

# Neighbourhood Play System

# Cobham School

ELGIN, GISBORNE TAIRĀWHITI  
FEBRUARY 2022

**Sport**   
Gisborne | Tairāwhiti

 Te Kaunihera o Te Tairāwhiti  
**GISBORNE**  
DISTRICT COUNCIL

 **SPORT**  
NEW ZEALAND  
IHI AOTEAROA

**Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa**  
New Zealand Government

# Contents

Executive summary .....	2
Introduction .....	3
The Neighbourhood Play System Blueprint .....	4
Approach .....	5
Cobham School context plan .....	11
Current conditions .....	12
What we heard .....	18
What does success look like? .....	20
Cobham School opportunities plan .....	22
Opportunities for play in Elgin .....	23
The five dimensions of the Elgin Neighbourhood Play System .....	24
Play Champions - the rope that binds the play system together .....	33
Next steps .....	34

# Executive summary

Sport New Zealand Ihi Aotearoa, Sport Gisborne Tairāwhiti and Healthy Families East Cape (HFEC) are committed to increasing opportunities for tamariki, rangatahi and whānau to access quality play opportunities and experiences.

With the support of Sport NZ, Arup and the Gisborne District Council, Sport Gisborne Tairāwhiti and Healthy Families East Cape explored and tested the Neighbourhood Play System Blueprint of play sufficiency within the suburb of Elgin and the neighbourhood surrounding Cobham School. This document is a comprehensive assessment of the neighbourhood that surrounds Cobham School and evaluates the opportunities identified through an assessment and consultation process for creating playful neighbourhoods through tamariki co-designed play initiatives.

The Blueprint is a radical approach to urban design in that it places the key stakeholder, our tamariki, at the centre of the design process. Through co-design practices with the tamariki of Cobham School in the suburb of Elgin, the key barriers and opportunities to play in their neighbourhood have been identified and shaped into powerful initiatives that have the potential to dismantle the systems of play inequity in Tairāwhiti.

The kaupapa of this project was to understand how various urban systems impact the play experiences of tamariki in their community and to support the development of initiatives that contribute to creating an equitable tamariki-friendly urban environment.

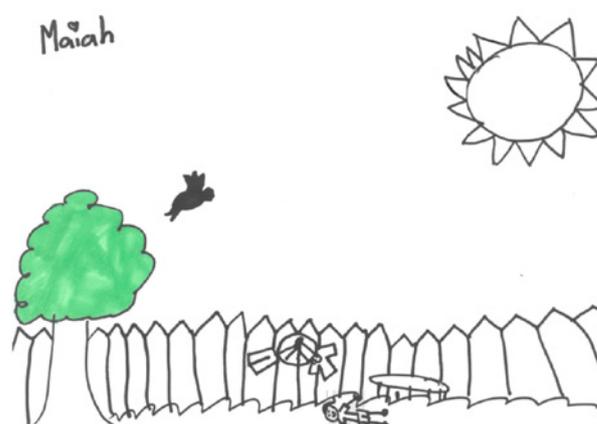
The population of Elgin predominately identify as Māori, with Māori making up a far greater proportion of the Elgin population than the national average. The proportion of Elgin residents that speak Te Reo Māori is also far higher than the national average. Elgin is a relatively young community with 25% younger than 15 years of age compared to the national population of 19%. There is low access to basic forms of education, transport, and communication with personal and household incomes and home ownership also all lower than the national average.

Compounding these statistics is the fact that the Elgin community faces many daily challenges including gang activity, roaming dogs, busy roads and a lack of investment in infrastructure and planning. The community of Elgin has also been plagued by decades of neglect and poor urban design that has essentially cut the suburb and its people off from the city centre, the surrounding environment, and each other. One of the main challenges for the tamariki of Elgin is the lack of a publicly accessible playground, which has won Elgin the unenviable title of 'The Play Desert'. There is however a lot of pride in the school and wider community as well some active play champions and community groups achieving some great mahi. The tamariki also have the old-school luxury of being able to free-range across their neighbourhood and the broader Tairāwhiti play network.

This Blueprint takes a Te Ao Māori view of the health and wellbeing of the Elgin community and the broader play system. This reflects the high proportion of Māori who live, work and play in Elgin and the holistic approach of the Sport Gisborne Tairāwhiti Manawakura kaupapa and their Te Waharoa concept for Cobham School. Utilising the Te Ao Māori framework of Te Whare Tapa Whā as a tamariki-friendly urban design tool has allowed the identification of five opportunities for a healthy and equitable Elgin Neighbourhood Play System:

- **Whenua - Where I am Tākaro Taiao (Nature Play):**  
Restoring the Awa and the Whenua - Reynolds Creek Restoration
- **Taha whānau - Who I am Tākoro Hapori (Village Play):**  
Revitalising Taha Whānau - Elgin Shops Revitalisation
- **Taha tinana - What I am Huarahi Tākaro (Play Corridors):**  
Activating Taha Tinana - Rail Corridor Active Transport Network
- **Taha hinengaro - How I am Tākaro Haere (Play on the Way):**  
Nourishing Taha Hinengaro - Te Waharoa Gateway to the City
- **Taha wairua - Why I am Papa Tākaro (School Ground Play):**  
Connecting to Taha Wairua - Te Whare Tapere - Community 'House' of Entertainment

Capitalising on these five opportunities to create an equitable Tairāwhiti Play System will require strong local governance, vocal play champions drawn from key Elgin community stakeholder groups and a continuation of the inspiring community-led, co-design approach with the tamariki of Cobham School. As a tamariki-led framework, this blueprint recognises and elevates young people as valued contributors to society, giving them the space to participate, assume agency and take responsibility for factors that affect their daily lives.



# Introduction

## The significance of play

Cities have a crucial role to play in shaping urban environments that meet the everyday needs of our tamariki. 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.

### What is play?

If we think back to our childhood memories, 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.

### 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".

### 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 increasingly becoming a national and international concern. For too many tamariki, access to playspaces is also determined by systemic barriers such as income and postcode.

### School grounds as public play spaces

Schools are usually located at the heart of our communities and neighbourhoods but the school grounds and playspaces are not usually publicly accessible after hours with many schools fenced and gated.

A movement to transform school grounds into publicly accessible shared outdoorspaces is gaining momentum internationally. In America, the Community Schoolyards project is upgrading asphalt covered schoolyards into green tree covered parks with up-to-date play equipment that are open outside of school hours for the use of the whole community. Multiple benefits of greening these spaces and opening them to the community include improved attendance, behavior and test scores, improved equitable access to greenspace for the surrounding community contributing to reduced stress, less depression and anxiety, improved concentration, lower obesity rates, and reduced blood pressure. As well, there are positive climate impacts through trees and plantings such as a reduction in heat island effects and increased water retention ([www.tpl.org/community-schoolyards](http://www.tpl.org/community-schoolyards)).

### Neighbourhood footprints

The neighbourhood footprint surrounding a school is just as important in creating liveable cities for our tamariki and their whānau. But there is little guidance on planning, designing and upgrading neighbourhoods to deliver outcomes that encourage tamariki to move freely and play without restrictions in the urban environment. The Neighbourhood Play System Blueprint is a community-based approach that identifies the key barriers and opportunities to neighbourhood play around a school hub. It has the power to dismantle the systems of play inequity and create a happier and healthier neighbourhood for our tamariki and their whānau to live, learn work and play.

# The Neighbourhood Play System Blueprint

## Kaupapa/Purpose

The Neighbourhood Play System Blueprint has been developed as an urban design tool to reflect that play is not just confined to playgrounds but includes school grounds, footpaths, streets, alleyways, greenspaces, waterways, industrial zones and shops. It is not intended to be a step-by-step guide, but rather outline the many approaches that need to take place in order to support the governance, funding, technical design and monitoring of child-friendly urban environments.

The Blueprint is a tamariki-led framework that recognises and elevates young people as valued contributors to society, giving them the space to participate, assume agency and take responsibility for factors that affect their daily lives. Through co-design practices with the tamariki of Cobham School, the key barriers and opportunities to play in their neighbourhood have been identified and shaped into powerful initiatives that have the potential to dismantle the systems of play inequity in Elgin.

The Blueprint will seek to operate in tandem with local activation plans, funding 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 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 local play strategy will encourage all tamariki to engage further in play activities and being physically active.

### How does the Neighbourhood Play System Blueprint 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.

The Blueprint approach 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 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 to advocate 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.



# Approach

In June 2021, Sport NZ approached Regional Sports Trusts across Aotearoa to submit proposals towards the testing of their Neighbourhood Play System Blueprint. Sports Gisborne Tairāwhiti (SGT), in partnership with HFEC and Gisborne District Council (GDC), submitted a proposal to explore child-friendly urban design in the suburb of Elgin and the neighbourhood footprint surrounding Cobham School.

