



Open Spaces and Physical Activity Strategy Te Rautaki mō Ngā Wāhi Honohono me Te Korikori Tinana

Vibrant places supporting healthy communities

1 October 2022



**WHANGANUI
DISTRICT COUNCIL**
Te Kaunihera a Rohe o Whanganui



Contents

From the Mayor	3
Our strategy – At a glance	4
1.0 Introduction	8
4.0 Vision and Principles	10
3.0 Issues and Opportunities	19
2.0 Strategy Context	28
5.0 Goals and Actions	34
6.0 Monitoring and Evaluation	39

From the Mayor

Kia ora koutou

In Whanganui we're spoilt for choice when it comes to parks, open spaces and sports facilities.

We all have our favourite places to visit, whether it's watching the kids clamber over the iconic playground figures at Kowhai Park, cheering on the sidelines at Wembley Park or exploring nature along the winding paths at Bason Botanic Gardens.

Our shared spaces are part of our collective histories and memories. Some of us will have generations of family who have been captured in photos in Whanganui's parks over the decades. Visitors are known to pull off our main highways just to stop for a visit to some of these incredible spaces.

As more people choose to make Whanganui home, it's important to plan how we manage, enhance and extend our open spaces and provide opportunities for sport, recreation and play. To this end, the Open Spaces and Physical Activity Strategy will guide decision-making in partnership with Tangata Whenua and the whole community.

The vision of this strategy is to create 'Vibrant spaces supporting healthy communities'.

Included in the scope of this strategy are the more than 150 reserves that Whanganui District Council owns or administers, ranging from premier parks to neighbourhood playgrounds, sports grounds and passive spaces.

We want all these spaces and facilities to be safe and available to everyone to enjoy, to support people to be physically active, to play, to protect and preserve the natural environment and to enhance biodiversity.



We know open spaces play a pivotal role in supporting hauora, physical, mental, social and spiritual health and wellbeing. During COVID-19 lockdowns, it was evident that access to these areas for exercise, or simply to relax and spend time outside, was hugely important to residents.

Open spaces bring people and whānau together, creating a sense of community and belonging and enhancing our appreciation and connections to place.

In recent years we've better understood the role our parks and reserves play in environmental action. We can increase community resilience to climate change through actions set out in this strategy, such as more tree planting programmes and modifying lawn maintenance to create carbon sinks and enhance biodiversity.

Thank you to all those who contributed to the strategy's consultation - your input has helped to shape the future of our abundant much-loved spaces and sporting facilities that contribute to Whanganui's unique identity. These places belong to all of us.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which reads "Hamish McDouall". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

Hamish McDouall
Mayor of Whanganui

Our strategy – At a glance

VISION

**Vibrant places
supporting
healthy communities**

PRINCIPLES

Health and wellbeing

Te Taiao

Community

Partnerships

Inclusivity

GOALS

- ✓ Our open spaces and physical activities support the health and wellbeing of all people in the community.
- ✓ We value and protect our natural environment and biodiversity.
- ✓ Our open spaces celebrate Whanganui's history, heritage and unique identity.
- ✓ Our whole community can experience and enjoy our open spaces, sport, recreation and play activities.
- ✓ Our open spaces meet the needs of local communities now and in the future.

ACTION PLAN

A detailed Action Plan with specific implementation activities will be developed after public feedback on the draft strategy.



TE WAWATA

He wāhi ora,
he hapori ora

NGĀ MĀTĀPONO

Oranga

Te taiao

Te hapori

Ngā hononga

Mahi tahi



NGĀ WHĀINGA

- ☑ E taunaki ana ngā wāhi honohono me te korikori tinana i te oranga o te hapori.
- ☑ E whakatairanga ana, ā, e whakahaumarua ana tātau i te taiao.
- ☑ Ko te pūtake o ngā wāhi honohono, ko ngā kōrero o mua, ko ngā taonga tuku iho me te tuakiri ake o Whanganui.
- ☑ Mā te hapori nui tonu ngā wāhi honohono, ngā mahi hākinakina, rēhia, korikori rānei.
- ☑ E hāngai pū ana ngā wāhi honohono ki ngā hiahia o te hapori o nāianei, o āpōpō hoki.

TE ARA WHAKAMUA

Ka kohikohi i ngā whakaaro o te rautaki nei mai i ngā uiuinga tūmatanui, ā, ka whakawhanake i te ara whakamua (me ngā mahi whakatinana) i ēnei kohinga whakaaro.



Drews Avenue - an Innovating Streets project

He tūwheratanga kōrero

This strategy tells a story of Māori (te ao Māori) and New Zealand European world views coming together to support collective and holistic health and wellbeing.

The need for an iwi Māori perspective to be seen and heard in the political sphere is increasingly important. However, understanding this perspective can be difficult as it is often viewed through a western lens and/or through the modern conservation movement, both of which have different foundations, ethics and understandings. Iwi Māori worldview contributes to the development and practice of a unique environmental ethic that holds those areas as intensely sacred or special places and spaces for us as Whanganui. This ethic does not instruct preservation; rather, it centres on sustainable use, and guardianship. Iwi Māori relate to nature in a meaningful way because they live it as tāngata whenua on their marae, as hapū and iwi, and their kawa and tikanga practices are embedded in the natural environment.

This strategy is about supporting collective and holistic health and the wellbeing of the environment and people.

Long-term formal, robust and evolving relationship agreements have been developed between Whanganui District Council and Te Runanga o Tamaupoko and Te Runanga o Tupoho. These runanga are a collective of marae within their respective tupuna rohe, and as whānau/hapū are the authority holders over their culture and traditions with their ancestral lands, water, sites, waahi tapu and other taonga.

