

Neighbourhood Play System

Western Heights Primary School and Aorangi Primary School

ROTORUA
FEBRUARY 2022

 **Sport Bay of Plenty**
more people, more active, more often



**SPORT
NEW ZEALAND
IHI AOTEAROA**

Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa
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Contents

Executive summary	2
The Neighbourhood Play System Blueprint	4
Approach	5
Introduction	8
Western Heights Primary School and Aorangi Primary School context plan	10
Current conditions	11
What we heard	14
Play sufficiency	17
Opportunities plan	19
Opportunities for play in Western Heights, Mangakakahi and Pukehangī	20
What this means	22

Executive summary

Sport New Zealand Ihi Aotearoa, Sport Bay of Plenty and Rotorua Lakes Council are committed to increasing opportunities for tamariki, rangatahi and whānau to access quality play opportunities and experiences.

Undertaking this comprehensive play assessment enabled Sport Bay of Plenty to evaluate opportunities for improving play in Western Heights Primary School (WHPS), Aorangi Primary School (APS) and in the surrounding community.

The aim of the study was to understand how various urban systems impact children's play experience in the selected community, according to the dimensions of the Neighbourhood Play System framework and to support the development of recommendations towards ensuring a play-friendly environment.

The project is approached through an understanding of the neighbourhood through the eyes of residing young people. The lives of tamariki living in these neighbourhoods today are impacted by poor quality parks and green spaces, prevalent gang activity and fast traffic. While conditions for play are not optimal throughout the neighbourhoods there are opportunities to improve this, building on existing initiatives, and to deliver wider social benefits.

Western Heights, Mangakakahi and Pukehangi have been identified by Rotorua Lakes Council (RLC) as areas needing future support and prioritisation within local play systems. The area will be the next focus of RLC's locality planning,

working towards a community led approach to co-develop solutions to challenges including safety, housing, equity and health.

Challenges around safety, limited provision of and access to play spaces, proximity to parks and green spaces and feeling disconnected to the wider community have been identified within the area. Teachers, community groups and whānau recognise the importance of play in learning outcomes and are eager to find opportunities to preserve, protect and promote play and create a connected community which values their tamariki.

The deprivation of Western Heights, Mangakakahi and Pukehangi means that wider livelihood considerations can place pressure on whānau and inhibit access to play opportunities. Overcrowding of households, poor quality housing, low incomes and the neighbourhoods' high deprivation index are key challenges, which can exacerbate the challenge of establishing a culture of independent play within the community.

The service levels of play in the area are predominantly defined by road safety risks, with abandoned parks and playgrounds, or restricted access to play spaces, creating an uninviting and off-putting atmosphere for tamariki.

Figure 1: Tamariki from Western Heights Primary School playing during school hours.





Figure 2: Tamariki in Rotorua playing together during school hours.

Ongoing concerns about safety is a key challenge as it influences whānau decision-making and hampers the ability of tamariki to access play independently. Tamariki who are not able to access play independently and participate in informal play opportunities miss out on benefits associated with play. As a result, health and wellbeing outcomes are impacted with a reduced range of play opportunities and interactions.

Sport Bay of Plenty's research and observation has identified opportunities to improve safety and invite play across the neighbourhoods, building on the school's commitment to play, which is currently realised through their involvement in the Healthy Active Learning initiative.

- Embedding play in the charters of the schools, articulating an ongoing commitment to supporting play. Clearly communicating their role in supporting and driving play ensures that tamariki now, and in the future, will benefit from the Neighbourhood Play Blueprint.
- Coordinating strategic implementation efforts will ensure that the play aspirations outlined in RLC and Sport Bay of Plenty documents are realised on the ground. This includes a co-ordinated approach to identifying infrastructure upgrades and improving the maintenance of formal and informal play spaces.
- Improving the network of spaces connecting public and play areas, creating safer journeys for tamariki and their whānau. This will activate a culture of play in the community and support independent mobility.

- Championing play at all levels, building on the support of stakeholders engaged with through this research. Clearly communicating the social, health and educational benefits associated with play will ensure that as the neighbourhood changes over time.
- Creating spaces that reflect the area's culture and identity including improving the look and feel of local shops and walkways by involving local tamariki and rangitahi in the creation of murals. This creates a sense of ownership and community cohesion, supports intuitive wayfinding and develops an enduring sense of place and identity.
- Leveraging the opportunities of roads and streets to reshape opportunities for play. Waka Kotahi, RLC, iwi and Sport Bay of Play are uniquely placed to work together, drawing on funding and initiatives such as Play Streets and Streets for People, to create safer spaces and support a culture of play within the community.

The key element of the ongoing success of this work will be involving tamariki, schools and whānau in decision-making. Active engagement and co-design, from the initial ideation through to implementation and maintenance, will create a sense of ownership and produce substantial wider benefits.

The Neighbourhood Play System Blueprint

About this plan

The Neighbourhood Play System Blueprint has been developed to reflect the understanding that play is not confined to defined areas and encompasses a wide community system including driveways, streets, parks and alleys. It is not intended to be a step-by-step guide, rather it explains the many steps that need to take place to support the governance, funding, technical design and monitoring of child-friendly urban environments.

The Blueprint will operate in tandem with activation plans, opportunities and a Kaupapa Māori Play Model to ensure a holistic approach is taken that reflects and responds to Aotearoa New Zealand's unique cultural, social and environmental context.

The Neighbourhood Play System Blueprint has been developed to explore a more sustainable approach to developing and managing a local play system.

This is characterised by three concepts:

1. The model process is iterative and will continue to be updated as we learn.
2. The process is based on an approach of collaboration and co-design.
3. Ongoing monitoring and evaluation of goals and impacts is critical.

Improving the quality of and access to play on a local scale, facilitated through the development of an integrated play strategy will encourage all tamariki to engage further in play activities and being physically active.

How does it help when it comes to large scale implementation of play in urban environments?

Little guidance has been developed on planning, designing and upgrading neighbourhoods to deliver outcomes that encourage tamariki to move freely and play without restrictions in the urban environment.

This model is intended to support enablers of play, guiding short- and long-term approaches through initiatives, influences and impacts:

- **Initiatives** are short-term activation and investment to drive action. Lower cost and often temporary, these may include Play Streets or the activation of school and community play spaces.

