



# Neighbourhood Play System

# Merivale School Te Kura o Tūtara wānanga

AUGUST 2023

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## Author/Project Lead

### Steph Reichardt

Regional Play System Lead  
Sport Bay of Plenty  
[stephr@sportbop.co.nz](mailto:stephr@sportbop.co.nz)

All comments and questions regarding this report can be directed to Steph.

## With Thanks

### Bev Hari

Sport Bay of Plenty Healthy Active Learning  
Community Connector

### Sandy Sheterline

Sport Bay of Plenty Healthy Active Learning Advisor

### Tom Paekau

Principal, Merivale School/Te Kura o Tūtarawānanga

### Dave Merton

Manager, Merivale Community Centre

### Tauranga City Council

Planning, Community Development and Travel Safe teams

## Accessible Properties

### Sport New Zealand Ihi Aotearoa

Sport Bay of Plenty is appreciative to Tom and the team at Merivale School/Te Kura o Tūtarawānanga for their partnership, as well as the tamariki of the school for trusting us with their voice to advocate for playful opportunities in their neighbourhood.

# Executive summary

With the support of Tauranga City Council and Sport New Zealand Ihi Aotearoa, Sport Bay of Plenty implemented a Neighbourhood Play System to assess play provisions, opportunities, and barriers in the Merivale suburb of Tauranga (also known as Tūtarawānanga). The focus of a Neighbourhood Play System is to place tamariki in the centre of the system and provide a comprehensive assessment of the area.

Merivale School/Te Kura o Tūtarawānanga is the central focus of the Neighbourhood Play System. Several play opportunities within the school grounds include a sandpit, turfed court area, large fields, and a playground. However, accessing 'play' in this community is challenging as the school is located close to a busy main road, liquor store and alleyway area. We engaged in conversations with the Merivale Community Centre, council staff, Merivale School/Te Kura o Tūtarawānanga principal and teachers, Accessible Properties, Whānau Aroha Centre, and several community members. Through these discussions we explored community aspirations including: The need for a health centre; an extension to the current liquor ban; reducing barriers for tamariki and rangatahi, particularly around boredom and not feeling safe to use existing play spaces.

Tamariki highlighted the prevalence of stranger danger and feeling unsafe when moving around and playing in their neighbourhood. This stemmed from tamariki observing drunk adults, broken glass, and teenagers "up to no good".

In addition, there is a lack of safe road crossings and many of the footpaths are damaged or have overgrown plants impeding access. This has a flow-on effect to the extremely low 'active transport' levels identified (only one student scooted out of the three classes we visited) and there are no perceivable 'play on the way' activities currently in place.

Students identified several opportunities to change the vibe of an alleyway space by the school through planting, painting, and 'play on the way' activities. The shopping centre wall has been identified as an opportunity to provide a sense of mana and beautification by painting it to represent tamariki and the wider community. The current liquor ban in the area does not include the school grounds. This provides a catalyst for further conversations and action around ensuring adherence and reporting of those breaching it in the hope this will lead to alcohol not being so visible to tamariki in their play spaces.

Tamariki and rangatahi expressed a want for similar recreation spaces and activities they would like to be able to access. This included basketball and skate/scooter areas, where tamariki can either learn to ride or practice their skills on other wheeled equipment, and an area where they can exercise, use obstacles, or practice parkour skills. This information was gathered from the Voice of Rangatahi survey, a play scan at Tauranga Intermediate, and through tamariki voice captured at Merivale School/Te Kura o Tūtarawānanga.

As a result of co-design practices, identifying key barriers, aspirations, and opportunities to play in the neighbourhood, it has shaped recommendations that have the potential to contribute to creating an equitable tamariki-friendly urban environment in Tūtarawānanga.

**" People are scary on the way to school, Intermediate kids are scary. "**

Figure 1: Merivale School/Te Kura o Tūtarawānanga fields.



# Background

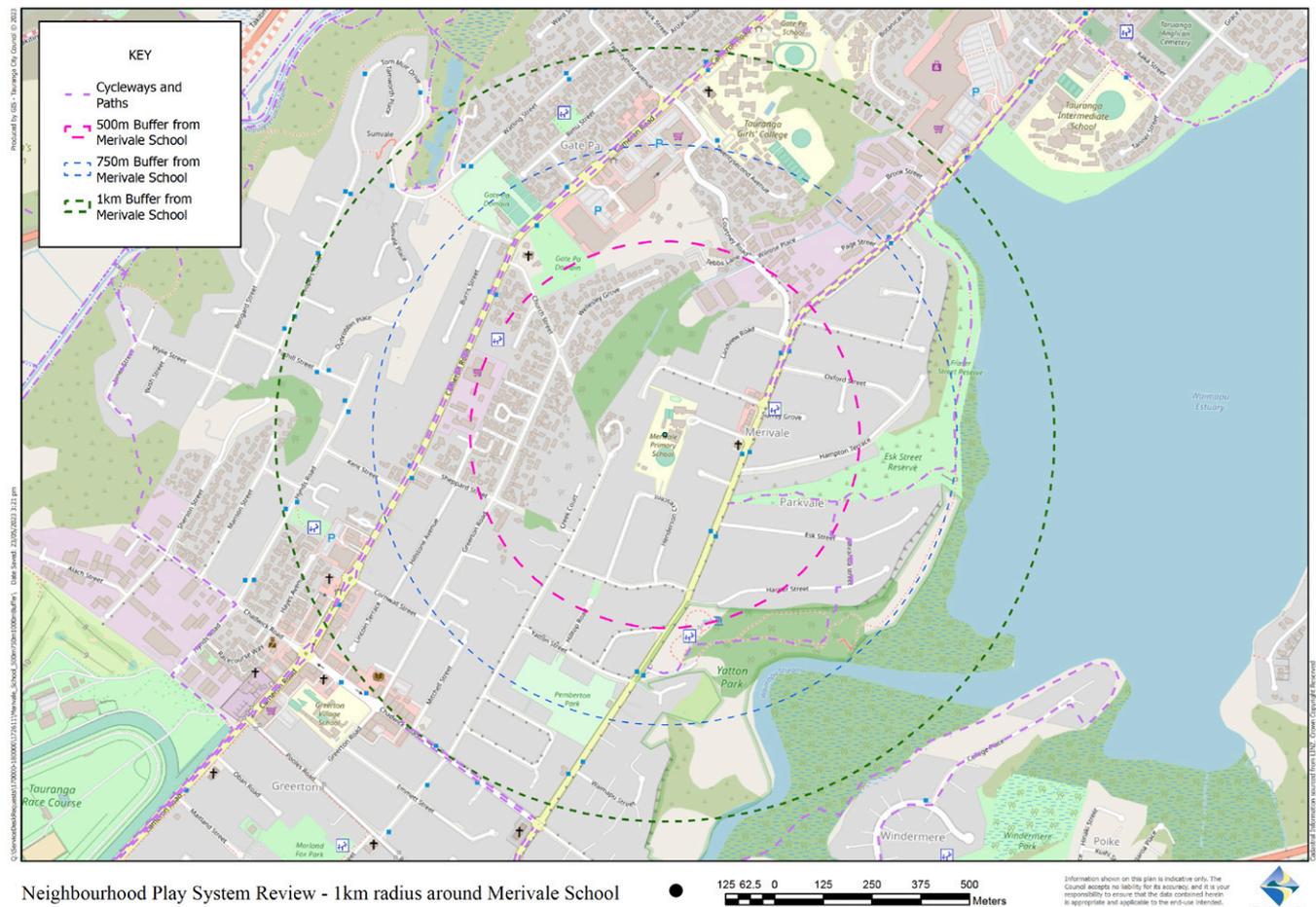
During 2022, Tauranga City Council staff, in partnership with Sport Bay of Plenty, developed a draft Play, Active Recreation and Sport Action and Investment Plan (The Plan). This draft plan will be formally considered by the council and adopted later in 2023. This plan provides guidance to council on investment into facilities supporting play, active recreation, and sport within Tauranga (such as sports fields, play spaces, and facilities for roller and wheely activities). Through this process, opportunities for play in Tauranga were mapped, and the area around Merivale School/Te Kura o Tūtarawānanga was identified as needing further assessment and community engagement to guide future investment.