From a statutory Whanganui Iwi perspective, interconnectivity with our environs is evident within traditional narratives and innate values, recognised in law through the Te Awa Tupua Settlement Act 2017. Those innate values – Tupua Te Kawa – guide the way in which decisions are made to protect and enhance the health and well-being of the environment, Te Awa Tupua and our people. Tupua Te Kawa establishes four kawa or values that underpin an indigenous natural law and value system, binding people to place. In the context of climate change, these kawa might be expressed or understood as follows:

Ko te Awa te mātāpuna o te ora

Our Awa and environs sustains us with life and natural resources, and these must be protected from environmental impacts so that current and future generations may be nourished. .

E rere kau mai te Awa nui, mai i te Kāhui Maunga ki Tangaroa

Our Awa and environs, including physical and spiritual elements, are indivisible, and responses must be cognisant of the holistic impact on all realms of wellbeing.

Ko au te Awa, ko te Awa ko au

There is an inalienable connection between people, the Awa and the environment, and we have a responsibility to change the way we live to reinforce and strengthen this connection.

Ngā manga iti, ngā manga nui, e honohono kau ana, ka tupu hei Awa Tupua

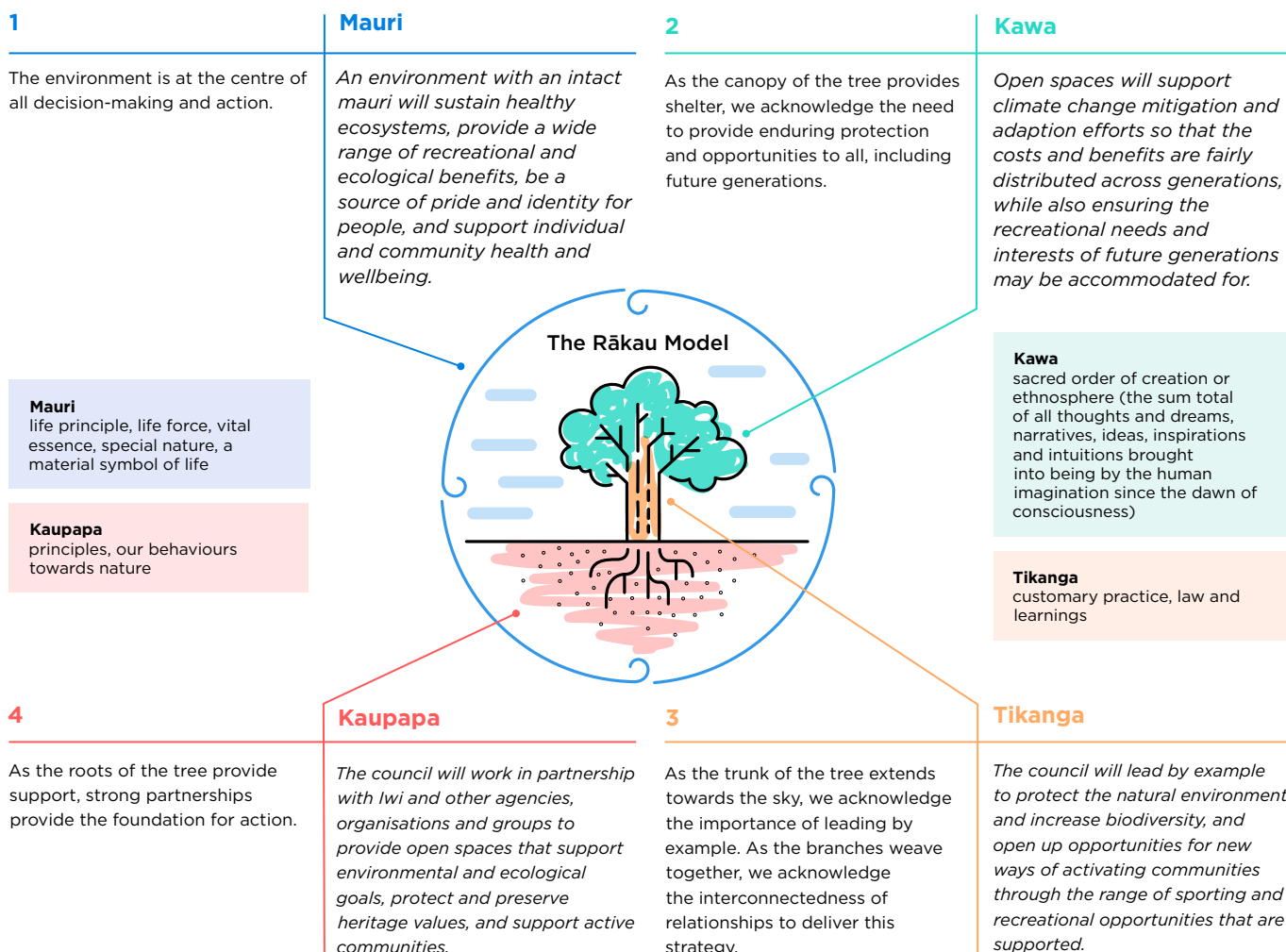
Co-ordinated effort is required across all communities and authorities, given that our Awa and environs are integral to our worldview and lives.

Tangata whenua view

The council's Open Spaces and Physical Activity Strategy brings together te ao Māori and New Zealand European worldviews to support collective and holistic health and wellbeing of the environment and people.

With this interconnected relationship, the environment is at the centre of decision-making and action. Centering the environment helps to support and empower the community to work for the benefit of the environment as the very basis for improving

collective wellbeing. A healthy environment provides vibrant open spaces for people to enjoy a wide range of sport and recreational activities, and can attract out-of-town visitors and investments. It also supports rich biodiversity which has important intrinsic value, but also direct and indirect economic, ecological and recreation benefits for people. Supporting a healthy environment and biodiversity is therefore fundamental to the holistic health and wellbeing of the community.