- **Influences** are how we shape systems, communities, times and places for play. This occurs with consideration of Council policy, perceptions and the ongoing impacts/context of spaces.
- **Impacts** involve long-term change and leadership, advocating for community play systems. This recognises the value that play has in the lives of tamariki and whānau, shaping how we consider and design urban environments going forward.

The significance of play

What is play?

Play is spontaneous, tamariki-led and directed, freely chosen with no pre-determined outcome, fun, accessible, challenging, social and repeatable. It is usually highly active with elements of challenge and risk that test boundaries in an imaginative way. Play allows tamariki the space to practice, learn and develop the skills they need to be active for life including fundamental movement skills, self-directed creativity and innovation, social and emotional connections, resilience, independence, leadership and informed risk-taking.

Play is under threat

The playful upbringing of previous generations is no longer as accessible to tamariki due to changing social, environmental, technological and economic pressures. Young people need the time, space and permission to play but with increasingly structured lives and reduced free time, the loss of traditional play spaces such as streets and driveways, increased fears around safety and risk and a loss of societal connections means play deprivation is becoming an increasing national and international concern.

The right to play

Children have the right to play and this right is encapsulated in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child - Article 31: "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".

Approach

The profile of play conditions in the neighbourhood around WHPS and APS draws upon desk-based historical, socio-economic, material and cultural research performed in advance of site visits, as well as in-depth field research conducted between September and November 2021.

Different qualitative methods were adopted to understand the context and to document findings as thoroughly as possible. Material collected included demographic and policy conditions influencing how local children play. Sport Bay of Plenty also investigated how local stakeholders perceive these conditions, contribute to shaping them, and act within them.

The following methods were used for the field research:

Desktop analysis

Desktop review was carried out by the Sport Bay of Plenty Regional Play System Lead and the Insights and Evaluation Lead, looking at current conditions and existing data sources including Census, school web pages, Education Counts, and RLC documents.

Site walks

Site walks were conducted in September where Sport Bay of Plenty were able to capture images from the 1km radius around the two school locations. Images showed a variety of challenges ranging from overgrown trees to broken footpaths to vandalism and tagging of play spaces and buildings.



Figure 3: Vandalism on the side of the shopping centre on Brookland Road.

“ The shops don’t look fun coz it has spraypaint and people keep tagging it, they’re stupid coz it looks dumb. ”

Feedback from tamariki in engagement session

Community engagement

Sport Bay of Plenty engaged with the community through a school holiday play day at Linton Park. Surveys were sent out to parents at both schools to capture their thoughts on play in the area.

School engagement

Three activities were run with groups of students from each school including drawing their journey to school, creating their favourite play memory and commenting on images from around the neighbourhood (this is covered in more detail later). The students were also asked to show us how they enjoyed playing at school (captured in images).

One-on-one meetings

The Regional Play System Lead and Healthy Active Learning Community Connector met with a range of potential project partners including:

- APS Principal – Debra Harrod and Sport Co-ordinator- Karen Anderson
- WHPS Deputy Principals – Ben McFarlane and Melanie Sweeney
- Rotorua Community Constable – Viv Sutton
- Kaitao Rotohokahoka – Maylene Brake
- Linton Park Community Centre – Veena Kamata
- Healthy Families Rotorua – Jenny Kaka and Mariana Vercoe
- Te Papa Takaro o Te Arawa – Steven Te Moni
- Kaitao Intermediate Deputy Principal – Debbie Holmes (Now MOE Regional Manager)
- Rotorua Lakes Council – Jill Campbell, Georgie Griffiths
- Wera Aotearoa Charitable Trust – Huia Kearney, Kyle Hughes and Barney Teao (Emergency Housing)
- Western Heights Community Centre – Owen Roberts
- Sport Bay of Plenty – Internal staff including HAL, Play Champions, Insights and Evaluation

These people will be essential to the ongoing success with this project and can form a key part of our neighbourhood group.

Sport Bay of Plenty is endeavoring to make future connections with RLC Councillors and the Sport Bay of Plenty Rangatahi Māori Lead (starting Jan 2022) as they will be key advocates for this project.



Figure 4: Tamariki at Aorangi Primary School playing on tires.



Figure 5: Drawing of journey from home to school as part of tamariki engagement session.

School involvement

Classroom engagement sessions were held at both schools, visiting three classes to gather information and drawings from students. The purpose was to gain a view of the current neighbourhood play system through the eyes of tamariki.

Students were provided with three activities to rotate through during a one-hour period:

- Activity 1 Mind Mapping: Students were asked to draw their home and their school and show their journey between the two places including any shops, parks or key landmarks they passed on their journey. This was to establish how tamariki perceive their environment and positive aspects or barriers within the space.
- Activity 2 Urban Realm: Students were asked to look at A3 images from the neighbourhood and identify anything that stood out to them. This was to help us understand barriers to play in different locations and knowledge of where tamariki feel safe and unsafe. Thoughts were captured via post-it notes by students and teaching staff.
- Activity 3 Crafting a play environment: To help us understand what makes play enjoyable from a child's perspective, we asked them to create a favourite play memory or activity from playdough, we asked questions to understand what they enjoy, who they play with, where they play, how they play and what stops them from playing.

On a separate visit to each school, we were shown around the school by a group of senior students who showed us how they like to play within the school environment, from the playground to climbing trees to tag on the astroturf. Their play was photographed.

In the future, Sport Bay of Plenty will be part of a one-day activity at WHPS with parents and tamariki and are hoping to run a 'Fun for You' day at APS Term 1 2022.

A poem was created to give the principal of APS as she retired at the end of 2021. We hope this will also be a fun way for the new principal to see what the project is about and how we have engaged with the students so far.

COVID-19 restrictions made some engagement sessions more difficult due to not being able to engage with tamariki and schools at different alert levels. Low vaccine rates during 2021 within the neighbourhoods contributed to this challenge. At the time of undertaking engagement, Western Heights was on 43.7 percent double dosed and neighbouring Mangakakahi sat on 43.8 percent.

Our Poem

Special visitors came to our school today, they wanted to learn about how we play;

Can you draw us a picture?
Show your home and your school,
we want to know what's dumb
and what's cool!

Playing with playdough, it's
colourful and bright, we make
our favourite play memories,
a fort, a scooter, a kite.

Looking at pictures from our
neighbourhood, we used sticky
note messages, what's scary
and what's good.

“We just want to play!” said the
kids in the class, climbing, hiding,
swinging and rolling in the grass.

But it's raining said Whea, in a
very stern voice. “We love playing
in the rain!” said all of the boys.