The proposal collated insights gathered by SGT, HFEC and GDC on the existing play sufficiency of Elgin, which had earned the suburb the unenviable title of 'The Play Desert'. The backbone of the proposal was a submission to the GDC Long Term Plan by the E Tu Elgin community group concerning the lack of a public playground in the suburb. An outcome of this submission was a commitment by GDC to "work with E Tu Elgin and Sport Gisborne Tairāwhiti to identify future opportunities and report back to Council". The Elgin Neighbourhood Play System was one of four successful applications to be funded by Sport NZ along with Southland, Bay of Plenty and Waikato.

The objective of the Elgin Neighbourhood Play System is to understand the quality and quantity of play sufficiency in the suburb and to identify opportunities to weave play through the urban footprint surrounding the school, in order to enable and promote play every day. Play sufficiency is more than providing play assets, it is about nurturing a sustainable system where tamariki have the time, space and permission to practice, learn and develop the skills they need to be active for life including fundamental movement skills, self-directed creativity, innovation, social and emotional connections, resilience, independence, leadership and informed risk-taking.

Understanding the complex system of a city in order to equitably reweave play through the urban fabric requires a diverse range of approaches to achieve an holistic outcome. The approach developed by the Tairāwhiti Blueprint Team for the Cobham School Neighbourhood Play System builds upon previous insights and community engagement carried out by SGT, HFEC and GDC. Other urban design tools and frameworks were also explored in order to create a robust process. These included the Six Conditions of Systems Change, the 20-minute neighbourhood model, the United Nations Development Goals and the holistic Te Ao Māori model Te Whare Tapa Whā. This provides a robust and holistic approach that embodies the unique cultural, social and environmental context of Tairāwhiti.

An initial scoping of existing play sufficiency insights, reports and community engagement was followed by three phases of investigation: A desktop analysis of existing data, whakawhanaungatanga with the key partners, stakeholders and the tamariki of Cobham School, and a series of three playshops.

The insights gathered were mapped across four themes identified in the Neighbourhood Play System by Sport NZ and sustainable development firm Arup: Access and movement, the built environment, awareness and agency, and enjoyment. These themes were assessed at the school, neighbourhood and city scale in order to gain an understanding of the level of play sufficiency in the study area. Five opportunities to increase play equity were identified through a series of playshops with the Cobham School tamariki and these will form the backbone of the Elgin Neighbourhood Play System to be explored and tested in the next phases of the Blueprint.

The development of a consultation plan, risk assessment and COVID-19 plan were vital to being able to work in the grey area during COVID-19 restrictions, which limited engagement and consultation with the school and the wider community. With relationships being the key to achieving meaningful change with this project we were happy to take our time, respect the process and pivot when required. This allowed the focus of the project to remain with the aspirations of the tamariki and not be caught up in the existing power dynamics of the current system.

## Six conditions of systems change

Creating tamariki-friendly playful cities requires a community-based approach to challenge and dismantle the long-standing barriers built into every community that make real change difficult. These barriers can be simplified into six conditions known as the systems change approach.

The six conditions of systems change include play-related policies, practices and how resources like council funding are allocated. Relationships and connections and power dynamics within a city are important as they can champion or limit the access tamariki have to play. How tamariki and community voices are heard and included in the planning and development of play resources are also important.

The final condition of attitudes and beliefs is the hardest to change but the most transformational and includes perceptions and stereotypes. This involves examining what level of importance people place on play and how safe and welcome our tamariki and whānau feel in outdoor spaces.

Changing the long-held attitudes and beliefs around play and elevating the importance of play in the physical, cognitive, emotional and spiritual development and overall wellbeing of our tamariki is the hardest condition to change but the most powerful.

Mapping the six conditions across the Elgin and Tairāwhiti Play System helped to identify the barriers and opportunities to play for our tamariki and their whānau.

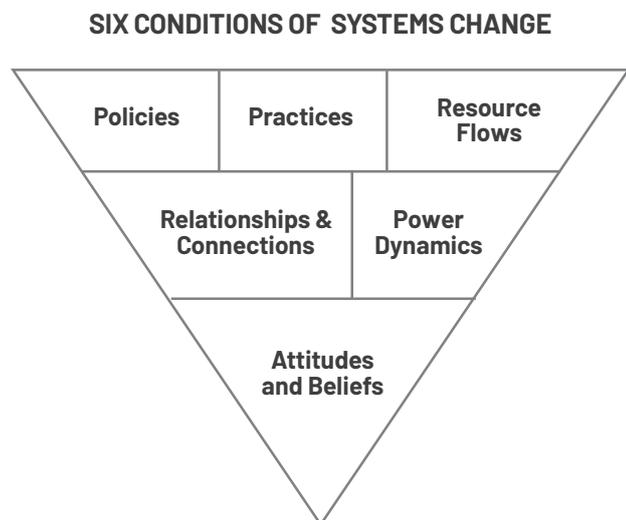


Figure 1: Six Conditions of Systems Change ([www.childrenandnature.org/resources/creating-systems-level-change-in-cities-a-toolkit/](http://www.childrenandnature.org/resources/creating-systems-level-change-in-cities-a-toolkit/))

## 20-minute neighbourhood

The places we live, learn, work and play have a direct impact on our health and well-being. The 20-minute neighbourhood model aims to create liveable cities of connected and walkable neighbourhood hubs through inclusive, vibrant and healthy urban design.

The 20-minute neighbourhood celebrates living locally by creating walkable access for people to meet most of their daily needs – food, work, education, access to services and meeting their neighbours within a 20-minute return walk from home as well as access to cycling and local transport options.

Many components the 20-minute neighbourhood also aligns with the following UN Sustainable Development Goals:

- SDG 3 - Good health and well-being
- SDG 11 - Sustainable cities and communities.

20-minute neighbourhood liveable communities have access to the following features:

- are 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.



Figure 2: Features of a 20-minute neighbourhood ([www.planning.vic.gov.au/policy-and-strategy/planning-for-melbourne/plan-melbourne/20-minute-neighbourhoods](http://www.planning.vic.gov.au/policy-and-strategy/planning-for-melbourne/plan-melbourne/20-minute-neighbourhoods))

## Te Whare Tapa Whā

Te Whare Tapa Whā is a holistic Te Ao Māori model developed by Mason H. Durie (Ngāti Kauwhata) that is widely recognised as the key model for considering the health and well-being of an individual or a collective in Aotearoa. The four dimensions of the model represent the walls of the whareniui and the whenua represents the strong foundation.

All dimensions need to be healthy in order for the person/collective to thrive or they may become unbalanced and unwell. The dimensions in the model are:

- Taha tinana - What I am: physical well-being
- Taha whānau - Who I am: family well-being
- Taha hinengaro - How I am: mental well-being
- Taha wairua - Why I am: spiritual well-being
- Whenua: Where I am: the strong foundation

Taking a Te Ao Māori view of the health and wellbeing of the Elgin community and play system through Te Whare Tapa Whā reflects the high proportion of Māori who live, work and play in Elgin. Grounding our play initiatives in Te Whare Tapa Whā also acknowledges the holistic approach of the Sport Gisborne Tairāwhiti Manawakura kaupapa and the Te Waharoa concept for Cobham School.

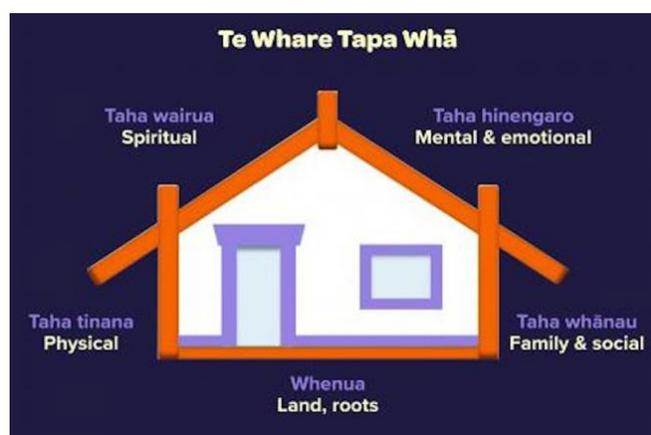


Figure 3: Dimensions of Te Whare Tapa Whā Model  
(Image credit: Mental Health Foundation NZ).

## Desktop analysis

The desktop analysis undertaken by the Blueprint team considered all of the layers that contribute to the existing play system of Elgin and the broader city. These were mapped in individual layers in Photoshop in order to allow for the creation of unique maps and to reveal previously unseen play system barriers, relationships and opportunities.