Tauranga City Council has several other policies that inform its provision of recreation areas across the city. The Tauranga Reserves Management Plan guides decision-making in the development of reserves. The Open Space Level of Service

Policy outlines a commitment to neighbourhoods to have open spaces within 500m as the crow flies of most residences (400m in intensification areas) and is accompanied by a Best Practice Guide for Open Space. These documents are intended to be reviewed in 2023. In addition, Tauranga City Council has identified upgrades for walking and cycling in the Te Papa peninsula.

Long-term recommendations made through the Neighbourhood Play System project will be considered through council's 2024-2034 long term plan process. Short-term and Tū Manawa Active Aotearoa funded opportunities may enable swifter action.

Figure 2: Aerial map showing the roaming zones around Merivale School/Te Kura o Tūtarawānanga.



# Introduction

This Neighbourhood Play System report highlights key issues impacting play and sets out the current play context at a city, neighbourhood, and school level with Merivale School/Te Kura o Tūtarawānanga at the centre. It also proposes a set of recommendations that can be implemented by enablers of play through integrated actions, messaging, and infrastructure, which promotes play and independent active mobility of tamariki.

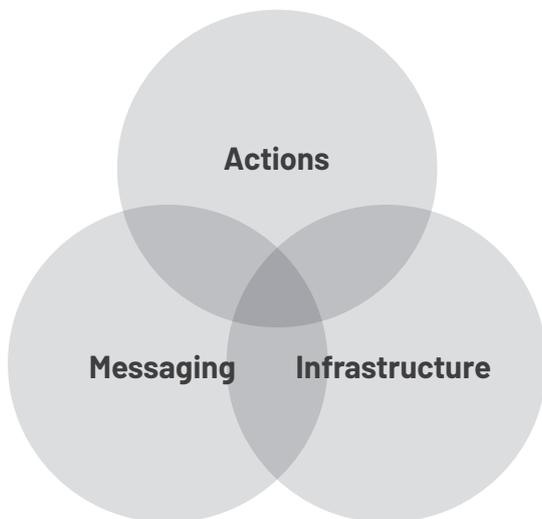


Figure 3: The three domains of work that will sustainably grow play.

- Actions are short-term activations, programmes, projects, and events. These are often low to no cost, are temporary, and may include the activation of school and community play spaces.
- Messaging is about how we shape systems, communities, and places for play. This occurs with consideration of council documents, community perceptions, and the ongoing impacts/context of spaces. We will usually try to evolve case studies and learnings from locally led approaches into policies, strategies, and plans.
- Infrastructure is about the transformation of our public spaces to create playable communities. This recognises the value that play has in the lives of tamariki and whānau, shaping how we consider and design urban environments to be 'child-friendly'.

An example: To address road safety concerns, 'infrastructure' could include installing safe pedestrian crossings along with 'messaging' (policies) to reduce vehicle speed in the area, and 'actions' to educate tamariki and the community about road safety and the benefits of active and independent mobility for play.

## What is play?

If we think back to our childhood, play is spontaneous, tamariki-led, fun, accessible, social, and freely chosen with no predetermined outcome. 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. These include fundamental movement skills, self-directed creativity/innovation, social and emotional connections, resilience, independence, leadership, and informed risk-taking.

For more information about how we can grow our Aotearoa play system.

[Play | Play Development | Sport New Zealand - Ihi Aotearoa \(sportnz.org.nz\)](http://Play | Play Development | Sport New Zealand - Ihi Aotearoa (sportnz.org.nz))

## 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".

Figure 4: Rights of the Child - Article 24-31.

The infographic is titled 'Children's Rights' and features illustrations of diverse children. It lists six articles in colored boxes:

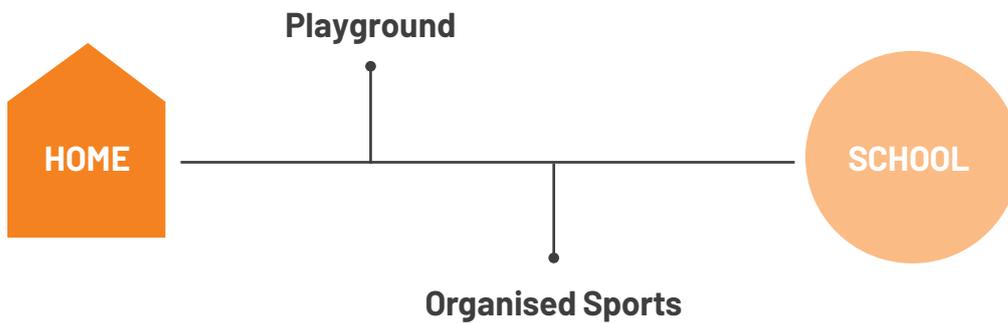
- Article 24** (Blue box): Every child has the right to good health, including health care, clean drinking water and nutritious food.
- Article 27** (Red box): Every child has the right to a life that meets their physical, social and mental needs.
- Article 28** (Yellow box): Every child has the right to an education.
- Article 29** (Green box): Every child's education must develop their abilities and talents and help them to respect people, live peacefully and protect their environment.
- Article 30** (Dark Blue box): Every child has the right to learn and use the language, customs and religion of their family.
- Article 31** (Pink box): Every child has the right to play and rest.

### Play is under threat

The playful upbringing enjoyed by previous generations is no longer as accessible to many 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, heightened fears around safety and risk, and a loss of societal connections means play deprivation is increasingly becoming a national and international concern.

Play spaces and play locations have become car-centric destinations which require whānau to drive tamariki to, for play to occur (see Figure 5). For too many tamariki however, access to these play spaces and play locations are determined by systemic barriers such as income and postcode.

Figure 5: Car-centric play system.

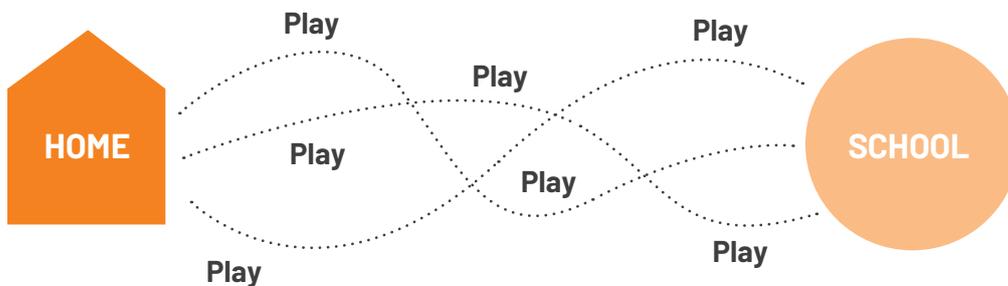


### The neighbourhood footprint

Tamariki and whānau need safe and clean streets, access to green spaces, clean air, things to do, the ability to get around, the freedom to see friends, and somewhere to call home. Each neighbourhood across Tauranga has the opportunity to build upon its own cultural, political, socio-economic and environmental contexts to realise the benefits of play through child-friendly urban planning. Schools are usually located at the heart of neighbourhoods and communities but more and more often, school grounds are not publicly accessible after hours (with many schools fenced and gated) - and therefore dramatically decreasing play opportunities. The neighbourhood footprint surrounding a school is just as important in creating a liveable and playful city for our tamariki and their whānau.