We pack away our things, as
the break time bell rings.
What's missing from our school
- we all chanted “SWINGS!”

“

I go down mountain road on my scooter,
we go up the steps, there's heaps of
potholes on the footpath so we go on the
road, Susan Street is really bumpy. ”

Feedback from tamariki in engagement session

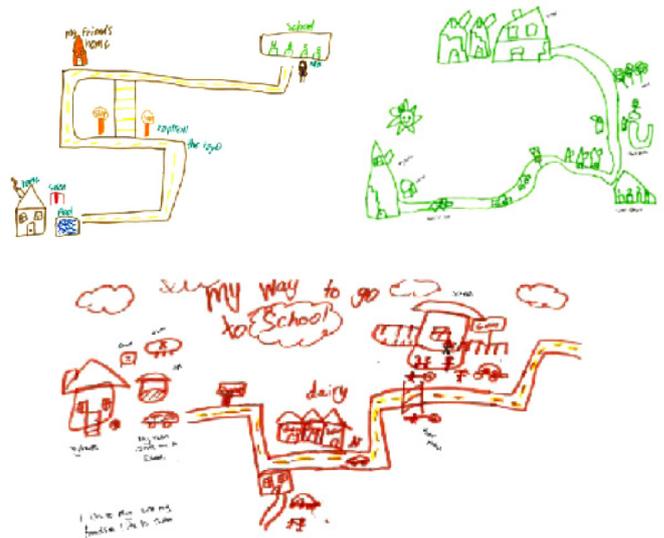


Figure 6: Drawings of how tamariki play and journey from home to school.

“

I have a huge tree at home I can climb at
my mum's, I always swing on it. ”

Feedback from tamariki in engagement session

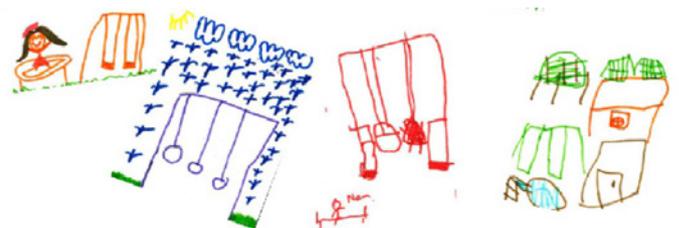


Figure 7: Drawings of what is missing from their school, particularly swings.

Introduction

Purpose

Cities have a crucial role to play in shaping urban environments that meet the needs of tamariki and rangatahi. Tamariki have the same needs from their urban environments as everyone else: safe and clean streets, access to green space, clean air, things to do, the ability to get around, the freedom to see friends, and somewhere to call home. Each city needs to shape a context specific approach, building on their unique cultural, political, socio-economic and environmental conditions and drivers, to realise the benefits of play through child-friendly urban planning.

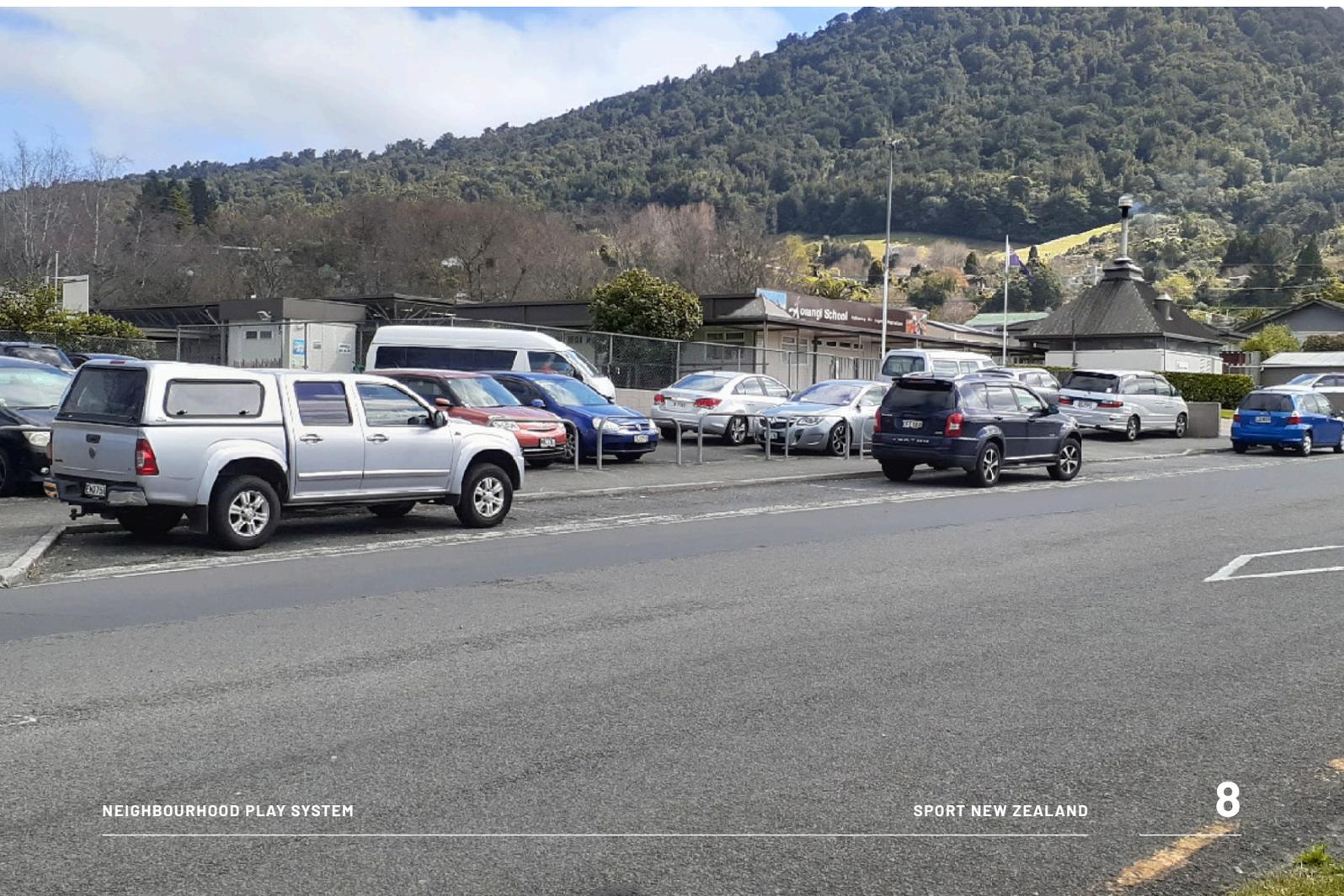
This document sets out the current play context at a city, neighbourhood and school level for WHPS and APS in Rotorua. Understanding the social, cultural, economic and environmental conditions that shape play for tamariki in this community is a crucial component in supporting play opportunities across the neighbourhood.