1.0 Introduction

Open spaces and physical activity are essential for the health and wellbeing of the community. Our many parks, nature reserves, public urban spaces, connecting pathways and walkways, lakes and coastal areas are common settings people go to rest and relax, connect with nature, and socialize with others.

Engaging in sport, recreation and play activities help people to be physically active and these often take place in public open spaces. The visual beauty and amenity value of these spaces attract visitors as do the wide range of recreational opportunities that they enable.

Open spaces also have important environmental and ecological benefits. Trees and forests absorb and store carbon, assist in reducing heat, provide natural sun shading and support the biodiversity and are therefore imperative in sustaining all life, human and

non-human. In the context of climate change and the many factors that currently impact wellbeing, open spaces are fundamental in supporting the environmental, physical, social and economic health and wellbeing of communities.

Whanganui District Council's (the council) Open Spaces and Physical Activity Strategy is a high-level document that sets the long-term strategic direction for public open spaces, sport, recreation and play in the district. It supports the delivery of a leading edge district and community in line with the council's strategic direction as well as the three community outcomes: quality of life; connections to each other, our place in the world; and community pride in our unique identity.





Majestic Square

Purpose of the strategy

The purpose of the strategy is to guide decision-making around the provision, development and management of open spaces so that they support the health and wellbeing of the environment, individuals and communities, now and in the future.

This strategy has been informed by the *Whanganui Physical Activity Insights Report*, published by Sport Whanganui in June 2022.

An action plan will be developed out of this strategy drawing on the specific insights from the research.

Provision

- What types of open spaces do we need now and in the future?
- What types of recreational and sporting activities do we want to enable/support?
- Where should these spaces and activities be located?
- How accessible will they be?
- How many should there be?
- How will we get them (new land acquisitions or changing use overtime)?

Development

- What should the spaces look like?
- What types of equipment and facilities should they have?
- How should they be developed?
- When should it be done?
- Who should be involved?

Management

- How should we look after/maintain them?
- What are the priorities?
- Who should be responsible for maintaining what?
- How should funding be prioritised?

Vision statement

Vibrant places supporting healthy communities



Principles

The following principles guide this strategy:

Health and wellbeing - open spaces and physical activities play a pivotal role in supporting the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual health and wellbeing of individuals and the community.

Te Taiao - we are interconnected with the natural world and therefore invested in protecting the health and sustainability of the surrounding environment and ecosystems.

Community - open spaces, sport, recreation and play bring people together, creating a sense of community and belonging and enhancing our appreciation and connections to place.

Partnerships - our open spaces, sport, recreation and play activities can better meet the needs, interests and aspirations of our communities when we work in partnership with Iwi/Hapū and other organisations.

Inclusivity - our open spaces, sport, recreation and play activities are for everyone.



Fest of Cultural Unity at Majestic Square

Scope of strategy

The Open Spaces and Physical Activity Strategy applies to the vast range of public open spaces that are owned and/or administered by Whanganui District Council as well as to the wide variety of sport, recreation and play supported in these spaces. Open spaces include 'green spaces' such as parks, reserves, and walkways, 'blue spaces' such as lakes and coastal areas, and 'grey spaces' which are public spaces in the urban built environment, including connecting pathways and civic squares. It is recognised, however, that there are also many publicly accessible spaces used by the community that are not owned/administered by the council, including school grounds and private land.

The strategy does not apply to the Whanganui River, as this is covered by Te Awa Tupua (Whanganui River Claims Settlement) Act 2017, but it does support decision-making to uphold the objectives of this legislation.

Land settlement negotiations are important processes taking place between the Crown and Whanganui Iwi (Whanganui Land Settlement Negotiation Trust). The outcomes of these are likely to alter the governance structure of a number of reserves in the district, returning some of the decision-making and control of certain land sites to Tangata Whenua. While the negotiation process and discussions are outside the scope of this strategy, the strategy supports the objectives of the land settlement.



Definitions

For the purpose of this strategy, open space, sport, recreation and play are defined as follows:

Open Space – any site owned and/or administered by Whanganui District Council that is open and available for public use. This includes outdoor spaces such as parks, reserves, sports grounds, playgrounds, walking and hiking trails, mountain biking tracks, walkways, beaches, coast, streams and lakes, as well as public urban spaces where people gather including civic squares. It also includes council-owned and/or administered indoor sport and recreation facilities and spaces that are open to the public.

Sport – any organised, structured physical activity engaged in for competition often requiring specific equipment and where particular rules and objectives are observed. They may be played in outdoor spaces or indoor facilities, either individually, in a group or as a team.

Recreation – includes passive and active forms of recreational activities. The former are those activities undertaken for lifestyle, wellbeing and enjoyment that do not exert much energy, such as reading a book, bird watching and flying a kite, while the latter denotes any physical activity undertaken for the same purposes but is more active, including walking, biking and other types of active transport, and unstructured play. Active recreation differs from sport in that it is typically casual, non-competitive and less structured.

Play – any activity that is freely chosen and directed by tamariki for enjoyment. It takes place whenever and wherever opportunities arise, such as building huts and rolling down hills. It is fundamental for the physical, cognitive, social and spiritual development of tamariki, and provides opportunities to improve both individual and community wellbeing.

The four wellbeings

The council plays a number of roles in relation to open spaces, sport, recreation and play activities which help promote environmental, social, cultural and economic wellbeing, as required of territorial authorities under the Local Government Amendment Act 2002.

Environmental wellbeing

Protection and preservation of the natural environment and landscapes, supporting biodiversity of flora and fauna, reducing pollution, mitigating climate change, and improving air quality.