The layers identified the key considerations for the Neighbourhood Play System Blueprint and included:

- historical data
- landscape characterisation and values
- walkable catchments
- population data
- housing and living standards
- levels of education
- access to transport
- existing council assets and community facilities
- roadways
- waterways
- public and private greenspace
- school zoning
- walking and off-road infrastructure
- bus routes
- unsafe areas
- and street lighting.

Also mapped were the 20-minute neighbourhood features to understand how the local built environment impacted upon the daily needs of the Elgin community. It was also important to identify and recognise unique features of the suburb of Elgin additional to the 20-minute neighbourhood model. These include the local marae, churches, an industrial zone, nearby beaches and areas with high gang presence.

Mapping of the Elgin area was performed by Sport Gisborne Tairāwhiti/HFEC staff with GIS data provided through partnership with GDC. Ministry of Education counts illustrated the current decile and population demographics for Cobham School and Statistics New Zealand 2018 Census data provided a snapshot of the Elgin community.

All of the individual layers and maps created are in the attached appendix.

## Site walks

The Blueprint team undertook numerous site visits to the suburb of Elgin to fully understand the local context. These site visits included observations of how tamariki get to and from Cobham School, taking the public bus route from the city and through the Elgin neighbourhood as well as a walking tour and site assessment of the Cobham School walkable catchment. Further site visits occurred during the school holidays to observe how local tamariki and rangatahi play outside of the school term.

These site visits were crucial in shaping early insights and considerations in the initial scoping phase and became increasingly meaningful given the difficulties of accessing Cobham School following the impact of COVID-19 restrictions. It was important to strike the right balance of visiting potential project sites before engaging with key stakeholders directly, in recognition of the risk of developing a growing presence in Elgin before making ourselves and our intentions known to key community stakeholders.



Figure 4: Cobham School tamariki enjoying a Zumba session during consultation.

## Whakawhānau

Relationships are important as they can support or limit access to play opportunities and experiences for tamariki. These relationships can include professional and personal connections, community partnerships and the impact of power dynamics within a city.

There are a number of key relationships and connections that influence the current Elgin Neighbourhood Play System and include the:

- Re-imagining Streets and Neighbourhoods Group
- Sport Gisborne Tairāwhiti Manawakura Team
- Cobham School staff, tamariki and whānau
- gangs
- GDC
- Elgin community.

The tamariki of Cobham School are the key stakeholders and are supported by whānau, staff from Cobham School, SGT including the Manawakura Team, HFEC and the Re-imagining Streets and Neighbourhood Group.

Taking the time to undertake whakawhānau with these groups and especially with the tamariki of Cobham School provided a shared sense of connection and purpose as well as creating a safe and trusted environment for the voices of our youngest stakeholders to be heard. As more relationships and connections are made during future Blueprint mahi, the Kaitiaki Roopu of the Cobham School Neighbourhood Play System will continue to evolve.

## Re-imagining streets and neighbourhoods

HFEC have partnered with SGT, GDC, Turanga Health, Cobham School, Parafed Gisborne, CCS Disability Action and Metcon Mauri to establish a committee called Re-imagining Streets and Neighbourhoods. This rōpū explores tactical urbanism techniques such as pilots, pop-ups, street parties, Play Streets and temporary initiatives to transition our streets and neighbourhoods to safer and more liveable spaces.

The role of the rōpū is to spark a regional-wide conversation about the role of play and active transport on the wellbeing of tamariki, rangatahi and whānau in Tairāwhiti. The group includes the Principal of Cobham school Gina Lean, members of the E Tu Elgin community group and current and former residents of Elgin. Assumption mapping and the identification of barriers and enablers in the suburb of Elgin was undertaken with the group and provided important insights to the past and present play sufficiency of the suburb.

The Re-imagining members form the initial rōpū for the Elgin Neighbourhood Play System. The formation of the Kaitiaki Roopu for the Elgin Neighbourhood Play System is an organic process that will continue to evolve as more connections and relationships are made and folded into the process.



Figure 5: Tamariki mind map of their neighbourhood.

## Manawakura

The SGT's Manawakura team are the Tairāwhiti leads of the national Healthy Active Learning initiative being delivered in partnership with Sport NZ and the Ministries of Health and Education. The kaupapa of Manawakura is that good nutrition and quality physical activity improves physical health, mental health, and social connections. Physically active young people are more engaged in learning and achieve better in and out of the classroom.

The Manawakura team have a long-standing relationship with the staff and students of Cobham School through weekly visits and delivery of the Manawakura programme. This pre-existing relationship has been extremely valuable for the Blueprint project team to build upon in a way that is respectful and meaningful, especially considering the difficulties of accessing the school during COVID-19 restrictions.

The Manawakura team are currently crafting an approach called Te Waharoa-Pāpā Tu Tamaiti Ora Te Waharoa 'Fathers in Arms'. Te Waharoa is the entrance way or gateway to a pā or marae and at Cobham School this is aligned with the school entrance way and the gateway to learning. Before stepping through the waharoa it is important that our hinengaro is clear, our tinana is fuelled and our wairua is in a safe place bound together by our whānau. However, the challenge at present is getting the tamariki and whānau to Te Waharoa, together and ready for the learning journey ahead. This Cobham School based initiative aims to ensure the tamariki are ready to learn through the holistic support of their whānau.

Te Waharoa embraces the concept of manaakitanga and the idea of how we can manaaki to ourselves and our whānau the way we manaaki others. By showing manaakitanga to our tamariki at home through good kai, support and opportunities we can ensure they are ready when they arrive at Te Waharoa for the learning day ahead.

## Cobham School

The relationship with Cobham School established through the mahi of the SGT Manawakura team and Principal Gina Lean's participation in the Re-imagining Streets and Neighbourhoods Group, made Cobham School the obvious choice to partner with on the testing of the Neighbourhood Play Systems Blueprint. Gina is also a major play champion, promoting playful opportunities and experiences through the delivery of the school curriculum. This was especially evident in her dress-up storytelling social media posts to the school tamariki during the lockdowns.

## Gangs

There are a number of gangs that reside in the Elgin area and many stakeholders including the tamariki identified their presence as barriers to play sufficiency in the neighbourhood. Sport NZ's Locally Led Consultant provided useful guidance in how best to approach consulting with local gangs by engaging via pre-existing relationships already held with Cobham School and other community representatives. As members of the community, it is important to engage with the gangs, as with all members of the broader community, to gain their play insights and ideas into the creation of an equitable neighbourhood play system. To date, this engagement has yet to be undertaken due to COVID-19 restrictions.

## Playshops

A series of three playshops were developed to engage and co-design with the tamariki of Cobham School and coincided with their weekly Manawakura sessions. The importance of the playshops was promoted by the Manawakura Lead as a potential legacy opportunity for the tamariki and something they could revisit and have ownership over once they left school. Whakawhanaungatanga with the Cobham School tamariki was most important outcome of the playshop engagement process. In addition, it was important to gain a clear understanding of their current perceptions of play, what the key enablers and barriers for playful spaces are in the school, neighbourhood and the Elgin suburb, and what a playful child-friendly neighbourhood could look like in the future.

The key considerations for the engagement included:

- balancing quality data with building connections and relationships
- ensuring tamariki felt comfortable being vulnerable
- ensuring all voices were heard and captured
- ensuring the tamariki were the co-leaders/co-designers on this project
- ensuring that the tamariki recognised their role as agents of change in their own neighbourhood.



Figure 6: Tamariki participating in a drawing exercise during an engagement session.

The form of the sessions built upon insights gained through previous engagement with the tamariki and the regional play consultation undertaken through the Power of Play huddles in 2020.

Cobham School is a small school with one junior classroom and one senior classroom and a total of 44 students. All students in the junior and senior classroom participated in the first two playshops, with the Principal then selecting 10 students from across the junior and senior classes to complete the final playshop together.

The three playshops were designed to gather insights into:

- how play is described, understood and felt emotionally
- where play is undertaken in the neighbourhood footprint and city context
- what the future of play and child-friendly spaces might look like at the school, neighbourhood, suburb and city level.

Further playshopping with the tamariki of Cobham School will involve testing the five play opportunities identified during the desktop analysis and engagement process. Further details on the playshop sessions are outlined in the appendix.