Play has many benefits for tamariki, their whānau and the wider community. But for many, access to playful spaces is not equitable and can be determined by income and post code. Improving equitable access to safe playful spaces will improve the health and wellbeing of tamariki and aligns with the aspirations of RLC and Sport Bay of Plenty to improve health, education and wellbeing outcomes for all.

Conditions in Western Heights, Mangakakahi and Pukehangi, as in every community, have developed over time through planning and design decision-making, relationships, resources and established practices.

Understanding these conditions, and the opportunities and challenges they present is instrumental to delivering the outcomes outlined in the Rotorua Vision 2030 including “Papa whakatipu – Outstanding places to play”.

Figure 8: Aorangi Primary School viewed from across Gem Street.



20-minute neighbourhood

The 20-minute neighbourhood is a concept used in Victoria, Australia. It is all about ‘living locally’ – giving people the ability to meet most of their daily needs within a 20-minute return walk from home. Key features of this include access to safe cycling and local transport options with connected and walkable places where people can live, work and play. By creating well-designed walkable neighbourhoods that are connected through a mix of land uses, housing types and access to quality public transport, we can create more healthy, liveable communities.

Liveable communities should have access to the following features:



Figure 9: Features of a 20-minute neighbourhood.

Hallmarks of 20-minute neighbourhoods

They must:

- be safe, accessible and well connected for pedestrians and cyclists to optimise active transport
- offer high-quality public realm and open spaces
- provide services and destinations that support local living
- facilitate access to quality public transport that connects people to jobs and higher-order services
- deliver housing/population at densities that make local services and transport viable
- facilitate thriving local economies.

The role and function of Neighbourhood Activity Centres

Community services and infrastructure are generally co-located within a Neighbourhood Activity Centre. These should provide retail services and goods (eg. newsagent, bakery, supermarket), local entertainment facilities (eg. cafes and restaurants) and local health services. In the walkable catchment around WHPS and APS there are two Activity Centres, one on Brookland Road and one on Thomas Crescent. In their current state they do not provide the full spectrum of facilities to meet the communities’ daily needs. Through applying the 20-minute neighbourhood concept to this area we know the community will benefit both physically and mentally from an increase in active travel, resulting in cleaner air. With easy access to healthy food options and quality green space, we will see a neighbourhood where residents can live, work and thrive.

Ultimately, success for Aotearoa would be in applying the Māori principle of sustainability and stewardship, Kaitiakitanga. Kaitiakitanga is important to whakapapa as it honours the legacy of tīpuna, protects and nurtures generations here and prepares for the generations to follow. It is of reciprocal nature and so involves a whole community of people.

WSP Aotearoa 20 minute city
<https://www.wsp.com/en-NZ/insights/the-20-min-city-in-aotearoa>

Figure 10: 800m walkable catchment.



Western Heights Primary School and Aorangi Primary School context plan

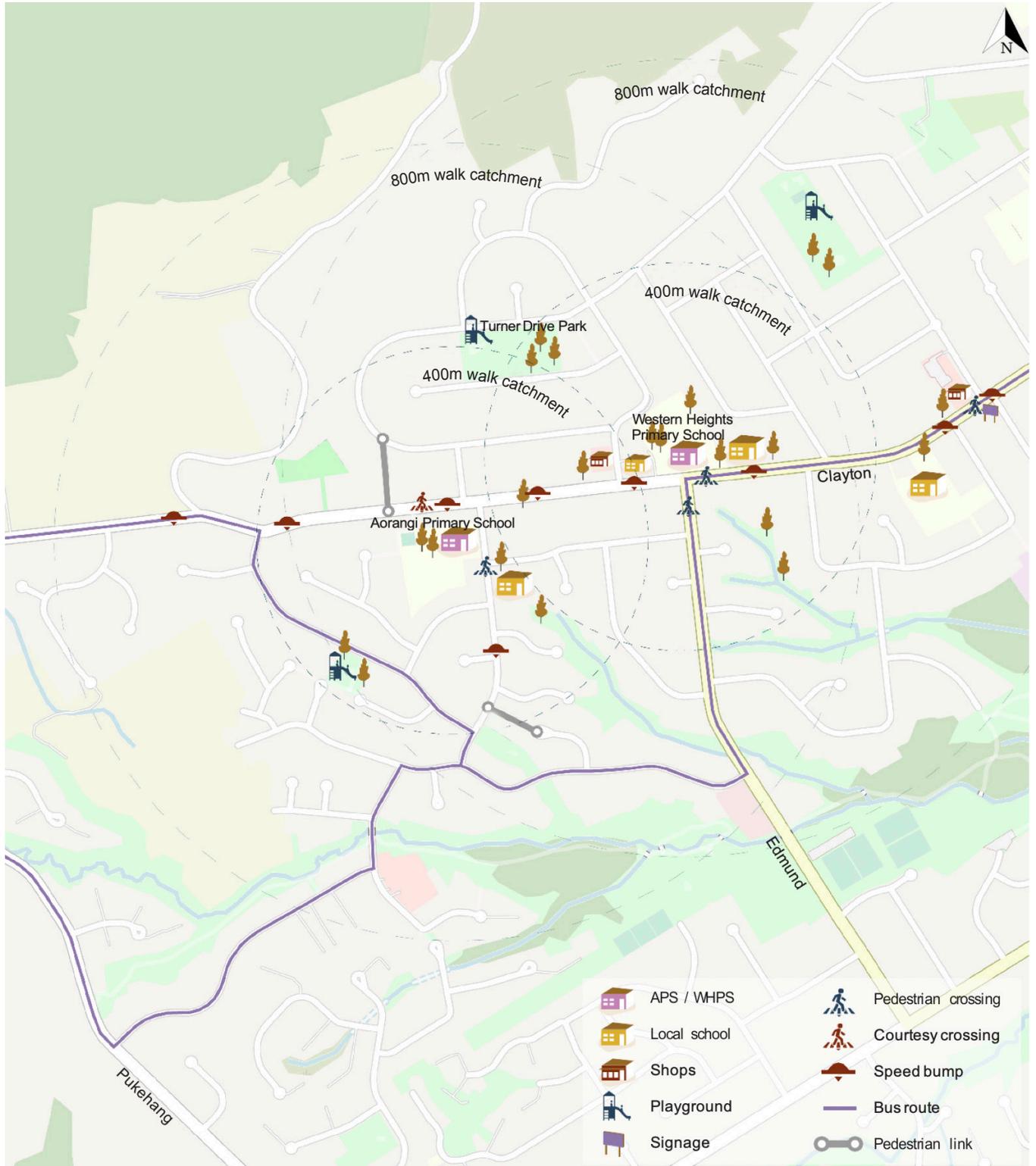


Figure 12: WHPS and APS context plan.