Social wellbeing

Physical and mental health supported by engaging in physical activities individually or in a group, connecting with nature in outdoor settings, and social connections.

Cultural wellbeing

Protection and promotion of heritage and sites of cultural significance, storytelling and education.

Economic wellbeing

Attractive and vibrant spaces and places attracting residents, visitors, events and investments.

The council is committed to supporting community-led initiatives to help make open spaces, sports and recreation fun and attractive places and activities for all. We do this by performing the wide range of roles listed on the following page.



Roles

The council is committed to supporting community led initiatives to help make open spaces, sports and recreation fun and attractive places and activities for all. We do this by performing the wide range of roles listed below.

ACTIVATE

We help to get communities active to maximise their use and enjoyment of the facilities and open spaces. We do this by running community events, providing equipment and resources, and improving our information and promotion of what we have available on top of the other roles we play.

PARTNERSHIPS

We partner with others including Tangata Whenua, community organisations, trusts, schools and sport and recreation clubs to provide open spaces and sport and recreational opportunities and to help activate the community.

PROVISION

We provide, develop and maintain a wide range of facilities and open spaces and look to ensure they meet the needs of different community groups and that provision meets the needs of different suburbs both now and in the future.

MANAGEMENT

We manage reserves through the preparation and implementation of Reserve Management Plans (RMP) so that they are managed in accordance with the purpose under which they are classified under the Reserves Act.

PROTECTION

We protect the heritage and cultural significance of land sites and preserve the natural environment so that they may be valued and enjoyed by the community now and in the future. Under RMPs, we also look to protect areas for recreation.

FUND

We fund and/or help communities secure funding for community projects. Actions in this strategy are funded through provisions in the council's Long-Term Plan (LTP).

CO-DESIGN/ COLLABORATE

We co-design and collaborate with the community to design and deliver projects together. This means partnering from the start of the project through to completion.

ADVOCACY

We advocate for open spaces, sport and active recreational activities through other strategic and planning documents to ensure they are supported across the council.

RESEARCH/ PLANNING

We undertake research and monitoring to help inform our planning so that we can continue to meet the needs of our communities now and in the future.

Key partners

The council works with several key partners to provide a wide range of open spaces as well as sporting and recreational opportunities to the community.

Tangata Whenua

Working with tangata whenua to identify and acknowledge places of historical, cultural and environmental significance.

Multicultural groups and organisations

Working with cultural groups and organisations in Whanganui including Pasifika, Asian and other culturally diverse groups, and those supporting recent migrants, former refugees and international students,

Regional sports trust (RST)

Working with Sport Whanganui as the RST that works across the physical activity, sport and recreation and play sector and has a wide range of duties including the distribution of funding and acting as a regional voice for the community.

Sports clubs

Assisting and supporting sports clubs in delivering a wide range of sporting opportunities and activities to the community.

Regional sports organisations (RSOs)

Working with RSOs who lead, promote and oversee a sport in the local region to provide opportunities for the community to play the sport. RSOs have direct relationships with sports clubs and schools to provide them leadership and support in order to create active, healthy communities.

Environmental groups

Working with active volunteer groups to protect and maintain the natural environment including tree planting and coastal care, and to share ideas on how to enhance biodiversity and climate change mitigation and adaptation in our open spaces.

Schools

Working with schools to support their current provision of sport and recreational facilities/fields for the local community to use and enjoy.

Whanganui Health Sector

Working with community and local groups, including youth organisations to provide open spaces that support healthy lifestyles and address public health issues as well as addressing specific accessibility needs where possible. This includes working with the Cancer Society amongst other health groups.

Community groups

Working with community groups, including youth organisations and the disability sector, to support the delivery of inclusive and accessible sport and recreational programmes and activities.

Advocacy groups

Working with advocacy groups including health, accessibility, and other advocacy groups.

Volunteer groups

Working with local volunteer groups and organisations.

Landowners

Working with various landowners to provide access and improve connections to open spaces, or to acquire land for public open space and activities.

Accessibility groups

Working with accessibility groups and the disability sector to support the delivery of accessible and inclusive sport and recreational activities and facilities.

How the community has shaped the strategy

Context for the review

Whanganui is quickly changing. These are some of the key changes we looked at in this review:

- An increasing and ageing Whanganui population and changing demographics.
- Changing sport and recreation trends - including a declining use of parks and participation in sport/physical activities both nationally and in Whanganui.
- Urban development, climate change and environmental pressures.

A recent report by Sport Whanganui, the Whanganui Physical Activity Insights Report, provides more detail on the local demographics and trends that impact the sport and recreation sector.

Engagement process

This involved stakeholder meetings, workshops with elected members and Tangata Whenua, and community engagement including public surveys and formal consultation.

We also researched sport and recreation trends, population growth and development, and reviewed national legislation and local policies to inform this strategy.

In 2021, we ran a public survey to understand how Whanganui residents use the many parks, reserves and walkways in the district and to get their views on a range of matters, including safety, access, play and recreation and climate change. We had 360 responses to the survey.

The survey responses have shaped the overall strategy vision and the specific goals and principles to reflect the community's views and input.

Following this it was agreed to add 'Physical Activity' to the strategy to broaden it from 'open spaces' to include the role for council to 'activate' spaces - helping communities to get active and to maximise their use and enjoyment of the facilities and open spaces.

Public feedback

In 2022, we ran public consultation on the draft strategy and received 72 formal submissions.

Overall, community feedback on the draft strategy was very positive.