“ We don’t have any playgrounds around, so I mostly play in my backyard with my little brother. ”

“ The playground is too far to walk from home. ”

“ I’m not allowed to play on the street. ”

“ I want a tree with my name on it. ”

Feedback from tamariki in engagement session

# Cobham School context plan

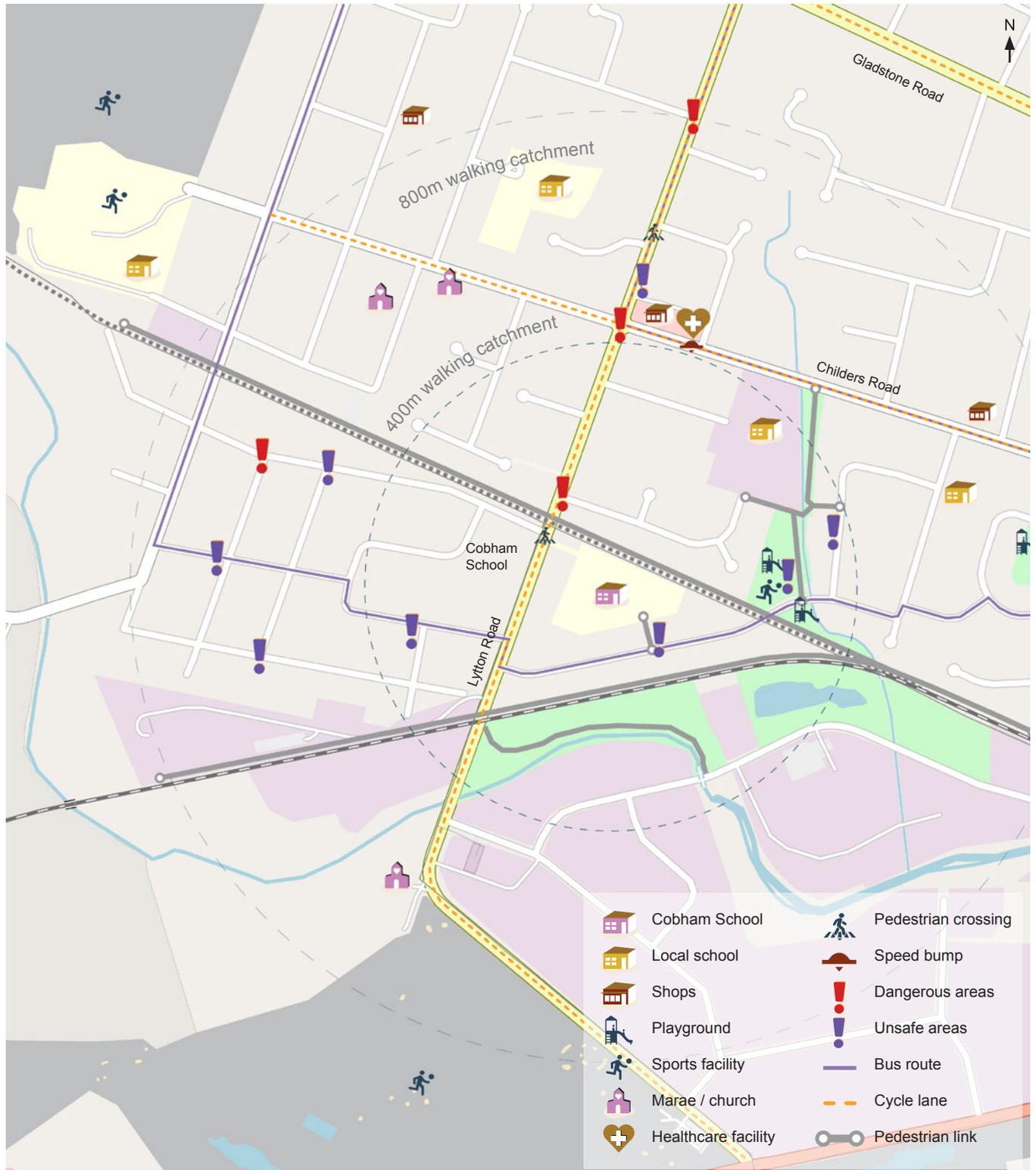


Figure 7: Cobham School context plan.

# Current conditions

Tairāwhiti has the highest levels of deprivation of any district in New Zealand, and the highest national health burden. It also has the highest proportion of young people under the age of 25. The suburb of Elgin reflects these key indicators and is also characterised by a number of unique challenges. Encouraging play and lifelong activity is a key tool in addressing the numerous health issues prevalent in Tairāwhiti including obesity and diabetes. However, development and maintenance of play spaces that are accessible, inclusive and diverse is a significant ongoing challenge for GDC.

## Demographics

Elgin had a population of 2,583 at the 2018 census with 843 households. 69 percent of the Elgin population identify as Māori and the proportion of residents that speak Te Reo is also higher than the city and the national average.

The median age of residents is 31 compared to the national average of 37 and the suburb has a 25 percent of its population under the age of 15 and only 12 percent over 65 years of age.

Home ownership is much lower in Elgin than the national average at only 40 percent as is both personal and household income. The median income is only \$22k compared to the national average of \$31k.

Only 5 percent of residents reported a form of higher qualifications with 27 percent having gained no formal qualifications. 44 percent were employed fulltime with 8 percent unemployed.

The majority of Elgin residents travel to work or education by vehicles with active transport use markedly lower despite the fact that many Elgin residents have limited access to vehicles.

Access to telephones and internet is lower than the national average, though the vast majority of Elgin residents have access to a mobile phone.

### Gisborne Tairāwhiti



of residents are Māori

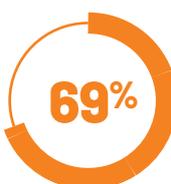


of residents are 0-15 years



of residents own or partly own their own home

### Elgin



of residents are Māori



of residents are 0-15 years



of residents own or partly own their own home

### Cobham School



of tamariki are Māori



44

tamariki

Decile

1

## Spatial development

The suburb of Elgin is located on the western edge of Tairāwhiti Gisborne on flat land bordered by the Tahuheru River to the north and east, Waikanāe Creek and Waikanāe Beach to the south and the Waipaoa River to the west.

Two busy roads with heavy commercial traffic and logging trucks divide Elgin into quarters with the Elgin shops located at the cross section. Residential housing dominates the north of the suburb and includes Elgin School and Te Wānanga o Aotearoa. To the east, Reynolds Creek and Sandown/Blackpool Park create a green border. The south of Elgin is bound by an intermittently used railway line, an industrial zone, a golf course and eventually the sea. To the west, the airport provides a hard boundary with rural farmland further beyond.

The Elgin neighbourhood is characterised by low density, single-storey residential housing on large sections, predominantly built in the 1940s-1970s and laid out in a network of unpermeable cul-de-sacs interspersed with alleyways.

There is a distinct lack of infrastructure and amenity value throughout the suburb including limited street lights, pedestrian crossings, street furniture and street trees. A cycle lane that is part of the broader network does pass through the suburb but it is poorly signposted and is not separated safely from heavy vehicles. There is no pedestrian crossing to the Elgin shops and there are only two seats at the shops for use by the community.

Buses pass through the suburb connecting the residents to the city centre and the hospital.

## Cues to care

The built environment has poor levels of passive surveillance with many areas of Elgin ending in cul-de-sacs with high corrugated iron fences topped with steel spikes cultivating an unwelcoming and defensive atmosphere. Abandoned vehicles, unkept gardens, burnt houses, graffiti and roaming dogs all contributed to feelings of unease and the suburb being uncared for and unsafe. Very few people were observed walking through the area during a recent visit and no tamariki or rangatahi were seen using public transport.

**“ I don't get to play outside my house on Lytton Road, there's nowhere for kids. I have to play inside my house or in the backyard. ”**

## Cobham School

Cobham School is located to the south of the Elgin shops intersection off one of the busy roads and up a long driveway. Established in 1962 with an initial role of 100 pupils the school buildings are located at the end of the driveway with large flat grounds to the east. Trees and picnic tables are located near the classrooms to the north and a playground in need of repair is located to the south. A basketball court is situated adjacent to the classrooms, however, vandalism and theft have resulted in both hoops being made unusable in the past.

The large grassed grounds are surrounded by residential housing that overlook the school on all sides except to the north, which is bound by a disused rail corridor. This large portion of the school grounds is under Ministry of Education investigation to be sold if an appropriate use by the school cannot be found. Gated vehicle and pedestrian access opens via a large alleyway to Munroe Street and some of the residential houses have their own gates into the school grounds.

A visit to the school during the school holidays found the gates of the school were shut and locked, with no tamariki playing either in the Cobham School grounds or at the playground of the nearby Elgin School, though a group were seen playing in the grounds of the nearby Te Wānanga o Aotearoa.

Cobham School has a current role of 44 students and is rated a decile 1. 100 percent of the school identify as Māori, 4.5 percent Pacific and 4.5 percent Pākehā. The school motto is WHĀNAU First- Wisdom Humility Aroha Nature Attitude Unique. The school places a focus on creating an educational environment that promotes student wellbeing and engagement in learning and is described as the 'Little School with the Big Heart'.



Figure 8: Some tamariki encounter busy roads on their journey to school.



Figure 9: The Elgin 800m/20-minute neighbourhood catchment in Gisborne, Tairāwhiti.