Current conditions

At a city scale the approach to play in Rotorua is driven by RLC and Sport Bay of Plenty through a suite of plans and strategies that support play outcomes. While RLC does not have a dedicated play strategy currently, the Rotorua Vision 2030 and the Long-Term Plan 2021-2031 identify delivering outstanding places to play as a key goal for the District. RLC also works closely with communities on a range of projects to reinvigorate neighbourhoods, including coordinating fun, free and whānau focused activities for young people in their local community.

Rotorua and the Western Heights neighbourhoods, Mangakakahi and Pukehangi are currently confronted with a number of challenges that effect the ability for tamariki to play safely and independently. However, there are significant opportunities to support the creation of and empower access to playful spaces throughout the neighbourhood.

Demographics

Encouraging play and lifelong activity is a key tool in addressing a number of health issues prevalent in the area including obesity and diabetes, which disproportionately impact Māori.

Through locality planning, RLC is working alongside communities to co-develop approaches to address health and wellbeing challenges.

The presence of gang activity across the neighbourhoods creates a sense that the area is unsafe and discourages whānau and tamariki from walking and cycling through the area. Gang presence in the area can feel intimidating, make tamariki and their whānau avoid certain locations and be a barrier to investment in the area where organisations are not wanting to spend money due to potential vandalism. It is important to also recognise that many of the gang members in this neighbourhood also have tamariki of their own who attend the schools and are also in need of quality play opportunities within the area.

Clayton Road in particular is known as a high speed area, with courtesy crossings, rather the road patrolled crossings, making it difficult for tamariki to cross safely in these locations. Through engagement with tamariki, the poor conditions of footpaths in the area was identified as a deterrent to scooting and cycling, with some tamariki preferring to travel in the better maintained road space. Due to the poor condition of streets and play infrastructure, and safety concerns associated with local play spaces many tamariki travel to other parks outside of the Western Heights area. The neighbourhood is a hilly area with tamariki either going uphill to school or downhill to school (and opposite on way home).

Rotorua



of residents are Māori



of residents are 0-18 years



of residents own or partly own their own home

Western Heights



of residents are Māori



of residents are 0-18 years

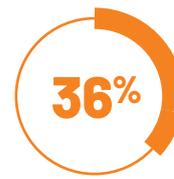


of residents own or partly own their own home

Pukehangi North



of residents are Māori



of residents are 0-18 years



of residents own or partly own their own home

Pukehangi South



of residents are Māori



of residents are 0-18 years



of residents own or partly own their own home

Mangakakahi West



of residents are Māori



of residents are 0-18 years



of residents own or partly own their own home

Many play spaces in the area do not reflect the diversity and unique character of these neighbourhoods, with two local play spaces closed when Sport Bay of Plenty carried out a site visit. However, there is support from Healthy Families Rotorua, Kaitao Rotohokahoka and Te Papa Takaro to embed Te Ao Māori narratives in the public realm.

There is an opportunity to re-purpose existing spaces in the form of interactive and playful paths such as hopscotch, giant dinosaur footprints or snake alphabets. Using paint as a form of initiating play would provide an attractive, easy and tangible first step in enhancing play environments.

Spatial development

The neighbourhoods assessed are characterised by low density, single-story residential housing on large sections laid out in a network of cul-de-sacs joined by busy arterial roads. The environment has poor wayfinding for all modes, with street markings only observed on main roads. An uninviting atmosphere is felt in some areas due to poorly lit alleyways, footpaths in bad conditions, cars parked onto berms and sidewalks and overgrown trees from private properties. However, there is a wide nicely paved and maintained footpath that runs behind WHPS and links to Clayton Road.

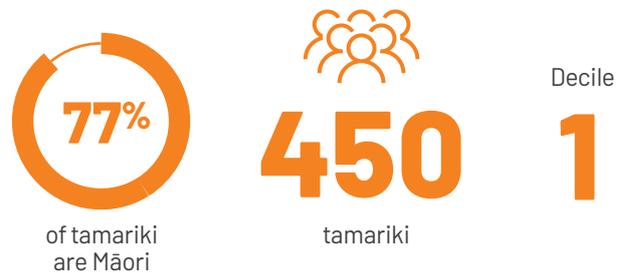
As a result of the poor quality road network and sidewalk connections in the neighbourhood, tamariki who attend APS are discouraged by the school from scooting and cycling. Similarly, due to WHPS's location on a busy arterial road many whānau do not feel it is safe for tamariki to walk, scoot and cycle to school independently. Many tamariki report a fear of walking past strangers on the footpath. The streets near APS and WHPS are heavily dominated by private vehicles and buses. There are limited pedestrian crossings but courtesy crossings with islands are located near APS. During a recent site visit, very few people were observed walking through the area and no rangatahi or tamariki were seen using public transport. Opportunities for 'Play on the Way' would be limited due to layout of streets and condition of paths. Heavy traffic along the front of WHPS and a child care centre either side means lots of vehicle congestion before and after school.

WHPS and APS place a focus on maintaining good conditions within the school, highlighting wellbeing and engagement in learning and current play areas. Both schools have high quality outdoor spaces, one with very modern play spaces and one with a large amount of green space. Due to past vandalism they are not keen to encourage community use out of school times. WHPS has well maintained grounds, bright painted buildings and gardens highlighting the character and culture of the school. Modern playgrounds for all ages are available within the school grounds together with a mini putt course, courts, loose parts play and covered play areas.