Considering that tamariki spend most of their time at home or at school, these two settings should be used as anchor points for play within the neighbourhood footprint. Providing safe travel routes to enable independence and creating a network of opportunities to play on the way and in every space available helps form the foundations of a truly child-friendly city (see Figure 6).

Figure 6: Walkable play system.



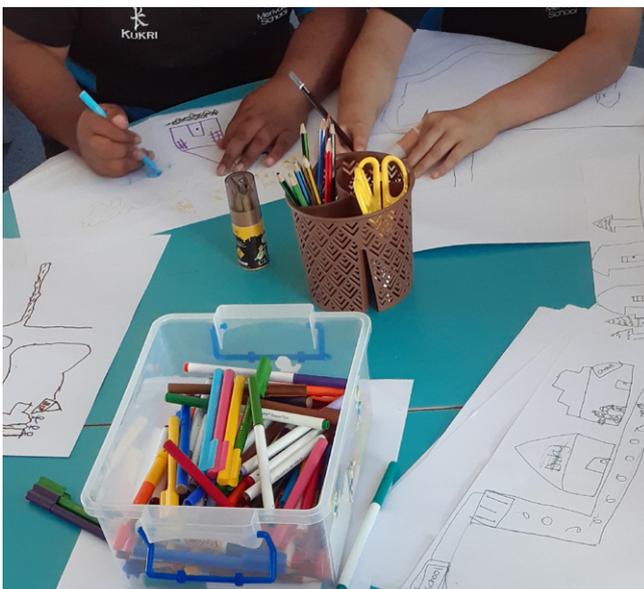
## The Neighbourhood Play System Blueprint

The Neighbourhood Play System provides a blueprint to identify key barriers and opportunities for tamariki to play inside their school and in their surrounding neighbourhood. This is approached through the eyes of tamariki and their whānau who live, work, and play in that community. The blueprint seeks to link with local plans and funding opportunities and considers how to embed play elements through school grounds, footpaths, streets, alleyways, greenspaces, waterways, industrial zones, marae, churches, and shops to promote play every day.

The following Neighbourhood Play System is a snapshot into the Merivale School/Te Kura o Tūtarawānanga community in the suburb of Merivale/Parkvale/Tūtarawānanga, Tauranga, and how this community supports the play sufficiency of the tamariki at Merivale School/Te Kura o Tūtarawānanga. It looks at play in a school and community setting from both an external lens and tamariki point of view. This Neighbourhood Play System will look at the local infrastructure, human constraints, and social behaviours to determine what play currently looks like in this context. From these findings, a list of recommendations will be identified to encourage the time, space, and permission for the tamariki of Merivale School/Te Kura o Tūtarawānanga to play.

To understand how tamariki of Merivale School/Te Kura o Tūtarawānanga are enabled to play, we first must understand what play is and why it is important. Play is activity tamariki take part in purely for their enjoyment and can be determined by a few characteristics. Play is spontaneous, it has no rules and no predetermined outcome. Play is led by tamariki themselves and is fun and challenging. Play is a vital part of children's physical, social-emotional, spiritual, and cognitive development.

Figure 7: Students drawing during the engagement session.



## So why are we concerned?

Play for our tamariki is under threat. Due to the changes in the physical environment (denser urbanisation), societal norms (lack of time and differing priorities), health and safety concerns, and increased technology; children have come to play less often and in less varied ways than what generations before were fortunate to experience.

## What was the approach to achieving this?

The profile of play conditions in the neighbourhood around Merivale School/Te Kura o Tūtarawānanga 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 November 2022 and June 2023.

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. It also investigated how local stakeholders perceive such conditions, contribute to shaping them, and act within them. The following methods were used for the field research.

### Desktop review

A desktop review was carried out by the Sport Bay of Plenty Play System Lead, looking at current conditions and previous data sources for example Census, school web pages, and council documents.

### Site walks

A neighbourhood walk was conducted where we were able to capture images from around the 1km radius around the school. Images showed a variety of challenges from overgrown trees to broken footpaths to vandalism and tagging of play spaces and buildings.

### Engagement and workshops

We facilitated a fun session with three classes of students at Merivale School/Te Kura o Tūtarawānanga to talk with students and gain their perspective on the neighbourhood. Three activities were run with the students, including drawing their journey from home to school, creating their favourite play memory with playdough and commenting on images from around the neighbourhood.

We spent three hours with the Merivale community centre talking through the draft report and capturing their knowledge, stories and aspirations of the community and then facilitated a workshop with key stakeholders to identify the opportunities and actions needed to make change to the play system in Merivale.

# Analysis of Merivale

## Community

Merivale is an older well-established inner suburb of Tauranga. Merivale is rated in the lowest 10% of communities in the New Zealand deprivation indexes. The Merivale community can be described as vulnerable.

There is a high percentage of social housing managed by Accessible Properties. Accessible Properties provides good-quality, affordable homes and property management services to people with disabilities, older people, and those on low incomes. There are approximately 225 properties they manage within 1km from Merivale School/Te Kura o Tūtarawānanga.

Figure 8: Merivale community garden painting.



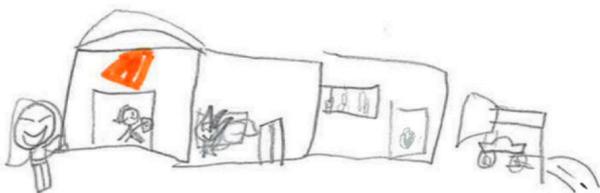
In Merivale, many houses have been in the same family for generations and there have been some historical issues related to the parks and green spaces within the area.

The Merivale shopping centre is made up of a row of buildings, many of which are vacant and covered by roller garage doors. The tamariki consider the butchery, bakery, and dairy to be safe places, with several students commenting about the 'free lollies' they receive at these stores, along with pies and fizzy drinks they like to purchase before or after school. Adults have expressed the need for a health/medical centre and social services to support community members, which would be a valuable addition to the area.

Figure 9: Student voice captured in response to the image of a wall near their school.



**“ There are men in hoods next to the dairy that stare at us and scare me. ”**



The community has a dark green wall on the corner dairy, adjacent to the only footpath that leads to Merivale School/Te Kura o Tūtarawānanga. Some comments and feelings from the students were:

The dark green wall is “hori” and “ugly”.

In the recommendations piece at the end of this report are suggestions to improve this.

## Merivale School/ Te Kura o Tūtarawānanga

The area of Merivale School/Te Kura o Tūtarawānanga is also known as Tūtarawānanga. Historically, for local iwi, it was the first area in Tauranga Moana where learning took place. Merivale School/Te Kura o Tūtarawānanga, established in 1957, provides education for students in years 1 to 6. It is a member of the Tauranga Peninsula Community of Learning | Kāhui Ako (CoL). The school's current roll includes 108 Māori, 30 Pasifika, and a small number of students from other cultural backgrounds. Education through the medium of Te Reo Māori is provided in two rumaki classes.

The school's values are based on 'The Vale Way: Very respectful, Always safe, Learning for life, Expect the best.' The values aim to assist in creating a supportive culture that is responsive to the needs of students, staff, and the community, and ensure a positive, safe, and respectful learning environment.

The school's strategic goals focus on:

- improving outcomes for students in literacy and supporting students to accelerate progress
- enhancing Māori and Pasifika pedagogy to ensure success
- creating a supportive culture
- developing a strong and positive presence in the Merivale and wider community.

Merivale School/Te Kura o Tūtarawānanga is currently reviewing their strategic goals. This provides an opportunity to add a goal focused around a healthy, active learning environment and to ensure tamariki and kaiako are on a healthy active pathway.

A Kohanga Reo, Whānau Aroha Early Childhood Centre, and the Merivale Action Centre are located either close to or in the school grounds. Ka Ora Ka Ako provides students with healthy lunches every day and it tops up a community kai pantry for whānau located by the school office.