Figure 10: Cobham School and surrounding neighbourhood footprint.

## Around the Cobham School neighbourhood footprint



Figure 11: Logging trucks.



Figure 12: Reynolds Creek.



Figure 13: Unused rail corridor.



Figure 14: Elgin Shops roundabout.



Figure 15: Alleyway connecting to school.



Figure 16: Play equipment at Sandown/Blackpool Park.



Figure 17: Elgin Shops.



Figure 18: Cobham School.

## Relevant plans and policies

At the city scale, the approach to play in Gisborne Tairāwhiti is driven largely by GDC through a suite of plans and strategies that support the provision of play spaces. A 2016 playground audit found that many play spaces in Gisborne Tairāwhiti did not meet the accessibility needs and safety standards required, with ongoing maintenance and management of equipment and amenities a key challenge. Many play spaces across the region also do not reflect the diversity and unique character of the communities they are situated within. Demand is growing for new and improved community facilities and playspaces across the region to replace aging infrastructure thereby placing pressure on already limited budgets.

### Tairāwhiti Community Facilities Strategy (TCFS)

The TCFS sets out a programme of investment to develop a cost-effective and sustainable network of community facilities over the next 20+ years. The Strategy has been developed to address an ad hoc approach to the development of facilities in the past, which has resulted in duplications and gaps in the network. Under the strategic framework sits a series of nine plans for the range of facility types Council is involved with. These consider multiple scales from regional, to local to neighbourhood and look closely at Council-owned community facilities. However, they also cover non-Council facilities as they are part of a network of facilities and present opportunities for partnerships. Relevant plans include:

- Arts Facilities Plan
- Arts in Public Places Plan
- Parks and Open Spaces Plan
- Play Spaces Plan (detailed below)
- Sports Facilities Plan
- Street Trees and Gardens Plan.

**An emerging school of thought is around the concept of neighbourhoods as the play venue. The phrase “playbourhood” was coined by parent Mike Lanza and describes a move back to neighbourhoods where children are encouraged to play freely between backyards, streets, transitional spaces such as streets and public open spaces. It involves creating opportunities to extend play spaces outside of traditional parks. Play can and does occur anywhere. It is the activity itself that defines play, not the location or structures. There are opportunities for diverse and connected play experiences beyond parks.**

Tairāwhiti Play Spaces Plan 2018

### Play Spaces Plan (PSP)

The PSP has been developed to enable holistic and innovative thinking around affordable and effective provision of play spaces over the next 20+ years. While the PSP focuses on providing safe and equitable access to parks and playgrounds across the region it also notes the ongoing evolution of more diverse play environments including ‘Playbourhoods’, where play is extended outside of parks and into backyards and transitional spaces such as streets and public open spaces.

### Tairāwhiti 2050 Shaping the Future of our Region - Tairāwhiti Regional Spatial Plan

Tairāwhiti 2050 is GDC’s visions for the region for the next 30 years. The documents states major challenges and identifies solutions, sets direction for regional planning and decision-making, mapping critical infrastructure and development and aligning with strategies and planes of Council.

### Significance and Engagement Policy (SEP) 2021

The SEP 2021 guides ‘when’ and ‘how’ GDC engages with its communities about important Council decisions. This is determined by decision-making and guided by the engagement framework in this policy.

### Tairāwhiti Rau Tipu Rau Ora COVID-19 Pandemic Response and Recovery Plan 2020

The Plan brings together an initial set of priorities and actions that will be tracked and reported regularly over the next three-four years. At the centre of the framework is the workforce with encompassing factors including supporting whānau and communities, economic push and protecting the natural environment.

## Tākaro Tairāwhiti 2021 (SNZ, SGT, HFEC)

In 2021 SNZ, SGT and HFEC hosted four Power of Play huddles across the Tairāwhiti region including the town, coast and rural play catchments. Tākaro Tairāwhiti captures all of the perceptions and experiences of play from sector stakeholders, whānau and tamariki in our region from up the coast, across town and into our rural hinterland.

Although the Tairāwhiti community shared many thoughts and experiences about play that overlap with what was heard across Aotearoa, the region also clearly has some distinct differences and unique influences around play. The main highlights include:

- Play in Tairāwhiti has historically centered around survival, such as finding kai, and is strongly influenced by our communities' strong connection to te taiao and Te Ao Māori.
- Play is different in our town, rural and coastal catchments.
- We have a strong sense of community and local pride, with people who are creative and have a playful mindset.
- Play 'back in the day' was about being outdoors, taking risks with very little adult supervision.
- Social, environmental and physical changes have seen play become more structured and supervised, influenced by technology, with increased fears around safety and risk, and less time and space for our tamariki to build confidence and skills and play with their whānau.

Looking forward, our community have aspirations for play in our region to be:

- embedded in Tairāwhiti Te Ao Māori
- tamariki-led
- inspirational and freely available
- nature-based
- for the whole whānau
- embedded in our urban fabric
- balanced between safety and risk
- valued and normalised
- and part of our holistic well-being.

Tākaro Tairāwhiti is just the start of an exciting play movement at the local, regional and national levels. SNZ, SGT and HFEC are committed to increasing opportunities for our tamariki, rangatahi and whānau to access quality play experiences across our town, rural and coastal play catchments.



# What we heard

Through our engagement with tamariki a number of key barriers and opportunities for play in Elgin were identified. The insights gained through these engagement sessions form the backbone of the play opportunities and next steps for the community. Tamariki shared their views on play in the community and identified what they would like to see improved, changed or removed.

## Barriers

**School play spaces:** In need of repair, tired and rundown, dogs come on to the school grounds, gates broken.

**Munro Street:** Unsafe street, can't walk along street to visit friends, parents said not to go on street, dangerous, footpath broken, not safe, dogs off lead, increase in traffic, broken cars on lawns, school sign wobbly, parked cars on grass stop us playing, "Adults might hurt you", "An old man was beaten up by three gang guys in the street".

**The playground:** "Too far to walk from home".

**Exercise equipment:** Fix - rust, "Anybody can use", "Can't read the signs", "Strong equipment - can't break it".

**Alley ways:** "Don't go down there - gangs hang out there", No lighting, "My parents say not to go down there - gang people are there", [How do you know if people are from a gang?] "We just know who they are".

**Reynolds Creek:** The tamariki would play here more but they wanted all of the rubbish cleaned out and to smell better.

**Railway corridor:** The rail corridor was seen as a place that needed fixing due to the prickles and glass.

**Childers Road:** Had big stumps that needed fixing.

**Elgin shops:** The tamariki are not allowed to go the shops by themselves and they do not feel safe with no pedestrian crossings. "Have to wait for the cars to go". There were lots of dogs around and the tamariki suggested putting them in the pound or making a home for them.

**Lytton Road:** The tamariki described the road as noisy due to the logging trucks and cars with a fear of being run over.

Tamariki have provided feedback on what they would like to see in their neighbourhood:

1. Pool
2. Tree with my name on it only for me
3. More seats and a toilet
4. Build a tree house!
5. "Too many sticks to trip on"
6. Need a bigger path to include bikes, wheel chairs, prams, runners, walkers.



Figure 19: Tamariki participating in a site visit and identifying a space that they thought wasn't great for play in the neighbourhood.

## Opportunities

Through conversations and activities with tamariki they identified a number of opportunities where play could be improved in the neighbourhood.

**School:** More equipment, safe place to play in the weekend, more shade and nature play, gardens, trees, fruit trees, kai, flowers, cubby house and soccer goals.

**Munro Street:** Park (flying fox, bus stop, slide), paint the path, big rocks, big pathway to ride on, 100 trees, a “no driving this way” sign, playground, waterpark, pool in the street, build a farm.

**Blackpool/Sandown Park southern end:** Jungle gym, flying fox, bumper cars, giant playground, pool, slide, hot tub, love the swings, colourful plants, rubbish bins.

**Basketball court:** Yoga would be great, hoops need nets, need basketballs to use.

**Bridge:** Lights, “Me and my Dad come down here”.

**Initiative:** Pool, “Tree with my name on it only for me”, more seats and a toilet, build a tree house!

**Reynolds Creek:** When asked how the awa could be restored, the tamariki stretched their arms wide and pointed to their classmates. They loved the flowers and trees, eels and fish. They wanted more fish and water with a bridge and rope swings to swing over the stream. Some tamariki wanted to play in the mud and others wanted a fence and gate for safety.

**Rail corridor:** The design fixes the tamariki came up with included a walking track, taking down the bushes, keeping the horses, adding in a toy store and pool and a big train to play on to keep the train story going.

**Childers Road:** The tamariki saw a lot of potential for Childers Road with a bike/scooter lane a high priority, trees, tree houses and swings.