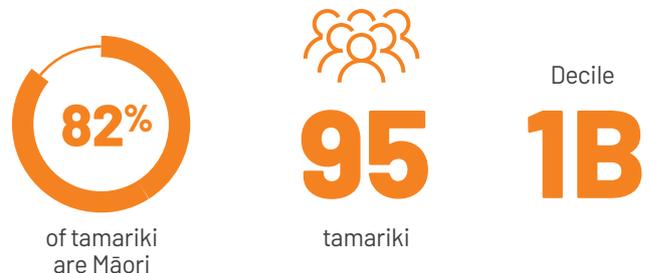
APS is an older school and the buildings reflect this with paint wearing away in some areas. It has a large field space surrounded by houses.

Tamariki at the school are able to enjoy turfed courts, a small sand pit, play grounds and some wooden obstacles. In order to upgrade or amend the grounds that could impact play, APS has identified a desire to provide a bike track for their pupils, however due to the small roll, is unable to access Council funds for it. Students at APS have also identified swings and trampolines as play items they would enjoy at the school.

Western Heights Primary School



Aorangi Primary School





I cant play at the skatepark because Mum said I'm too young to go there on my own. //

Feedback from tamariki in engagement session

Figure 13: Park Road Reserve skate park and playground.

Relevant plans and policies

Vision 2030 The Rotorua Way

Establishes a way forwards for the Rotorua District and drives everything Council does, working with the community to achieve a positive future. There is a committed focus on supporting new strategies and projects, growing partnerships with Te Arawa, delivering cost-effective services and shaping a more responsive Council.

Long Term Plan 2021-31

Ensures the growth and development of the district by establishing long-term goals that drive co-governance with Te Arawa, improving infrastructure and environments and driving community facilitated projects and programmes.

Planning For The Future of Rotorua 2018 Spatial Plan

Focusses on the vision for the future and recognising what is important in communities emphasising on building homes, creating thriving neighbourhoods, enhancing the environment, supporting iwi aspirations, employment and building supporting neighbourhoods.

Parks Asset Management Plan 2005 (AMP)

Aims to demonstrate the responsible stewardship of recreation and community facilities and identify maintenance and management of environmental risk of asset failure. It also provides financial data on existing assets under the control of the Parks and Recreation department of RLC.

Cities should influence and impact a child's everyday journey, including through routes to and from school.



Figure 14: Turner Drive Reserve playground.

What we heard

Our conversations with tamariki at APS and WHPS provided insights into how they experience their neighbourhoods and engage with play in the home, school and neighbourhood contexts. The key themes that came through in these conversations will shape our understanding of successful play environments within the neighbourhood as well as informing the opportunities in response to barriers or experiences that tamariki raised.



Figure 15: Tamariki playing at Aorangi Primary School playground during school hours.

Playing outside

Tamariki shared their experiences playing outside with friends, family and sometimes alone.

“ I like climbing trees, my favourite is at the front of my house, the tree is too high to climb to the top. ”

Feedback from tamariki in engagement session

Playing inside and digital play

Some tamariki shared how they play indoors at home.



Figure 16: Tamariki drawing how they get to school during engagement session.

“ I just stay inside, I don't like to go outside at all. I just play Rocker league on my PS4. ”

“ I'm going to make a PS controller, I like gaming and technology. ”

“ We just play on our phones. We text each other and watch tik tok. ”

Exploring the neighbourhood

We heard how tamariki experienced their neighbourhood and what their perceptions were of the places they spent time.



Figure 17: Local street with no road markings.

“ I like going to Brooklyn Park, playing on the monkey bars. Sometimes when I walk to school, I pick blueberries off the neighbours trees. ”

“ I like going to the bike tracks and jumping off high ramps on my scooter. ”

“ I like climbing the trees at the events centre. ”

Feedback from tamariki in engagement session

“ If it’s raining Mum picks us up, if it’s sunny the teacher walks us halfway. ”

“ I walk through the alleyway to the skatepark. ”

“ I saw a wild boar on Mt Ngongotaha when I was walking on my own, it was scary. ”

Feedback from tamariki in engagement session

Getting around

Tamariki shared their experiences of moving around the neighbourhood and the things that sometimes make this difficult.



Figure 18: Alley way from main road to cul-de-sac.

Barriers to play

There were a number of elements that tamariki identified as being barriers to play either by restricting these opportunities or through the perceptions of caregivers about these environments.



Figure 19: Sign at Aorangi Reserve Playground showing that it's closed.

" I cant play at the skatepark because Mum said I'm too young to go there on my own. "

" I don't like the wind and cold, I don't like going outside. "

" I used to play with my friend at the playground but it's locked down. Sometimes teenagers knock down the fence to hang out there. When are they going to re-open the playground? "

" I can't do anything after school coz of the gangs, Mum doesn't trust other people. "

Feedback from tamariki in engagement session

Play sufficiency

Access and movement

This aspect of the Neighbourhood Play System Blueprint refers to the degree to which tamariki of all ages and abilities can feel safe and are able to freely access play opportunities in their communities.

What success looks like:

WHPS and APS	Tamariki attending WHPS and APS have safe and connected journeys to school. Footpaths are wide and well maintained with safe pedestrian crossings, and high levels of amenities including lighting and street trees. Tamariki walk, cycle and scoot to school independently and are able to access school grounds and local play spaces after hours safely and confidently.
Western Heights, Mangakakahi and Pukehangi suburbs	Tamariki are able to move independently through Western Heights, Mangakakahi and Pukehangi. The neighbourhood streets and public spaces feel safe and inviting and are well maintained with murals and no graffiti. Safe cycleways and intuitive wayfinding encourage tamariki to explore their neighbourhood and to access formal and informal play spaces including play streets in local cul de sacs.
Rotorua District	The city's transport network is safe and accessible, connecting tamariki with play opportunities across the region. Signage reflects the culture and diversity of the city, and tamariki and their whānau are empowered to connect to the broader play network through high quality active and public transport links.

Built and natural environment

This aspect of the Neighbourhood Play System Blueprint refers to the degree to which local built and natural environments facilitate a variety of play opportunities suitable for tamariki of all ages and abilities.

