shade, picnic tables and waste bins at a minimum.

Tier Three (Activated) play spaces will comprise the following characteristics:

- ▶ Not rely upon equipment
- ▶ Be mobile and able to be shifted from site to site
- ▶ Pop up events - adult-curated play programmes of a temporary nature
- ▶ Use loose parts
- ▶ Use transitional spaces such as streets and trails for small play interventions
- ▶ Take advantage of natural features such as wild spaces
- ▶ Use digital apps to create a virtual play scene such as dinosaurs in the park.

PART E: ACTIONS

ACTIONS

Table 1 outlines the priority actions to implement the Play Spaces Plan.

Table 1: Actions to implement Play Spaces Plan

Key actions	Partners	Cost (est)	Timeframe (est)
1. Establish a Community Facilities Relationships and Partnerships position responsible for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community partnerships • Alternative funding arrangements 	GDC / SGT / ECT	\$90,000 pa	By Jul 2018
2. Develop a play spaces design guide that includes advice on options for safety and security and provision of inclusive play spaces for all ages and abilities etc.	GDC	\$60,000	By Jun 2019
3. Prepare a play spaces development and upgrade programme considering timing of the planned township plan upgrades	GDC	Internal	By Jun 2020





Te Kaunihera o Te Tairāwhiti
GISBORNE
DISTRICT COUNCIL