**Elgin shops:** Tamariki suggested putting up a stop/go sign to help kids cross the road.

**Lytton Road:** Solutions identified for the busy Lytton Road were putting in speed bumps and adding drinking fountains.

“ My parents always have to drive me to playgrounds in other parts of Gisborne. We have nothing here. ”

“ There are gangs around and my parents won’t let us walk around. ”

Feedback from tamariki in engagement session



Figure 20: Tamariki drawing play experiences during one of the engagement sessions.



Figure 21: Tamariki participating in a site visit showing one of the spaces they liked in their neighbourhood.

# What does success look like?

## 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:

<b>Cobham School</b>	Tamariki attending Cobham School have safe and connected journeys to school. Footpaths are wide with safe pedestrian crossings and high levels of amenity 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.
<b>Elgin</b>	Tamariki are able to move independently through Elgin, with Cobham School well connected to Blackpool Park. The neighbourhood streets and public spaces feel safe and inviting and are well maintained. Safe cycleways and intuitive wayfinding encourages tamariki to explore their neighbourhood and to access formal and informal play spaces.
<b>Tairāwhiti</b>	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:

<b>Cobham School</b>	The built and natural environment at Cobham School is inviting and well maintained. The playground is accessible with a diverse range of play equipment to meet the needs of tamariki of all ages and abilities. Trees, including fruit trees, provide opportunities for climbing and engagement with nature. The fences around the school are brightly painted with tamariki artwork, reflecting the culture and surrounding natural environment.
<b>Elgin</b>	Tamariki in Cobham have access to a diverse range of formal and informal play opportunities. Playgrounds are looked after, and have equipment that meets the needs of tamariki of all ages and abilities. Public spaces are adorned with tamariki artwork, reflecting Elgin and Tairāwhiti's culture and heritage.
<b>Tairāwhiti</b>	There is a diverse range of playgrounds and play on the way infrastructure across Tairāwhiti, 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:

<b>Cobham School</b>	Cobham School is part of the Sport Gisborne Tairāwhiti Manawakura (Healthy Active Learning) programme where a variety of play types and play-based learning are offered. The Principal is an amazing play champion supporting the tamariki in playful ways during lockdown with daily book reading and dressups. A diverse variety of play types and experiences are provided by external organisations.
<b>Elgin</b>	E Tu Elgin is championing play and developing a play-supportive culture to create opportunities for the community to access and support play in the neighbourhood. This is supported by community partners including local churches, shops, the airport and the marae.
<b>Tairāwhiti</b>	GDC is actively championing play throughout the city, working with the community to create play solutions and investing in accessible play infrastructure. A Play Strategy prioritises play and ensures it is embedded in an integrated across other GDC plans and strategies.

## Enjoyment

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

### What success looks like:

<b>Cobham School</b>	The Cobham School playground is accessible and meets the needs of tamariki of all ages and abilities. There are ample cues to care in the well maintained grounds and boundaries of the school. Broken equipment is repaired and tamariki are encouraged to explore a diverse range of play opportunities.
<b>Elgin</b>	The rail corridor, awa and streets around the school are engaging and fun spaces to spend time in. Tamariki feel confident exploring their neighbourhood independently.
<b>Tairāwhiti</b>	Play spaces across the city reflects the unique cultures and needs of the community, with the pūrākau and mahi toi of the region woven into the urban fabric. Tamariki have access to accessible and safe playgrounds where ever they live.

# Cobham School opportunities plan



Figure 22: Cobham School opportunities plan.

# Opportunities for play in Elgin

The Neighbourhood Play System Blueprint provides an holistic approach to achieving tamariki-friendly urban design. An analysis of the desktop data and playshops identified five key opportunities to increasing equitable access to play experiences for the tamariki and whānau of Cobham School, the broader Elgin residents and the wider Tairāwhiti community.

## Te Whare Tapa Whā as our model for child-friendly urban design

The five play opportunities identified align with each dimension of Te Whare Tapa Whā and the core principles of Te Waharoa and to provide an holistic approach to improving the health and wellbeing of our tamariki and their whānau through tamariki-friendly urban design. All dimensions of Te Whare Tapa Whā need to be healthy in order for the person/collective to thrive or they may become unbalanced and unwell.

The five dimensions of a healthy and equitable Elgin neighbourhood play system identified through the Blueprint approach are:

- **Whenua - Where I am Tākaro Taiao (Nature Play):**  
Restoring the Awa and the Whenua - Reynolds Creek Restoration
- **Taha whānau - Who I am Tākoro Hapori (Village Play):**  
Revitalising Taha Whānau - Elgin Shops Revitalisation
- **Taha tinana - What I am Huarahi Tākaro (Play Corridors):**  
Activating Taha Tinana - Rail Corridor Active Transport Network
- **Taha hinengaro - How I am Tākaro Haere (Play on the Way):**  
Nourishing Taha Hinengaro - Te Waharoa Gateway to the City
- **Taha wairua - Why I am Papa Tākaro (School Ground Play):**  
Connecting to Taha Wairua- Te Whare Tapere - Community 'House' of Entertainment

Capitalising on these five opportunities to create an equitable Tairāwhiti Play System will require strong local governance, vocal play champions drawn from key Elgin community stakeholder groups and a continuation of the inspiring community-led co-design approach with the tamariki of Cobham School.



Figure 23: Te Whare Tapa Whā Model (Image credit: Mental Health Foundation NZ).

**“Before we step through the waharoa we need to make sure that our hinengaro is clear, our tinana is fuelled and our wairua is in a safe place, what binds this together is whānau”**

Manawakura Te Waharoa Cobham School Approach

# The five dimensions of the Elgin Neighbourhood Play System

## Whenua - Where I am

### Restoring the Awa and the Whenua - Reynolds Creek Restoration: Tākaro Taiao Nature Play

**Ka ora te wai,  
ka ora te whenua.  
Ka ora te whenua,  
ka ora te tangata.**

**If the water is healthy,  
the land will be nourished.  
If the land is nourished,  
the people will be provided for.**

Spending time in nature contributes to happier and healthier tamariki and their whānau with a strong connection between the health of the land and the health and wellbeing of the people. Cobham School tamariki identified the opportunity to restore Reynolds Creek, which runs through the suburb of Elgin, along the edge of Blackpool/Sandown Park, through the industrial zone connecting to Waikanae Stream, and eventually the sea.

The creek is accessible from the school and the tamariki were instinctively drawn to this natural space on our neighbourhood walk. They said they play there often with their whānau and like spotting tuna (eels). They disliked the rubbish in the creek and wanted it removed, more plants and trees added, and increased waterflow, fish and tuna. When asked who would undertake this mahi they stretched their arms wide and pointed to their classmates.

Planting native shrubs and trees endemic to the area would help to improve the health of the awa and the whenua, increase the biodiversity corridor network and contribute to the health and wellbeing of the local community. The installation of a wide permeable footpath and safety crossings across roads and the working train line would enable the stream corridor to provide a safe accessible walking and bike route from the school and neighbourhood, all the way to the popular Waikanae Beach.



Figure 24: Tairāwhiti Waikanae Stream restoration collaborative.

## Key partnerships

Cobham School has the space to establish a native nursery to grow the trees and shrubs required for the creek restoration and this initiative could be supported by the following partners:

- Local Iwi
- GDC
- Enviroschools
- Women’s Native Tree Trust
- Tairāwhiti Polytechnic
- Neighbouring industrial zone
- Waikereru Ecosanctuary
- Gisborne Airport
- Air New Zealand
- Waikanae Stream restoration group.

Adopting a Mātauranga Māori approach to this initiative would honour the unique body of environmental knowledge surrounding the local awa, local pūrākau and the unique relationship between Māori and the environment. The project has the potential to reconnect the local community to the whenua and affirm their roles as kaitiaki. The original name of the stream could be

restored, reconnecting the mana of the awa. Local stories of tuna could be expressed in signage, art and site furniture. It also has the potential to create meaningful connections between the school and the local community as well as the broader Tairāwhiti community. This initiative has the potential to create an intergenerational legacy project for the tamariki of Cobham School.



Figure 25: Wild Futures Stream Restoration Project with tamariki.

“ Me and my dad come here. ”

Cobham School Tamariki

“ I wish there were fish in here. ”

“ I come down here. I like that the eels fly. ”



Figure 26: Community planting and weeding day for the Pāpakura Stream Restoration Project.

## Taha whānau - Who I am

### Revitalising Taha Whānau - Elgin Shops Revitalisation: Tākoro Hapori Village Play

The dimension of Taha whānau focuses on the people that make us feel like we belong and the interconnected web of relationships that support us where we live, learn, work and play. Taha whānau focuses on the community developing deep connections to each other, with tamariki, whānau and the whenua.