What success looks like:

WHPS and APS	The built and natural environment at WHPS and APS is inviting and well maintained. The playgrounds are accessible with a diverse range of play equipment to meet the needs of tamariki of all ages and abilities. Fences around the school remain unlocked after school hours and tamariki and their whānau are able to access the play equipment and grounds after hours safely.
Western Heights, Mangakakahi and Pukehangi suburbs	Tamariki in Western Heights, Mangakakahi and Pukehangi have access to a diverse range of formal and informal play opportunities. Playgrounds are looked after and have equipment which meets the needs of all ages and abilities. There are swings in some street trees. Public spaces are adorned with tamariki artwork, reflecting the neighbourhoods' culture and heritage and kept free from graffiti.
Rotorua District	There is a diverse range of playgrounds and 'Play on the Way' infrastructure across Rotorua, creating a network of play opportunities connected by safe and accessible active transport routes. Art and stories depicted throughout the city reflect the local natural and cultural heritage.

Awareness and agency

This aspect of the Neighbourhood Play System Blueprint refers to the degree to which play is actively supported and encouraged (through time and permission) by tamariki and their whānau as well as community members, and city authorities.

What success looks like:

WHPS and APS	WHPS and APS are both part of the Healthy Active Learning initiative where a variety of play types and play based learning are offered. Tamariki are engaged and encouraged to play in the school grounds and when they leave, with play opportunities reflecting the needs of all ages and abilities.
Western Heights, Mangakakahi and Pukehangi suburbs	Community groups championing play and developing a culture of play in the community and creating more opportunities in the neighbourhood. This is supported by community partners including Healthy Families Rotorua, Ngati Whakaue, Linton Park Community Centre, Kaitao Rotohokahoka, and Te Papa Takaro o Te Arawa.
Rotorua District	RLC is actively championing play throughout the city, working with the community to create play solutions and investing in accessible play infrastructure. A Play, Active Recreation and Sport Strategy ensures play is embedded and integrated across all RLC work streams.

Enjoyment

This aspect of the Neighbourhood Play System Blueprint refers to the degree to which tamariki of all ages and abilities with their whānau, continually enjoy their play experiences.

What success looks like:

WHPS and APS	The WHPS and APS playgrounds are accessible, well maintained and meet the needs of tamariki of all ages and abilities. Broken equipment is repaired promptly and tamariki are encouraged to explore a diverse range of play opportunities.
Western Heights, Mangakakahi and Pukehangi suburbs	The neighbourhood around WHPS and APS has unique character and high levels of amenities, encouraging children to play. Street trees are planted across the neighbourhood creating a sense of community pride and ownership and encouraging whānau to empower their tamariki to explore their neighbourhood independently.
Rotorua District	Play spaces across the city reflect the unique cultures and needs of the community, with the stories and mahi toi of the region woven into the urban fabric. Tamariki have access to accessible and safe playgrounds regardless of where they live.

Opportunities plan

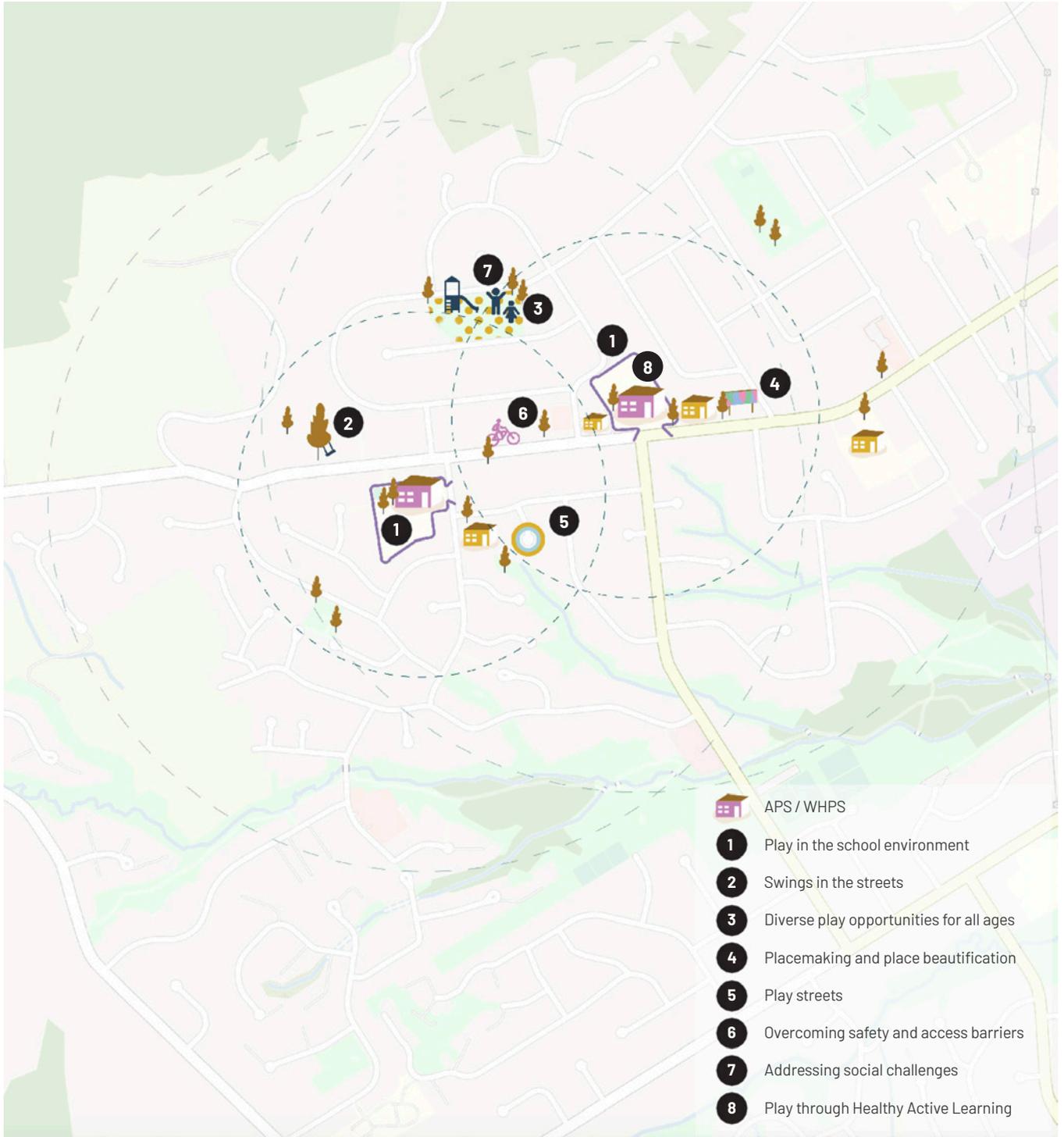


Figure 20: Opportunities plan.