**“ My home is in Pyes Pa.” [Why do you come here?] ‘To speak Māori. ”**

**“ Bring back the playground by the Aroha Centre so we can make some memories... ”**

## Community context

Whakahou Taketake Vital Update is a three-yearly research project led by Tauranga City Council, and supported by Acorn Foundation, Bay Trust, and Tauranga Energy Consumer Trust (TECT). The purpose is to hear from different communities about what is going well and the challenges the communities are facing.

It is crucial that the work of Tauranga City Council is informed by the community and to ensure the community has a voice in the future of Tauranga City.

The data below was the 2020 Vital Update, in which responses were collected before the COVID-19 pandemic. The 2023 data is currently being collected (May 2023). Given the current financial climate, inflation, and the cost of living skyrocketing – particularly rental prices and food being at their highest levels since the early 1980s – it will be interesting to compare results.



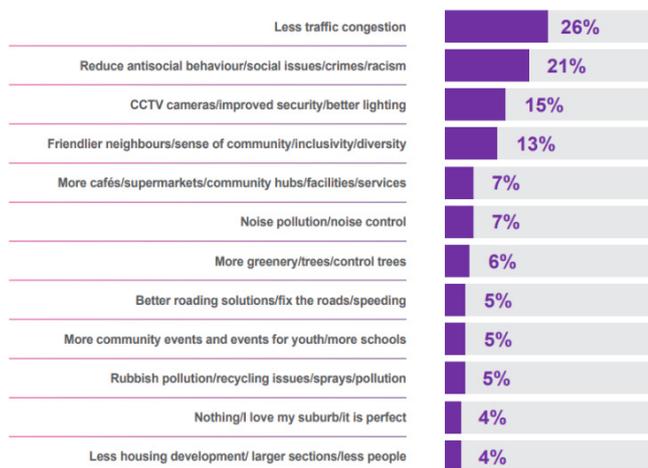
## Unemployment rate



10.5%

Unemployment rate in Merivale (Parkvale) is higher than the average in Tauranga (5.1%). It is still slightly higher than the National average at 4%<sup>(1)</sup>.

### What is one thing people would change in Merivale (Parkvale)

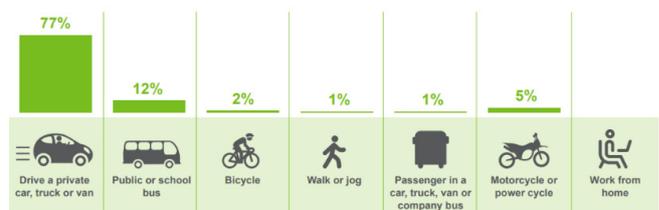


### People's housing situation



### How people move around in their community

Transport to school or work



### Merivale School/Te Kura o Tūtarawānanga Tamariki Transport Survey

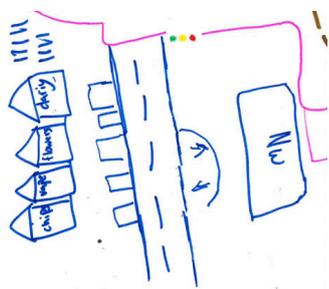
To understand the context of how the 2020 Vital Update data compares to Merivale School/Te Kura o Tūtarawānanga, we asked three classes the question, "How do you get to school?". The responses are in the following table:

|                | Class 1 | Class 2 | Class 3 | TOTALS   |
|----------------|---------|---------|---------|----------|
| Car            | 7       | 10      | 14      | 31 (62%) |
| Scooter / bike | 1       | 0       | 0       | 1 (2%)   |
| Walk           | 3       | 9       | 6       | 18 (36%) |

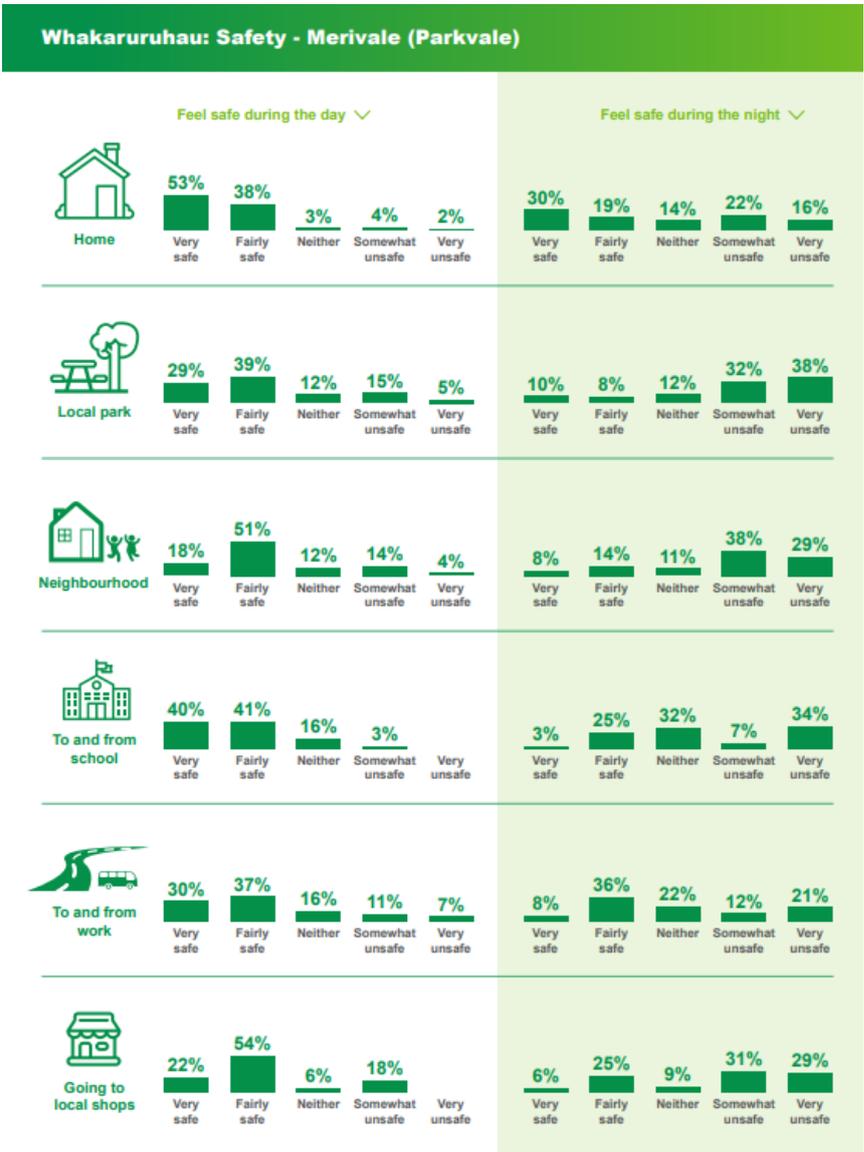
A large percentage of the tamariki that go to this school arrive by car, and less than 40% are travelling via scooter/bike/walk. This is reducing opportunities for playful moments in the community. There are a myriad of reasons why fewer tamariki are walking to and from school, including:

**"Nan doesn't let us walk alone - she thinks we will be kidnapped."**

**"We walk past big dogs on the way to school."**



**"Don't like to do anything by myself - it's scary."**



## Student voice and wider research context

Tauranga Intermediate School is just outside the 1km radius around Merivale School/Te Kura o Tūtarawānanga. With a roll of approximately 1250 tamariki – the largest in New Zealand – it is likely students from Merivale School/Te Kura o Tūtarawānanga would attend Tauranga Intermediate as the next step in their education pathway. Sport Bay of Plenty's Healthy Active Learning team conducted a play scan in March 2023 to support opportunities within break times in the school.

Some of the student voice captured supports the opportunities identified by Merivale School/Te Kura o Tūtarawānanga students and could be implemented within the community.