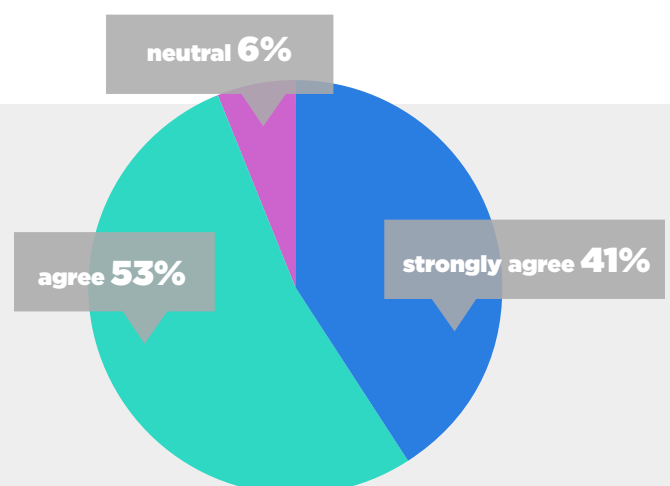
96% of respondents agreed with the overall direction of the strategy. There was also strong support for the five goals in the strategy.

Some of the key themes included

- The need to include multiple and diverse voices in the strategy and action plan - these included Tangata Whenua, Pasifika, multicultural voices, the disability sector, tamariki and older people, and out-of-town visitors as key stakeholders.
- The opportunity to include co-design and collaboration with the community.
- The need to consider solar protection as a key issue for Whanganui and nationally.
- Many submitters made requests for investment in new provision or activities or equipment, including cycleways and shared pathways and bridle paths. These will be reviewed through the action plan phase and future budget rounds.
- The need to do more on pest control/biodiversity and to better support native species and planting.
- The connection between nature and open spaces and our physical and mental wellbeing, especially following the impacts of COVID-19.
- The importance of accessibility and inclusivity and having a range of open spaces for different people and abilities.
- The need to better preserve the heritage and history of our open spaces.
- The critical role community, volunteer and advocacy groups play in our open spaces.
- The need for bold action to come from the strategy.

Changes have been made in the final strategy to reflect the key themes where possible and there will be further discussion with the community to develop and deliver on the action plan.

After feedback we changed the action plan to be reviewed annually to ensure accountability and currency for the community.



You told us

In partnership - "This is important but must be done in partnership with iwi and hapu and be able to measure the effectiveness within a te Ao Māori perspective (e.g. access to green space for mahinga kai or tikanga practices)."

Catering for a broader group - "Having a range of open spaces for all people with their different abilities, life stages and interests is important."

Activation - "We should aim to activate our spaces more with events. For example, the Grey Lynn Park in Auckland is greatly enriched by the yearly Grey Lynn Park festival, and the Auckland and Wellington Council both have music and performance events in parks in the summer."

Connecting with nature - "I would like to see pockets of 'wild spaces' within some of our parks. These would not only create more biodiversity but if we could calm our overly risk-assessing inclinations, they would create spaces for children and families to explore and find connections in nature."

Storytelling - "We could do more to celebrate our identity as a city of design with some fun interactive installations."

Bold action needed - "I support the draft strategy which is well compiled, as far as it goes. However, the Strategy needs some well-defined and bold actions. Otherwise it will just become a document that will sit on the shelf for 3 years until the next review."





Rotokawau Virginia Lake

Rotokawau Virginia Lake is one of Whanganui's premier parks and a favourite recreational spot to walk, picnic, relax and play.

A 25-minute woodland walk around the lake offers opportunities to see the statue of Tainui, a band rotunda, twin bridges, rose and wisteria pergolas and various birdlife including wildfowl species such as white swans and the native black shag (kawau) for which the lake is named.

Adjacent to the lake is the Winter Garden with colourful displays in an Art Deco-era conservatory, and an adjoining Art Garden that features garden art and sculptures.

Additional attractions at the lake and surrounding reserve include a free flight aviary; the Higginbottom Fountain which gently changes between colours when lit at night; a fenced children's playground; and the Punchbowl amphitheatre and stage, used for community events such as Carols by Candlelight.