Opportunities for play in Western Heights, Mangakakahi and Pukehangi

There are a number of opportunities that respond to the challenges and outcomes identified through research and engagement that will shape play opportunities for tamariki living in Western Heights, Mangakakahi and Pukehangi. Capitalising on these opportunities will require strong governance and vocal community play champions. In this community this includes Healthy Active Learning Community Connector for Sport Bay of Plenty and the opportunity to add in Healthy Families Rotorua, Linton Park Community Centre, Kaitao Rotohokahoka, and Te Papa Tākaro o Te Arawa. Ngati Whakaue and RLC will play key roles in bringing together a wide range of external agencies, personnel and community resources to shape play opportunities in the community.

The opportunities below have been defined at a high level in response to what we heard from our communities and key stakeholders in the project. They will continue to be evolved as the project partnership grows.

Play in the school environment

Improving play in the school environment is one of the best ways to make the most of existing resources and spaces that tamariki already value. Currently the fences are locked during and after school hours, for both safety and protection of property. We understand that there may be an opportunity to explore unlocking the school gates outside of school hours to open this up as a community resource for play outside of times when tamariki are within the school boundaries. There are a number of challenges to work through in this process including navigating vandalism, ensuring these spaces are safe and advocating for and supporting funding that would be needed to support this opportunity.



Figure 21: External view of Western Heights Primary School viewed from across a busy road.

Swings in the streets

Tamariki have expressed their desire for more opportunities to swing within their neighbourhoods. Swings can be provided as informal play opportunities outside of playgrounds and park spaces. One of the key opportunities defined around this, and to add character to the neighbourhood, is to identify areas where swings may be able to be placed in street trees or public trees in the immediate term, followed by identifying opportunities to plant more trees which can provide this for future generations. The investment in street trees has many benefits for play and for improving neighbourhood character and pride of place.

Diverse play opportunities for all ages

There are a number of parks and green spaces around the schools. Students mentioned many of the playgrounds are not providing the quality play opportunities for their age. Many tamariki are keen to engage in activities and play where there is the opportunity to take risks such as climbing. Older tamariki have mentioned they love the basketball half court and the skate park, and there is the opportunity to enhance these spaces so they cater to more tamariki and are more safe and inclusive.

Placemaking and place beautification

There are a number of spaces around the neighbourhood where graffiti and tagging are prominent. Tamariki expressed interest in being involved in the creation of a mural, with the mural linking to iwi stories or the history of the area.

This would support improving the sense of place and pride of place working with the community to develop this as a central piece of public art that could be added to and updated periodically.

Play Streets

There are number of cul-de-sac streets in the area which have the potential to be used as Play Streets in partnership with the community and other organisations such as Waka Kotahi.

Overcoming safety and access barriers

Responding to challenges around accessing schools and play opportunities within the neighbourhood will be an important area of focus. Students do not currently bike or scooter to school due to stray dogs, dangerous roads, speed of vehicles, and safety of students on footpaths. Addressing perceived and actual safety concerns along routes to school will be important in achieving increased physical activity in the neighbourhood too.

Addressing social challenges

Working with organisations and community connectors to understand the social barriers within the neighbourhood will be a key part of unlocking opportunities within this project. Actual and perceived barriers to play caused by organised criminal activity were highlighted as a major concern for both children and their whānau. Addressing this opportunity is broader than just the responsibility of this mahi but it is important to recognise that this is a key part of the community we are working in and where this work might intersect with programmes looking to address similar challenges.

Alongside this challenge, the community experiences high deprivation and social inequity, which for some results in antisocial behavior. There is an opportunity to work with RLC, Police and other organisations to build rapport with this community through understanding, investment and placing tamariki and their whānau at the heart of these outcomes. There are examples of this kind of integrated work happening in Owhata.

Play through Healthy Active Learning

Currently play is not in either school's charter or school documents. There is an opportunity through Healthy Active Learning and the Regional Play System Lead to encourage the schools to create a play statement and to add to the school charter to show a commitment to their young people.

“ I have to go with an adult to the shops because it's dangerous. ”

“ There are no pedestrian crossings, I run across the road when there's no cars. ”

Feedback from tamariki in engagement session



Figure 22: Signage along Clayton Road urging motorists to slow down.



Figure 23: Susan Street Reserve viewed from the street.



Figure 24: Alleyway by Aorangi School.

What this means

Implementation and next steps

Early in 2022, Sport Bay of Plenty will invite key stakeholders, community members, principals and RLC to meet and reflect on what we have learnt. It is key to be on this journey together to advocate for an environment that fosters play within the focus area. Sport Bay of Plenty will support the group to develop and action the short-, medium- and long-term goals along with advocating for other opportunities that enable tamariki to play in this area.

Timeline

Short term (3-6 months)

Create a play focused working group to champion this mahi and bring this work to life. The success of this project is in partnership and working closely with communities. Key members/enablers within this group will include representatives from Sport Bay of Plenty, RLC, school communities, community organisations, Healthy Active Learning and any others who have expressed they are keen to be involved in this work.

- Ongoing community engagement with parents and community organisations.
- Further engagement with tamariki particularly around opportunities and keeping them involved in the conversation.
- Updates to the school community and interested groups on the progress to date.
- Identifying funding opportunities for 2022 in alignment with the plan.

Through strengthening connections with RLC, one of the early interventions we can explore is a mural on the Clayton Road side of the Western Heights Shops on Brookland Road involving students from both schools and the wider community to participate.

Medium term (6-18 months)

Support APS to create a safe and welcoming play space at the school out of school hours and support new principal to ensure its success and link with community to ensure the environment is respected and that community create the passive security of the space.

Create and support play champions within the community. Develop opportunities for Play Streets to be facilitated by the community living in cul-de-sacs.

Support RLC to develop a Play, Active Recreation and Sport Strategy to ensure play equality in the neighbourhood.

Support both schools through Healthy Active Learning to create a play statement and have play integrated into their school charter.

Long term (18+ months)

Alongside RLC, investigate temporary and permanent improvements to the movement network such as footpaths, crossings and identification of safe routes to school. Footpaths along school routes and within the neighbourhood are improved through pruning of overgrown trees and making footpaths wider and smoother to enable tamariki to safely scooter, skate and bike to their school.

Look for opportunities to either use existing spaces to install swings (parks, trees, etc) or opportunities to advocate for trees to be planted that can lead to having good climbing branches or swings tied to them in future.



Figure 25: Tamariki from Western Heights Primary School.



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