The top 10 fixed equipment/facilities intermediate-aged tamariki expressed an interest in are:

- Bike/skate track (pump track)
- Flying fox
- Individual swings
- Sandpit
- Trampolines
- Platform in trees
- Mini putt area
- Rockwall
- Parkour
- Fitness trail/ obstacle course.

Sport Bay of Plenty also facilitated a Voice of Rangatahi survey. This survey goes out to secondary schools across the Bay of Plenty to allow students the opportunity to provide their thoughts on the participation environment at school, centred around physical activity. This data is analysed by sub-region and by school and focuses on areas where the school can improve. In Tauranga, the top activities identified by rangatahi that they would like to participate in out of school time are:

|           |                                    |               |
|-----------|------------------------------------|---------------|
| <b>1</b>  | <b>Workout (weights or cardio)</b> | <b>25.58%</b> |
| <b>2</b>  | <b>Volleyball/beach volleyball</b> | <b>21.19%</b> |
| <b>3</b>  | <b>Boxing</b>                      | <b>19.99%</b> |
| <b>4</b>  | <b>Surfing</b>                     | <b>16.82%</b> |
| <b>5</b>  | <b>Badminton</b>                   | <b>15.95%</b> |
| <b>6</b>  | <b>Skiing</b>                      | <b>15.61%</b> |
| <b>7</b>  | <b>Football/soccer</b>             | <b>15.60%</b> |
| <b>8</b>  | <b>Basketball</b>                  | <b>15.24%</b> |
| <b>9</b>  | <b>Netball</b>                     | <b>14.32%</b> |
| <b>10</b> | <b>Yoga</b>                        | <b>13.40%</b> |

\*averages include both in and out of school

“

**A lot of tamariki play handball – it would be a great idea to mark these, possibly with more colour. ”**

## Assessments of facilities by Tauranga City Council

Tauranga City Council has also completed some assessments based on the provision of courts, facilities, and play spaces across the city. Gaps have been identified through this process with suggestions for further community consultation. This is captured within the draft Play, Active Recreation and Sport Action & Investment Plan (AIP) currently open for feedback via Tauranga City Council's website (May 2023).

Using the Voice of Rangatahi survey results from the Western Bay of Plenty sub-region, Tauranga Intermediate students, and Merivale School/Te Kura o Tūtarawānanga students, we can overlay the provision maps and preferred activities to determine a priority action plan.

Top three provisions based on gaps analysis and student voice:

- Local/neighbourhood skate park
- Basketball provisions – half-court minimum (currently a hoop at the community centre)
- Fitness trail/workout stations/opportunities for parkour/climbing activities.

“(I always) skateboard on the island in the middle of the road (grind the concrete on Surrey Grove intersection).”

Figure 10: Student scootering in school cul-de-sac on quiet weekend.



## Assessment of parks and reserves

In the 1km radius around the school there are several areas where play could take place.

### Surrey Grove Reserve

300m from school

#### Current facilities:

- Playground
- Seating
- Grassy area.

Students identify this as the 'green and purple playground'. Things noted in discussions with tamariki:

- have more swings and a flying fox
- play there and to feel safe to go there.

Figure 11: Surrey Grove Reserve playground.



Figure 12: Student voice captured on Surrey Grove Playground images.



“ I don't go to Surrey Grove Reserve [because] ... glass, adults drinking and fighting, and other kids pick on my sisters. ”

#### Student voice:

##### Positives

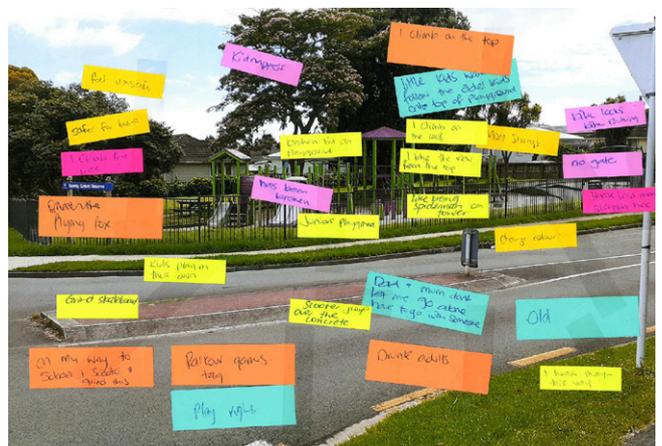
- I like being spiderman on the tower, I climb to the top, I like the view from the top.

##### Negatives

- Hori - too dangerous to go by myself
- Too much broken glass, adults fighting, adults drinking
- Bad vibe, feels unsafe
- Dad and mum don't let me go alone
- More swings and a flying fox
- Don't feel safe going there alone due to incidents that have happened and things witnessed there.

##### Opportunities

We identified opportunities for 'pop up' activities at this facility, such as a play trailer, community centre temporary location, whānau days, play sessions and more. These are captured in the recommendations at the end of this report.



## Yatton Park | Tūtarawānanga - papa rēhia o Yatton

650m from school

### Current facilities:

- Water features and fountain
- Toilets
- BBQ area
- Seating
- Playspace
- Carpark
- Drinking fountain
- Gravel pathways
- Gardens.

<https://www.tauranga.govt.nz/exploring/parks-and-reserves/parks/tutaraw%C4%81nanga-yatton-park>

In 2021, Merivale School/Te Kura o Tūtarawānanga students petitioned to council to have the park duel named to recognise the history and cultural significance of the site.

### Student voice:

#### Positives

- Love climbing the trees, like the playground stuff
- Leaf races in the water
- BBQs with our whānau
- We find rocks here that have been painted- we either keep them, throw them in the water or hide them.

#### Negatives

- Lots of dogs off leash
- Needs a bigger tramp
- The water fountain doesn't go and the water is dirty.

Figure 13: Part of wider Yatton Park.



Figure 14: Student voice captured on images of Yatton Park.





## Pemberton Park

1km from school. Please note, this is not a play space but a sports field.

### Current facilities:

- Toilets (not open to the public)
- Meredith Hall Building – includes changing rooms – managed by the Blue Rovers Football Club and Greerton Cricket Club.
- Cricket Nets – belong to a cricket club and must have their approval to use
- Home to Greerton Cricket Club and Blue Rovers Football.

Many students hadn't been there or didn't know what was there. Only a few students are part of either of the clubs. Neighbours to the park can be overprotective of the space and vocal about their concerns with people using it for anything other than football or cricket.

### Student voice:

#### Positives

- Feels safe
- We take a ball and play
- Dad had rugby training there.

#### Negatives

- We play games there but the lady in the house tells us to leave
- Needs a playground.

Figure 17: Side-street entrance to Pemberton Park.



Figure 18: Student voice captured on image of Pemberton Park entrance.



## Merivale Community Centre

Merivale has a well-functioning community centre that's been due for an upgrade since 2012. Current forecasting is for the upgrade to start by the end of 2024. The Merivale Community Centre currently facilitates a free after-school programme every day during term time from 3.00–5.00pm. All children are welcome from ages 5–18. The centre also provides youth nights every Thursday evening. It's youth workers have plans to run free, fun, group sessions to engage youth in positive activities with their peers. The centre also has a mentoring service for rangatahi who are engaged with Oranga Tamariki – Youth Justice.

The Merivale Community Centre is a safe space for the community to access services and support. Staff are respected and know their community members well. There is excitement about the new facility as it will be designed to ensure it meets the needs of the community, as well as being a space where the staff can enable playable moments for tamariki and whānau. While the new build is happening, it will be essential that a pop-up version of the community centre is still located within the heart of Merivale so it can continue to be accessible, close to facilities, and continue to provide the services needed in the community. Staff have also expressed a vision of activating spaces, for example, Surrey Grove Reserve to reclaim the space as a whānau space and enable the community to come together. Merivale School/Te Kura o Tūtarawānanga and the the Merivale Community Centre are the 'play champions' for the Merivale community.