The Elgin Shops are the community hub of the suburb offering essential services. There is however no real space for the community to safely gather, connect or build strong healthy relationships that nurture the hauora of the neighbourhood and promote the vibrant heart, identity, and pride of the Elgin community. The roads and roundabout dominate the space, cutting the suburb into quarters with no pedestrian crossings to safely cross and connect to the shops. The focal point of the roundabout creates an eerie shrine to CCTV cameras, which overlook the shops and the busy roadways.

There is a huge opportunity to revitalise the Elgin Shops through a township upgrade approach. Slowing the traffic through speed bumps, multiple pedestrian crossings, street art and plantings, narrowing the carriage way, creating a separated bike lane, removing shop frontage carparks and extending the footpaths for seating and outdoor dining, and planting street trees for shade. This would allow the community to take back some of the road as their own community space. The bus stops could be made more playful with swings, shade and art. Playful cycle and scooter parking would also encourage more active transport to the shops.

The carpark behind the shops is underused and in need of repair. The tamariki identified this space as an opportunity to be grassed over and turn into a play space. This carpark space is off the road and has natural surveillance from the neighbouring flats with existing overhead lighting. It would create an amazing urban park for the community to gather, connect, recharge and play.

The carpark space could act as a 'stage' for rangatahi to 'peacock' themselves in a safe and fun environment. Free WiFi, mirrors, and a small stage could give them the space to engage and participate. A basketball hoop, skate ramp, outdoor ping pong table or chess tables would also act like a 'stage'. Loose parts play containers could activate the space for younger tamariki and provide space to connect outside of school time. A community booth staffed by community volunteers could oversee the management of the space and provide the free WiFi, power outlets for recharging/ computers/music, free use of balls, games, other community needs and social service provision. This space would also be perfect for a farmers' market to act as a weekly opportunity for the community to connect. Creating a village brand through signage, flags and street furniture would signify the shops as the heart of the neighbourhood.

Overlaying all of these ideas with art and furniture inspired by local pūrākau and driven by the tamariki and rangatahi would recognise young people as valued contributors to society, giving them space to participate, assume agency and take responsibility.

#### Key partnerships

This initiative relies on creating taha whānau connections with broader stakeholders in the community who hold the resources to activate this space including:

- GDC: township upgrades, street tree programme, cycleway upgrades, active transport network, lighting upgrades, traffic calming, pedestrian crossings, footpath extensions, outdoor dining consents, footpath seating, art installation, carpark removal, roundabout upgrade, rubbish bins, street cleaning.
- Shop owners: Contributing to the village branding.
- Turanga Health: Footprint initiative.
- Community Groups: E Tu Elgin volunteers establishing a community booth.
- Commercial providers: For free electricity, WiFi and lighting.



Figure 27: Woodruff Park Community Cart with WiFi, power outlets, games hire and social services.



Figure 28: Outdoor public ping pong tables at Cherry Path Park, Tirana Albania.

“ Everybody needs networks with other people. It is impossible to make community without networks. ”

Jane Jacobs, Urbanist

“ Successful Urban Space requirements: Moveable chairs, trees for shade, sun, water, lighting, food, entertainment and art. ”

William Whyte, Urbanist



Figure 29: Barcelona Urban Forest Project: Pop-Up Play Spaces.

## Taha tinana - What I am

### Activating Taha Tinana - Rail Corridor Active Transport Network: Huarahi Tākaro Play Corridors

It is understood that the former rail corridor bordering the school has recently been returned to local iwi, offering the potential to transform this land into an accessible green play space.

Working closely alongside local iwi this initiative would require improvements to safety and amenity in the rail corridor and neighbouring properties. It would have the dual benefit of supporting enhanced biodiversity in the neighbourhood as well as providing shade and water retention capabilities. There is also the potential of creating community gardens along the corridor, subject to soil testing.

The rail corridor acts as a green link between the school, Blackpool/Sandown Park and Rugby Park and other green spaces in the city. Connecting the corridor to the existing bike path network would allow more active transport opportunities for the community and safer travel for tamariki to schools, the shops and connect to the broader bike path network to access the adventure playground, the pools, the skatepark, town and the beach.

The Blackpool/Sandown Park area offers the opportunity to make better use of existing open spaces and improve biodiversity by creating a green link between the high traffic environments of Childers Road and Lytton Road, as well as between Munro Street, Blackpool Street, Manuka Street and Totara Street. There is also the opportunity to explore the super block idea in this neighbourhood with vehicles blocked from entering non-connecting roads to create more safe playable spaces.

The southern section of Blackpool/Sandown Park links to the industrial greenspace zone, the town bike path (town and skatepark) and the beach boardwalk (adventure playground, pools and beach).

This initiative would require a safe pedestrian crossing over the currently in-use rail corridor (used only for an occasional tourist train), amenity improvements and planting. There is also an opportunity to connect the new Kāinga Ora housing currently under construction to this initiative.

Connectivity and accessibility throughout the neighbourhood could be enhanced through the application of wayfinding techniques inspired by local pūrākau and co-designed with tamariki, particularly between play spaces at Cobham School, Elgin School, Te Wānanga o Aotearoa and the area's greenspaces and reserves. The active transport journey itself offers opportunities to play, through interactions with the built and natural environment. Developing this through engaging wayfinding and interactive design that reflects Te Ao Māori narratives for the area could encourage tamariki to roam independently through the neighbourhood as they access play spaces. This would need to include consideration of safety issues in the neighbourhood to ensure whānau are confident in supporting independent mobility of their tamariki.

#### Key partnerships

- Local iwi
- GDC
- Downer
- Civil engineers



Figure 30: Highline, New York - revitalisation of an elevated disused rail line into an active transport route and major tourist attraction.



Figure 31: Gisborne Rail Bike Trail Tours repurposing and underused rail line into a tourist venture.

“ My parents always have to drive me to playgrounds in other parts of Gisborne. We have nothing here. ”

“ I'd like more places to go on my scooter. ”

Cobham School, Tamariki

## Taha hinengaro – How I am

### Nourishing Taha Hinengaro – Te Waharoa Gateway to the City: Tākaro Haere Play on Way

The dimension of Taha Hinengaro relates to the heart, mind, conscience, thoughts and emotions expressed through how we communicate, think and feel and contributes to our overall mental and emotional well-being.

When taha hinengaro is nourished, it provides resilience, a place to express feelings and the freedom to reach out for support. What we eat and how active we are contributes to our taha hinengaro. Healthy kai and having an active lifestyle nourish a strong taha hinengaro where we feel good by increasing positive feelings and possess the ability to manage negative experiences, function well by increasing our ability to do the things that give us meaning and purpose and we have a sense of connecting, being valued and belonging (wheelhouse.org.nz).

Nourishing taha hinengaro at the school, neighbourhood and city scales could be achieved through a placemaking initiative that focuses on the SGT Manawakura concept of Te Waharoa – the gateway. The suburb of Elgin sits as the gateway to Gisborne Airport, providing the first welcome and final farewell for visitors to Tairāwhiti. The community of Elgin could build upon the concept of Te Waharoa and the principles of manaakitanga to become the kaitiaki of Tairāwhiti's Te Waharoa. This gateway could be constructed as a series of carved structures located at the main entrances to the suburb and airport to create a village feel and boundary signifier as well as an embodiment of behaviour through manaakitanga and the expression of aroha, hospitality, generosity and mutual respect. This would elevate the mana of the community as well as building unity internally across the suburb and externally across the city through the act of giving and acknowledging the mana of others.

“ I want a tree with my name on it. ”

“ We need a sign.  
No driving this way! ”

Cobham School, Tamariki

The Te Waharoa placemaking project could be expressed across three scales:

**City scale:** airport gateway sculpture construction utilising the same artists and local pūrākau used in the recent airport upgrade. These sculptures could flow into the Elgin shops hub roundabout which is major route to and from the city, as well as the four main routes into the suburb. An airport koha from visitors and Gisborne Airport partnership could contribute to this initiative.

**Neighbourhood scale:** nourishing taha hinengaro with an edible and native street tree program, honouring local heroes at the local shops through posters on the poster pole, increased pedestrian focused lighting, neighbourhood wardens, improved and widened footpaths, footpath seating to break up journeys for older residents and provide mini meeting spaces would foster the concept of manaakitanga for all journeys the community undertake around the neighbourhood.

**School:** nourishing the tamariki's journey to school and preparing their emotional health and wellbeing for the school day through-play-on-the-way art/stencils on the footpaths depicting local pūrākau, Māori deities or atua to inspire them for their learning journey, naming footpaths around the school after the school tamariki as a legacy project, placing Te Waharoa gateway carved sculptures by the tamariki located at the main school entrance ways, planting edible street trees on the main routes to the school that are named through signage after school tamariki as a legacy project that are cared for by the tamariki and their whānau.