Issues and opportunities

New legislation, strategies, policies

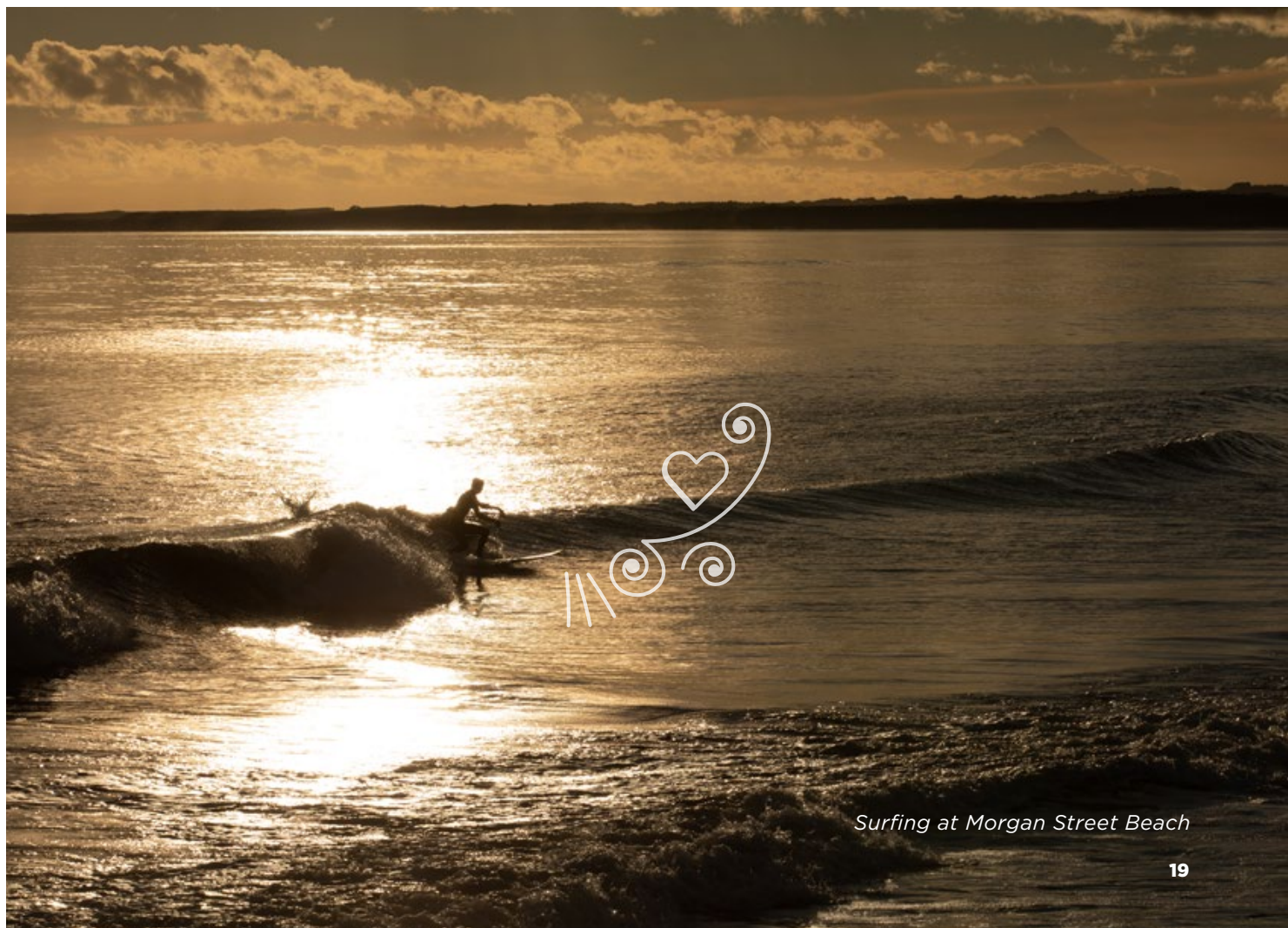


The increased emphasis of local government on supporting community wellbeing as well as the council's relatively recent strategies for housing, climate change, and heritage are all relevant to the open space network. There are also changes to legislation such as the Resource Management Act underway. Opportunities to identify and develop suitable parks, reserves and open spaces in the district that will assist the council in delivering on the different legislative and strategic objectives.

Te Awa Tupua



Te Awa Tupua legislation gives formal recognition of the Whanganui River as an indivisible whole and protects the environmental, social, cultural and economic health and wellbeing of the river. This includes the land on which the river covers, the subsoil, plants, the space occupied by the water and airspace above it. The open space network and sport and recreational activities supported in the district should uphold the objectives of Te Awa Tupua and support decision-making that protects the health and wellbeing of the Whanganui River. There are also opportunities to better support Tangata Whenua's connection with this taonga.



Surfing at Morgan Street Beach

Population growth and development



Since 2013, there has been a steady growth in the Whanganui population¹ and current projections indicate that the population will reach more than 51,200 by 2031.

Urban development has increased density with a greater number of housing and people located in existing suburban boundaries. This includes planned development with some formal Rural Lifestyle areas being rezoned to Residential with significantly smaller section sizes, as well as the increasing number of infill housing on private sections. This increasing density puts pressure on the availability of parks and open spaces to support individual and community wellbeing.

The actual and projected growth in Whanganui is an opportunity to develop guidance for decision-making around the provision and development of open spaces so that they meet the needs and interests of current and future populations. This includes ensuring all new residential properties and neighbourhoods have access to appropriate forms of open space.

Sport and recreation trends



The way people use open spaces and how and whether they engage in physical activities is changing. The majority of the community still visit public parks and beaches, but participation in sports and active recreational activities is declining.² Different drivers are impacting sport, active recreation and play activities nationally and locally. This includes growing, ageing, diversifying and urbanizing populations, technology and its impact on how people spend their leisure time, climate change, the rise of eSports, and COVID-19.³ Rising inequalities also negatively impact engagement in physical activities. Forty-six percent of the Whanganui population live in the bottom two deciles for socioeconomic deprivation, making affordability a pertinent issue. Funding for community sport is also under threat which has implications on the provision of sport and recreational activities. These drivers create different challenges and opportunities for the provision and development of open spaces, sporting and recreational activities.



Castlecliff Beach

Accessibility



Accessibility is influenced by factors such as distance and proximity, level of personal mobility, availability of transport and access, and feeling safe when accessing and using these spaces.

Access in general is influenced by the location of these spaces relative to residential areas and how well they are connected to a variety of transport routes and other open spaces. Equal distribution of particular types of open spaces across the city enables all residential neighbourhoods to have relatively easy and safe access to a range of recreational activities via different transport modes such as walking, cycling, public transport and car. There is an opportunity to ensure a balanced distribution of open spaces across the city, taking into consideration population growth.

Access for those with mobility impairments is about providing pathways and facilities that cater for a broad range of abilities. Whanganui's median age is 5.7 years higher than the national median. 20 percent of the population is +65yrs (2018)⁴ and this age group is projected to increase to over 30% by 2031⁵. While it may not be possible for all open spaces to be accessible for those in wheelchairs, mobility scooters and walking frames, ensuring they are catered for in the most problematic areas is important. Having smooth, level, sufficiently wide and connected pathways will also benefit other users, including parents with prams, those on bikes and scooters as well as the general population.