On school grounds is the Merivale Action Centre, which is run in partnership with the school, Bay Venues, and Tauranga City Council. This is a bookable space that is booked by a variety of users, which vary term to term. The Merivale Community Centre currently books the space for after-school and school-holiday programmes. There is an opportunity to explore what utilisation of this space could look like to benefit tamariki and whānau after school hours, using a community-led approach to support activity opportunities booked within the Action Centre at a time and cost that is suitable to school whānau.

## School access walkway

Bordering the school is a walkway that connects Kesteven Avenue and Henderson Crescent. At the Henderson Crescent end there is a Kohanga Reo and Merivale Whānau Aroha Centre. A large grassy space is used as a carpark for parents collecting tamariki. During school hours the walkway is often used as a thoroughfare for adults wanting to access the shops on Fraser Street. Students who use the walkway before/after school commented that they feel safe using it, while others expressed fear of going through there alone. Students identified several opportunities to change the vibe of this space including planting, painting, and integrating play opportunities.

Students and adults we talked with identified ongoing alcohol-related issues around the neighbourhood. This included: students being intimidated by adults, witnessing abusive behaviours (including verbal and physical altercations), broken glass in play spaces, glass bottles and rubbish left on school grounds, and students seeing alcohol as a normal part of their community.

There is currently a liquor ban in place around the Merivale shopping centre, including the Surrey Grove Reserve, however, this does not cover the school or the walkway alongside the school. Some promotion of what this liquor ban means and how to report people who may be breaching it will potentially lead to a reduction in liquor being seen or consumed around the school.

Leanne Fairbairn, Community Constable for Merivale in 2013, said in a newspaper interview, that there were issues around having alcohol available so close to a school.

"There is a walkway through the school grounds and, having purchased alcohol, people will walk through that way. The concern there is around making alcohol more visible in the community and to the children especially," Ms Fairbairn said.

There is another liquor store in Fraser Cove Shopping Centre – just a one-minute drive away – along with others along Cameron Road.



Figure 19: Map showing alcohol-free areas around Merivale.

The following Public Places, as shown on map 4, are permanent Alcohol-free areas 24 hours a day seven days a week.

- Fraser Street from its intersection with Hampton Terrace to, and including, its intersection with Oxford Street.
- Merivale Road from Fraser Street to, and including, its intersection with Landview Road.
- Kesteven Avenue from its intersection with Fraser Street to the boundary with Merivale Primary School.
- Merivale Community Centre grounds.
- Surrey Grove including the Surrey Grove Reserve.

## Sport Bay of Plenty neighbourhood walk

During the January 2023 school holidays, Sport Bay of Plenty staff conducted a neighbourhood walk. It was a nice, sunny day, however, no other people were seen walking around, and no cyclists went past. We initiated a conversation with a lady at the Merivale Community Garden who spoke very highly of the kai provided for the community to access. The vegetables in the garden were thriving, and the fresh, juicy plums were ripe for the picking. While at Yatton Park, one young family arrived just after us. Their son had a remote-control boat to put on the pond. We had a conversation with the graffiti removalist at Surrey Grove playground who mentioned most of what he removed seemed to be written/drawn by young tamariki as it was relatively inoffensive and just had the odd swear word. No tamariki were seen playing either in public or in home yards. Cars were seen to be the dominant mode of transport.

Some observations made:

- Lack of safe crossing zones across Fraser Street (only one pedestrian crossing by the shopping centre between Surrey Grove and Kesteven Avenue) – ideally this needs pedestrian crossing lights.
- Narrow footpaths that are in bad condition with lots of cracks, possibly caused by tree roots and overhanging branches impacting access.
- Access to school via the front gate on Kesteven Avenue only has a footpath on one side of the road.
- Flooding occurring across the pathway to access Esk Street reserve and walkway – looks like it's been there a while as has some mossy slime build-up.
- Lack of accessibility friendly spaces due to the condition of pathways and lack of sealed paths through Yatton Park (also results in a lack of scooter or skate-friendly places). Sealing these would provide access for those in wheelchairs, anyone with mobility issues, prams, and wheeled accessories.

Figure 20: Broken footpath due to tree roots.



Figure 21: Gravelled pathways through Yatton Park.



# Identity

There is an identity issue that needs some attention as there are currently three different names circulating for the same area. With a quick google search of 'Parkvale' the area of Merivale pops up. The Parkvale name was originally used by NZ Post, however, based on our conversations with locals during our 2023 engagement, Tūtarawānanga or Merivale are the preferred names. In a [Bay of Plenty Times article from 2013](#) (included in references at the end of this report), the case of multiple names for the area was raised. The article mentions: A book on the history of Merivale showed the suburb came into being after the end of WWII, when six family farms were purchased and subdivided. One of the farms was called Merrivale Estate and the name stuck, although an "r" was dropped along the way.

The school principal in 2013, Jan Tinetti, dismissed Parkvale as a name. "We are Merivale through and through, and we are proud of it. We don't care what others say." She said the school used both the European name for the area and the Māori name, Tūtarawānanga, adding, "we are not about to put in a third name".

Council staff in 2023 confirmed, "As far as we (Tauranga City Council) are concerned, it's Merivale and Tūtarawānanga." A street sign on 15th Avenue in Tauranga has a directional arrow pointing to 'Park Vale' (note the two-word spelling, which does not seem to appear anywhere else). The Vital Update report from 2020 also includes the name Parkvale in brackets following the title Merivale. There is some work to be done to ensure the situation is officially resolved.

Figure 22: Corner 15th Avenue and Grace Road.

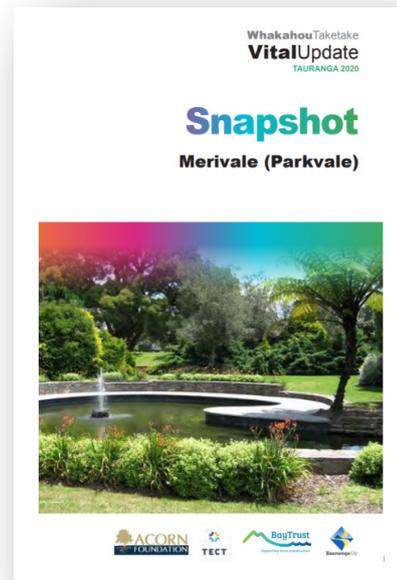


Figure 23: Showing the name Parkvale used on a Tauranga City Council document.

# Summary of findings

## What we know

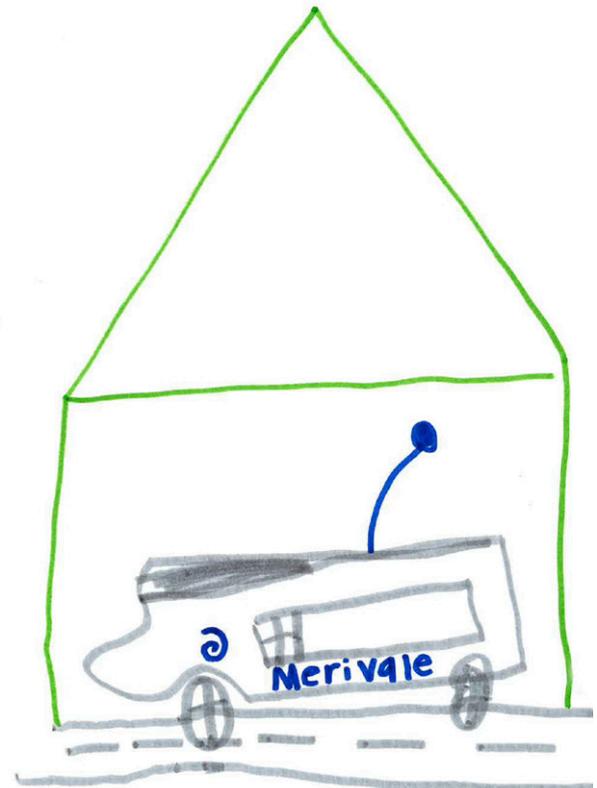
- Many families have been in the same house for generations and have historic views on their perception of the neighbourhood (for example, safety/boundaries).
- Shops aren't viewed as a nice place to go. Many are closed. The butcher has a good reputation.
- Extra-curricular activity is limited.
- The walking school bus is led by teachers from shops to school – there used to be Road Patrol, but so many cars ignored the lollipop signs and it became too dangerous to continue.