#### Key partnerships

- Local Iwi
- Gisborne District Council
- Gisborne Airport
- Waka Kotahi
- Local artists
- Local stencil suppliers



Figure 32: 'Waharoa' at the entrance to Aotea Square, transforming it into a marae or meeting place and Aotea Centre into a meeting house (Designed by Selwyn Munroe).



Figure 33: Yarn bombed personalised street trees (alamy.com).



Figure 34: Play on the way-pavement stencils (pavementstencil.com).



Figure 35: Vibrantly painted footpath/cycleway (Global Designing Cities Initiative).

## Taha wairua – Why I am

### Connecting to Taha Wairua- Te Whare Tapere – Community ‘House’ of Entertainment: Papa Tākaro School Ground Play

The dimension of Taha Wairu embodies the spiritual connection to the universe and ancestors or religion, as well as a celebration of one’s own story and connection to self, whānau, community, nature and the sacred. This spiritual essence is our mauri and can be expressed through beliefs, values, traditions and practices providing a sense of meaning and purpose.

Connecting to Taha Wairua through the Neighbourhood Play System could be achieved through the creation of a Whare Tapere Community House of Entertainment at Cobham School. Te Whare Tapere were traditionally pā based community places for storytelling, dances, music, games, puppets and other entertainments and were a feature throughout Aotearoa. These community spaces were located inside buildings or outside in the open and were the one space in a pā that everyone was welcome. Te Ahukaramū Charles Royal (Marutūahu, Ngāti Raukawa and Ngā Puhi) describes Whare Tapere as places of spiritual importance to celebrate rēhia (joy), tākaro (play) and harikoa (happiness) while giving people the time and space to build relationships.

Tamariki identified the need for a local destination playground. There is no public playground in Elgin beyond the swings and spinner at Blackpool Park and the lone set of swings in the secluded Centennial Crescent, which is just outside of the study zone. The suburb of Elgin has many power dynamics at different scales that could benefit from the creation of a neutral community play space to build relationships through tākaro and entertainment and to cultivate happiness.

**“ [School] is a safe place. People go there in the weekend to play basketball. I like to go and lie on the grass. ”**

Cobham School, Tamariki

**“ The reclamation of tākaro amongst our children I think is part of a broader project of the revitalisation of our knowledge, our traditional culture among our people. Ultimately play is a spiritual thing about finding ways to release yourself or a sense of healing. ”**

Te Akukaramū Charles Royal  
(Marutūahu, Ngāti Raukawa and Ngā Puhi)

Cobham School has the space and land available for the creation of a natural outdoor Whare Tapere. The natural surveillance from the surrounding houses and local residents could have kaitiaki over the space and protect it from vandalism. Gathering the community together through a Whare Tapere at Cobham School could feature:

- Outdoor classrooms and a pūrākau circle
- Permanent Ki-o-Rahi fields
- Traditional Māori Wāhi Tākaro
- Performance stage and Kapa Haka space
- Community facilities
- Puppet theatre
- Loose parts play
- Māra Hūpara - traditional playground
- Pump track.

Allowing this space to be used by all of the community could create a space that is safe, welcoming and nurturing to the wairua of the tamariki and the community. There is also the opportunity for Cobham School to become a special character school focusing on tākaro, mahi-toi, pūrākau, carving, kapa haka and revitalising, restoring and connecting with traditional mātauranga and tikanga.

#### Key partnerships

- Local iwi
- Local residents
- Local gangs
- Cobham School Caretaker
- GDC
- Te Wānanga o Aotearoa and Toi Houkura (Art) School
- Marae - Te Kuri ā Tuatai Marae
- Local Ki-o-rahi network.



Figure 36: All weather artificial turf Ki-o-Rahi field at Pukehuia/Newlands Park with adjoining pump track and basketball court.



Figure 37: Western Springs College Ngā Puna O Waiōrea - Whare Tapere multipurpose performance space and stage (Jasmax).



Figure 38: Māra Hūpara - ngā aro tākaro playground as part of the restoration of Te Auaunga Awa, Auckland (Boffa Miskell).

# Play Champions - the rope that binds the play system together

Capitalising on the five Neighbourhood Play System opportunities identified in this Blueprint will require strong governance and vocal play champions drawn from key Elgin community stakeholder groups. This group of play champions will form the rope that binds the five dimensions of a healthy and balanced Cobham School Neighbourhood Play System together.

## Current key play champions in Elgin

- Gina Lean, Principal of Cobham School. Cobham School is part of the Taha Tinana (Gisborne) Kāhui Ako (COL), Enviroschools and the Sport Gisborne Tairāwhiti Manawakura (Healthy Active Learning) kaupapa and utilises support from a wide range of external agencies, personnel and community resources in school activities, including play.
- Cobham School tamariki, whānau and past pupils who could foster the Blueprint as an intergenerational project.
- Community Group, E Tu Elgin who support community play days and have successfully gained funding from the Tū Manawa Active Aotearoa Fund for a play trailer.
- GDC through the LTP have committed to support the Elgin community to come up with play solutions.
- Re-imagining Streets and Neighbourhoods Governance Group who consist of representatives of the GDC, Turanga Health, Cobham School, Parafed Gisborne, CCS Disability Action and Metcon Mauri to spark a region-wide conversation about the role of play and active transport on the wellbeing of tamariki, rangatahi and whānau in Tairāwhiti.

**“I love the elements around the restoration around the local creek. Seeing that eel gave hope to what biodiversity could be planted there to create better nitrogen for other species to survive. The planting of natives at Cobham School will help enhance the new Waharoa and school grounds. In conjunction with what is happening inside the classroom and staff we will see a lot more growth in individuals and whānau. What the new Neighbourhood Play System looks like after the next consultation really excites me.”**

Victor Herbert, Manawakura – Sport Gisborne Tairāwhiti



Figure 39: Tamariki illustrating their journey from home and the breakfast club at School.

# Next steps

## Implementation and next steps

While the impacts of COVID-19 have made the testing of the Neighbourhood Play System Blueprint process slower and more complicated, it has allowed the central focus of the project to remain on the perceptions, experiences and dreams of the tamariki. This cup-of-tikanga approach or in the case of the tamariki, muffins-and-strawberries-tikanga developed trusting, safe relationships and the space for the tamariki to share their voice and empower them as co-designers in their own neighbourhood.

The Cobham School Neighbourhood Play System pulls together the Framing and Engaging stage of the co-design process and Let's Talk Play section of the Blueprint.

The next steps in testing the Elgin Neighbourhood Play System Blueprint involves continuing to consult with our tamariki and co-designing the implementation of the five dimensions of the Neighbourhood Play System.

Stage two of the Blueprint, Let's Plan for Play, continues the community play/workshops, identifies the proposed initiatives and begins engagement with key stakeholders to establish support for the proposals.

In the final stage of Let's Empower Play, an activation model and key project initiatives for investment is finalised and presented to the key stakeholders for approval and activation.

Sourcing funding for the short-, medium- and long-term activation of the Blueprint will allow the five opportunities identified to be tried and tested in the real world by everyday users including the tamariki of Cobham School.

## Next steps

- Keep up the cup-of-tikanga.
- Develop connections and relationships with Mana Whenua.
- Gather local pūrākau to ground and strengthen the five opportunities.
- Expand the consultation net to include Cobham School whānau and caregivers, staff, Board of Trustees, caretakers, outside providers and after school providers.
- As the net is cast wider still, we will weave in the insights of key stakeholders including various levels of GDC staff (school road safety, waterways, parks and recreation, dog control, street lighting crew), Civil Assist Engineering, Tairāwhiti Trails, Gisborne Airport, Cedenco and Downer.
- Develop connections and relationships for local gang engagement.
- Formation of Elgin Tākaro Kaitiaki Ropu.
- Gather insights on the playability of the neighbourhood from the users of the suburb, those that live work and play in Elgin and those that pass through it – shop owners, churches, childcare centres, police, and industrial zone users.
- Ice cream test and neighbourhood walk with Mayor, Councillors and tamariki.
- Co-applying with GDC for the Waka Kotahi Streets for People programme 2021-2024.

## Timeline

### Short term: December to February 2022

- Co-applying with GDC for the Waka Kotahi Streets for People programme 2021-2024 for the tactical urbanism fund.

### Medium term: February to June 2022

- Supporting the governance group to apply for the Tū Manawa Active Aotearoa Fund to test small initiatives within each of the five projects. Tamariki co-designed and led.
- Testing the Waka Kotahi Play Street Guidelines.

### Long term June 2022 onwards

- Long Term Plan submission on the need for a GDC Play Strategy and Elgin Neighbourhood Play System Blueprint activation.





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)

**Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa**  
New Zealand Government