Play equipment and facilities in our open spaces also need to be accessible and inclusive. A recent stocktake of public playgrounds in Whanganui⁶ highlighted the need to improve access to these spaces and the play equipment itself for a range of abilities.

¹ Statistics New Zealand (2018) Population counts, by age and sex.

² Versus Research (2021) Whanganui District Council Community Views Survey May 2021 Report.

³ Sport New Zealand (2020) Ensuring the Play, Active Recreation and Sport Sector is Fit for the Future. [ensuring-the-sector-is-fit-for-the-future-200721.pdf](https://www.sportnz.org.nz/ensuring-the-sector-is-fit-for-the-future-200721.pdf) (sportnz.org.nz)

⁴ Statistics New Zealand (2018) Population counts, by age and sex. <https://www.stats.govt.nz/tools/2018-census-place-summaries/whanganui-district>

⁵ Sport New Zealand (2020) Demographic Change in Ensuring the Play, Active Recreation and Sport Sector is Fit for the Future [futures-think-piece-demographic-change.pdf](https://www.sportnz.org.nz/futures-think-piece-demographic-change.pdf) (sportnz.org.nz)

⁶ Whanganui District Council (2021) Inclusive Play Spaces Project. Stage 1: Stocktake of Whanganui Play Spaces.



Population diversity



A diversifying population is creating different needs and interests in relation to open spaces, sport and recreational activities. Community feedback and findings from recent Play Workshops in 2021⁷ highlighted opportunities to support a wider range of play and recreational activities in our open spaces network.

This includes having play equipment that is suitable for multiple purposes, useable by different abilities, and interesting for different age groups. The current playgrounds are seen to be for younger children, but are not particularly enticing for older children.

Increasing ethnic diversity in the district is also an important factor. Whanganui's population is becoming increasingly diverse with Māori, Pacific Peoples, Asian and Middle Eastern/Latin American/African communities all increasing in size although some faster than others.⁸ This diversity is an opportunity to work with different cultural groups in the community to explore other types of recreational activities that may be supported in open spaces.

Climate change



Whanganui has a rich natural environment which will be increasingly impacted by climate change. The district is likely to experience more weather extremes, including a greater number of hot days and a general rise in temperatures, increases in rainfall and wetter conditions, as well as increased coastal erosion and flooding due to sea level rise. There are opportunities for parks and reserves to help mitigate and adapt to climate change through activities such as tree planting programmes. The Climate Change Strategy 2021 charts the direction and priority areas the council will focus on to address the key issues that the district will face in relation to climate change.

Heritage



Heritage is tangible and intangible. An example is built heritage which the council has an obligation to appropriately manage and protect. Heritage also includes less tangible elements. Public open spaces contain unique heritage stories pertaining to Whanganui but in some areas there is limited public knowledge about these narratives. Many of the parks and reserves in the network, including their flora and fauna and native trees, are culturally significant and need to be preserved and protected. It is also important to recognise that many sites are culturally significant to Tangata Whenua.

There are opportunities to provide more information about the history and heritage of these open spaces to the public, including exploring different ways and/or mediums to do so. There is also the need to better support the use and occupation of these ancestral lands by Tangata Whenua and enhance their connections to these spaces.



Safety



Physical safety is an important aspect of whether, when and how people use open spaces and it was also a key concern for users in the community feedback. Safety, and a sense of safety, are influenced by a range of factors including the presence of physical danger and hazards, lighting and visibility, security and surveillance, as well as personal attributes such as gender, age and physical ability. There are opportunities to increase safety in our open space network through regular maintenance to avoid physical hazards, ensuring safety around dogs, and by embedding Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles into the design/development of open spaces.

Amenity value



The quality and presentation of our open spaces and the sport and recreational activities they support are important in attracting users and out-of-town visitors. The uniqueness and beauty of some of our natural environments, including parks, reserves and lakes, are key attractions for tourists, and are also highly valued by the local community. Feedback from the community highlighted opportunities for the human-made features of these open spaces to better complement the amenity value, including through the provision of modern playgrounds and equipment, modernising signage and graphics, and through the inclusion of quality artwork and sculptures.

Solar protection



Staying safe in the sun is extremely important, especially in New Zealand as sun damage can have many short and long-term impacts on the health of our residents. New Zealand already has a high rate of skin cancer, therefore increasing sun shading around rest spots and play areas is important for UV protection.

The Cancer Society states that in New Zealand, 40% of playground provide adequate shade, and in Whanganui only 20% of our playgrounds provide adequate shade.

UV protection is required from level 3. In Whanganui we have 30+ days at level 11 or higher and 120-149 days at level 6. Open spaces will need to have adequate provisions to encourage and enable visitors to stay sun safe.

⁷ Innovation Unit (2021) Play in Whanganui: Perceptions and experiences of play from sector stakeholders, whanau and tamariki in Whanganui.

⁸ Statistics New Zealand (2018) Ethnicity, culture and identity.

<https://www.stats.govt.nz/tools/2018-census-place-summaries/whanganui-district#ethnicity-culture-and-identity>



What we currently provide

Whanganui District Council currently owns and/or administers 155 reserves (open spaces) in the district, serving a wide range of purposes. This includes ecological, heritage and aesthetic as well as recreational purposes. Seventy-seven of these are currently subject to the Reserves Act.

Please refer to our website for a full list of the reserves and open spaces at www.whanganui.govt.nz/open-spaces





SPORT AND RECREATION 13

Parks (often quite large areas) set aside and developed for organised sport and recreational activities, recreation facilities and buildings, often multiple use.

There are currently 13 sport and recreation sites.

Some examples:

Cooks Gardens, Spriggens Park, Wembley Park



NEIGHBOURHOOD 52

Parks developed and used for informal recreation and sporting activities, play and family-based activities and social and community activities.