## What we heard

- Community with vulnerable people, challenges are economic and social, people can be very judgemental.
- Slightly larger Māori population – strong community connections.
- The school is older and needs updating. Need to maximise access to education, property/facility. Funding if needed to improve property accessibility.
- Perception of safety – more comfortable with people who live in the area vs other people passing through.
- Merivale tenants potentially feel secure in access to amenities (for example, Fraser cove).
- Community survey was a few years ago, including community centre and social wellbeing questions – may be out of date but still useful.
- Young people are getting up to mischief and there is bullying. The community centre is seen as a safe space.
- Access to services is an issue – transport, stigma. It would be ideal to bring services to the community.
- Traffic congestion and speed on Fraser Street is a real issue for school kids – explore Waka Kotahi safer streets, 30km speed limits.

## Assumptions

- Is disability/accessibility thought about? For example, the shopping centre only has one pedestrian crossing.
- Environment looks tired – potentially old facilities, which accounts to not being accessibility friendly.
- Strong connections – sense of belonging.
- More difficult to travel, therefore unlikely to participate in other communities.



## Challenges

- Violence – community members sort out issues. There might be a big fight but it's over and done with and doesn't drag on.
- Child safety, gangs, crime, and addiction.
- With schools funding their own playground, inclusion and accessibility lens can be left off. There is an opportunity to change how they are designed, including a variety of heights, sizes, and age abilities.
- Cul-de-sac leading to school features vehicle congestion. There is one disability car park (both front and back entrances).
- High level of social housing, high gang presence, which equates to antisocial behaviour.
- No consultation with the community about the name 'Parkvale'. This is not liked by the community as they want to be known as Tūtarawānanga.
- Feeling like the council does FOR them, rather than WITH them.
- Most of the community want bottle stores closed and a 24-hour liquor ban put in place. Lots of alcohol-related crime in the area, including school students being intimidated by intoxicated adults.
- Teenagers can be intimidating at the play spaces. There needs to be a safe space for both rangatahi and for tamariki.
- Tamariki love to ride but they don't do it safely. They often don't have helmets either. Opportunity to explore a bike track or somewhere safe for them to learn to ride (pop-up pump track/roadway/bike loop).

“

**We can go to the park by ourselves, because we are 10; have to be home by dark. ”**



## Aspirations

- Would love a bridge for tamariki to safely cross Fraser Street to get to school.
- Opportunity for linkage through the Merivale stormwater area.
- Opportunity for relationships with Tauranga Girls' College to expand their network/neighbourhood and share resources (for example, pool).
- Opportunity to encourage a safe drop-off area away from the school with a safe walking route identified. Could this be student led.
- Safe and healthy community with resources.
- Through pathways and planning, schedule new/upgraded paths.
- Programme upgrades to play spaces through play space planning/community voice.
- Wheelchair users consulted with scope for varied perspectives – can also benefit other wheel users e.g. prams, scooters. For example, Yatton Park and gravel pathways.
- Safe and secure in the local community with access to sports and leisure activities.
- Close the liquor store, put in a dairy and health services – medical, Ngati Ranginui.
- Positive changes in the community would lead to more respect – the community centre is a safe place.
- Community centre rebuild – has been promised since 2012.
- Community garden – producing well, but more community use could be encouraged.
- Re-establish community hub meetings – first Thursday of the month.
- Residential hui.
- Safe route to school.

## What does good look like?

Our aspiration is for tamariki of all ages and abilities to feel safe and able to freely access play opportunities in their neighbourhood. Local built and natural environments should facilitate a variety of play opportunities. Merivale is a community where play is actively supported and encouraged (through time, space and permission) for tamariki and their whānau and play is valued by community members, and city authorities. We want to see tamariki of all ages and abilities, together with their whānau, continually enjoy their play experiences in Merivale.



## What does success look like?

### Household

Tamariki have access to play opportunities at home, including access to safe outdoor play spaces in or around their home. They are given adequate time and choice to play at home either with caregivers, siblings or peers and alone - this comes through educating caregivers and whānau of the benefits of play and how they can enable opportunities for their tamariki.

### School

Ensuring safe and connected journeys to/from school for tamariki of all ages. Offering tamariki safe, accessible and playful education facilities at Merivale School/Te Kura o Tūtarawānanga, supporting learning through play and a range of play opportunities and providing an important opportunity for regular, secure play. Ensuring kaiako are passionate play enablers and resources are available to cater to inclusive and cultural play.

### Neighbourhood

Supporting whānau to feel confident that their tamariki are safe and empowered to move independently through their neighbourhood. Providing healthy, playful and well-serviced public spaces and facilities for a range of play types. A play-supportive culture is established and promoted in the community, by local residents and organisations. Opportunities and avenues exist for community members to engage in and support play in public spaces. Play spaces provided in Merivale are fun and enjoyable for diverse groups of tamariki to use. Any future play provisions are informed by tamariki voice and co-designed using the local community.

### City

Tauranga City Council provides a safe and connected network of playful spaces and mobility options. Play experiences cater to a diverse range of experiences and enable all abilities, ages and ethnicities to experience quality play opportunities. City authorities are informed about the benefits of play, and support programmes to improve access to and quality of a diverse range of play modes for children in their homes, schools, and neighbourhoods. Play facilitation and knowledge support is enabled throughout the city by governance and leadership. Opportunities are provided for caregivers and children to participate in decision making and planning.

# Recommendations

## Short- to mid-term recommendations

| Opportunity   | Location   | Result  |
|---|--|---|
| Vegetation trimming and finding a solution to pathway leak to enable use of the pathway, clearing out overgrowth and replanting, fence painting, add painted play interactions along pathway, potential for pou to be installed and to share some local pūrākau along the walkway. Include organisations like Envirohub, Good Neighbour and the Tauranga City Council pathways planner.   | Esk Street Walkway- Fraser Street entrance.  | Community kaitiaki of the area, accessible, open up the space to create a safer feeling when passing through, tamariki friendly design.                               |
| Install a pump track/learn to ride area/scooter/skate spaces to suit a range of users from parents of toddlers learning to ride to primary school students wanting to have a fun and safe opportunity to develop their skills on bikes/scooters/skateboards.  | Explore opportunities for this including the back of the school, opposite Fraser Cove by BK or Pacific motors, in the walkway by the Action Centre. Need to check land status.                 | An opportunity not currently available in this neighbourhood; enable a new physical activity option for multi-generational activity.                                  |
| Provide a safe space for basketball and handball style recreation with a sealed court and hoop available. Possibility for lighting, seating, toilet facilities, and drinking water to encourage staying longer. There will be a half court at the community centre, but for some time there will be no provision while the rebuild is happening.  | Potential way of activating Surrey Grove play space for older tamariki/rangatahi.  | Work with local tamariki and rangatahi to ensure it meets their needs and create a sense of kaitiaki for the area.  |
| Provision of a healthy way to keep active, via fitness/ obstacle trail with exercise stations or parkour activity options. Ability for use by multiple ages. Opportunity to improve health and fitness- potential for use by local personal trainers/community sessions   | Potential to look at locations such as Surrey Grove, the Community Centre green space after the rebuild, Yatton Park or Pemberton Park to extend on the physical activity opportunities there. | Work with local young people to lead the project design, locality planning and incorporate their ideas into the end product.  |
| Opportunity to paint fence lines/walls in the area, add plants, incorporate Play on the Way activities and stencil markings to make the spaces look more inviting. Investigate opportunity for painting the green wall of the shopping centre (mural co-designed by students?) Add 'Play on the way' (for example, hopscotch/footprints, numbers, alphabet) to encourage playful moments as students move through this space on their way to/from school. | Green wall of the shopping centre on Kesteven Ave and school alleyway have been identified by students as spaces they would like to see revamped.  | Projects identified and led by tamariki, bring together the community, create pride of place, and community unity. Include a working bee and multi agency to support. |

**Opportunity**

**Location**

**Result**

Community Centre pop up space located central to the Merivale Community to enable continued central service provision during the rebuild as well as opportunities for whanau day's and play activation via centre staff

Install portable buildings in Surrey Grove Reserve during the rebuild of the community centre.

Impact in the community continues during rebuild. Remains central and accessible, enables play system reactivation

Vegetation trimming- enable safer access for walkers and wheel users when passing by on the footpath

Corner of Wembury Grove and Fraser Street. Fraser street by Community centre,

Clear access to footpaths for active modes going to/from places

Adding pedestrian crossing lights or raising the height of the pedestrian crossing to enable tamariki a safe way of crossing the pedestrian to actively move to and from their school

Fraser Crescent crossing by Kesteven Cres at the shopping centre.

More tamariki enabled to actively get to school and across to Surrey Grove play space as less likelihood of being hit by a car on Fraser Street, peace of mind to parents

Mural painted with something representing their pride in living in Tūtarawānanga, exhibiting the rich history and past generations of whānau, and as a wayfinding identity marker of their school being at the end of the cul-de-sac. Could be used to enable 'play on the way' via hopscotch or other footpath painting below the green wall.

The dark green wall on the corner dairy, adjacent to the only footpath that leads to Merivale School/Te Kura o Tūtarawānanga.

Tamariki will feel safer walking to and from school, feel more pride in their community and enables more playful moments for tamariki and their whānau and community.

Figure 24: The dark green wall on the corner dairy.



### Long-term recommendations:

1. Opportunity to encourage a safe drop-off area away from the school with a safe walking route identified (student-led and walking school bus) from Pemberton Park or the community garden to the Henderson Crescent school gate. Increase active transport, which creates an opportunity for play, laughter, and fun on the way to school.
2. Explore additional pedestrian crossings across Fraser Street by Yatton Park to improve access to the play area and the sport fields at Pemberton Park.
3. Explore the opportunity to reseal footpaths in the area and pathways through Yatton Park to create ease of access by wheel users, including prams, wheelchairs, scooters, skateboards, runner bikes, trikes, and for seniors with mobility issues.
4. Use community-led approach to support activity opportunities booked within the Action Centre at a time and cost that is suitable to school whānau.

Figure 25: Tree on the corner of Wembury Grove and Fraser Street.



### Other considerations:

These opportunities have been identified during our consultation but will need to be led through a council/ community process rather than part of the Neighbourhood Play System.

- Define the boundaries of Parkvale separate to the boundaries of Merivale/Tūtawānanga, or investigate removal of the Parkvale name entirely – and ensure this is transparent across assets such as Google, emergency services, real estate and street signage. This will support the identity and mana of Merivale.
- Extend liquor ban to include school and walkway and explore the opportunity to campaign this extension to increase reporting rates by the community (especially promote liquor ban in Surrey Grove playground). This will support tamariki to feel safer moving about in their community and reduce the exposure to alcohol.
- Advocate for health services to make use of some of the closed buildings in the shopping centre to change the vibe and make it a health hub that feels safe for community members from all walks of life.
- Traffic congestion and speed on Fraser Street is a real issue for school kids. Explore Waka Kotahi safer streets, 30km speed limits. Work with police to identify vehicles travelling too fast, especially during the school drop-off and pick-up times.

# Conclusion

When exploring the Merivale community with the lens of play it is immediately obvious that tamariki and the community are crying out for change to the system to enable safe play opportunities now and into the future.

The community has shared their aspirations and been vocal about their concerns over the years but feel there has not been much action as a result. There are a number of safety concerns that they manage to mitigate on a daily basis, but for real change to take effect the community needs to know that their voices are being heard and see tangible action taking place as a result.

Some easy to fix and quick to implement recommendations have been identified. There is a strong sense of community spirit and interested organisations who can support this to happen. There are also a number of social, environmental and traffic concerns that may need further exploration. Involvement from bigger organisations such as local government, Waka Kotahi, Te Whatu Ora and the Ministry of Education will support these pieces of work.

Tamariki living in Merivale have a strong sense of pride and have a desire to improve the visual appearance of the area. They are immensely proud of their school and want it to be clear that this is their community, and they are the future of this neighbourhood.

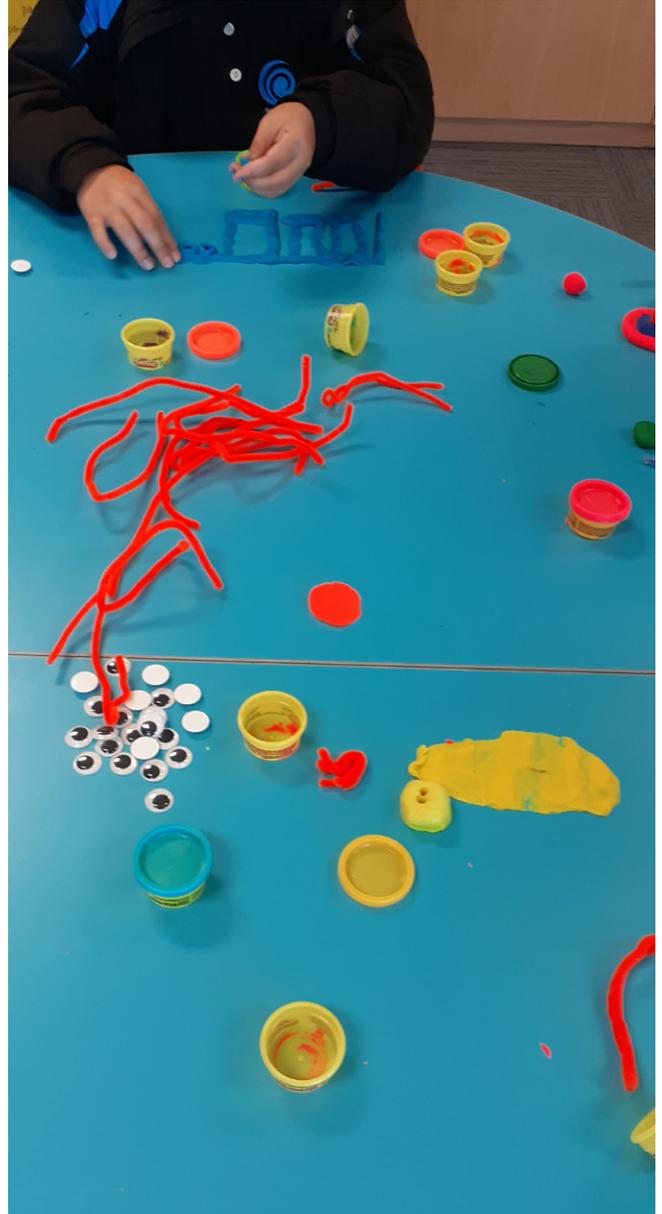


Figure 26: Students hands creating playdough art.



Figure 27: Students drawing during the engagement session.

## References and supporting documents

<https://aceline.co.nz/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Aceline-Services-School-Playground-Educational-Brochure-2022.pdf>

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Level 1, Harbour City Centre  
29 Brandon Street  
Wellington 6011, New Zealand  
PO Box 2251 Wellington 6140  
Phone: +64 4 472 8058  
[sportnz.org.nz](http://sportnz.org.nz)



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