There are currently 52 neighbourhood sites.

Some examples:

Mowhanau Beach, Wiritoa/Pauri Lake, William Birch Park



NATURE 39

Parks that offer the experience and/or protection of the natural environment, containing native bush, coastal margins, forestry, farm parks, wetlands, riparian areas and water bodies.

There are currently 39 nature sites.

Some examples:

Ototoka Beach, South Beach Reserve, Peat Park



RECREATION AND ECOLOGICAL LINKAGES 33

Areas of open space that are often linear in nature that provide pedestrian and cycle linkages, wildlife corridors and access to water margins. May provide for environmental protection and access to waterways.

There are currently 33 recreation and ecological linkages.

Some examples:

Rotokawau Virginia Lake, Town Walkway, Whangaehu Stream



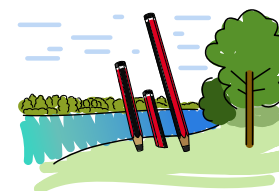
CULTURAL HERITAGE 11

Parks that protect the built cultural and historical environment, and/or provide for heritage conservation, education, commemoration, mourning and remembrance.

There are currently 11 cultural heritage sites.

Some examples:

Pukenamu Queen's Park, Brunswick, Durie Hill War Memorial Tower

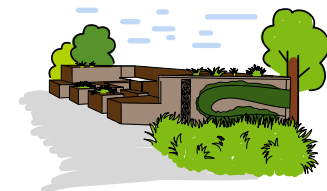


CIVIC 1

Areas of open space often provided within or adjacent to central business districts and developed to provide a space for social gatherings, meeting places, relaxation and enjoyment.

There is currently 1 civic site.

Our space: **Majestic Square**



PUBLIC GARDENS 5

Parks and gardens developed to a very high horticultural standard with collections of plants and landscaping for relaxation, contemplation, appreciation, education, events, functions and amenity/intrinsic value.

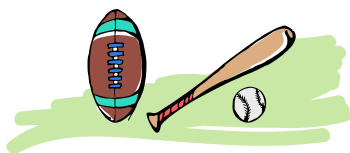
There are currently 5 public gardens.

Some examples:

Bason Botanic Gardens, Glen Logie Rose Garden



Our network of open spaces currently supports a wide range of sport, recreation and play activities.



SPORTS 13

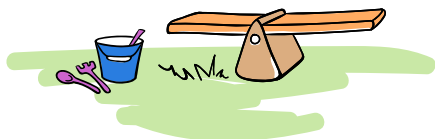
We currently own and manage thirteen (13) reserve areas as public sporting facilities offering a wide variety of traditional sports to the community. There is also the Whanganui Community Sports Centre Trust and there are also four schools with indoor and outdoor sport facilities frequently used by the public.



MOUNTAIN BIKE TRAILS 2

We have two (2) mountain bike trails on council land, including at Hylton Pit where the trails were developed by the Mountain Bike Club, and some more informal tracks at Matipo Park.

There is also the Ngā Ara Tūhono Mountains to Sea which is a Great Ride cycle trail.



PLAYGROUNDS 13

We have thirteen (13) playgrounds in the city located in a range of different neighbourhood parks and public gardens.



WALKING/HIKING TRACKS 2

We have the Westmere Walkway and Waitahinga Trails as two (2) main formal hiking trails in the district, along with many recreational walking tracks and paths in our parks network. Whanganui is on the Te Araroa (NZ Walk Trail) of national and international significance.



SKATE BOWLS/PARKS 2

We have two (2) skate bowls, one in Castlecliff Domain and the other in Kowhai Park, and there is also a cycle pump track located at Springvale Park.



SWIMMING POOLS 2

We have two (2) public swimming pools, one at Springvale Park and one outdoor pool in Whanganui East.



Durie Hill Elevator and tunnel

Built in 1919, the Durie Hill Elevator is New Zealand's only public underground transport elevator, and is one of only two in the world which service a hill suburb in a town. As well as providing easy walking and cycling access between the city and the Durie Hill suburb, it is a major tourism attraction and holds its own Heritage New Zealand Category 1 Historic Place rating.

With its unique acoustics, and backdrop for photos, the 213m long pedestrian tunnel burrows into the hill and provides access to the elevator (complete with bookcase and timber fittings and its own attendant). The elevator ascends 66m to the summit lookout where you can experience panoramic views that can include both Mt Ruapehu and Mt Taranaki.



Part of the shared pathway on Somme Parade

2.0 Strategy context

The Open Spaces and Physical Activity Strategy is informed by, and delivers on, numerous legislation, strategies and plans at the national and regional level, including:

Legislation:

- Local Government Act 2002
- Reserves Act 1977
- Conservation Act 1987
- Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014
- Whanganui Conservation Management Strategy 1997
- Resource Management Act 1991
- Te Awa Tupua (Whanganui River Claims Settlement) Act 2017

National initiatives:

- Biodiversity Strategy 2020 – Te Mana o te Taiao
- National Policy Statements – Biodiversity, Water Quality, National Parks Policy, Urban Development
- Every Body Active Strategic Direction 2020 – 2032

Regional initiatives:

- One Plan – the consolidated regional policy statement, regional plan and regional coastal plan for the Manawatu-Whanganui Region
- Manawatū – Whanganui Sport Facility Plan

Council initiatives:

The Open Spaces and Physical Activity Strategy is also influenced by, and will help give effect to, a wide range of strategies, plans and policies within the council. This includes the council's overarching vision for Whanganui as '**Leading Edge Strategy**'

Council policies and strategies:

Includes but is not limited to:

- Climate Change Strategy
- Town Centre Regeneration Strategy

LEADING EDGE STRATEGY

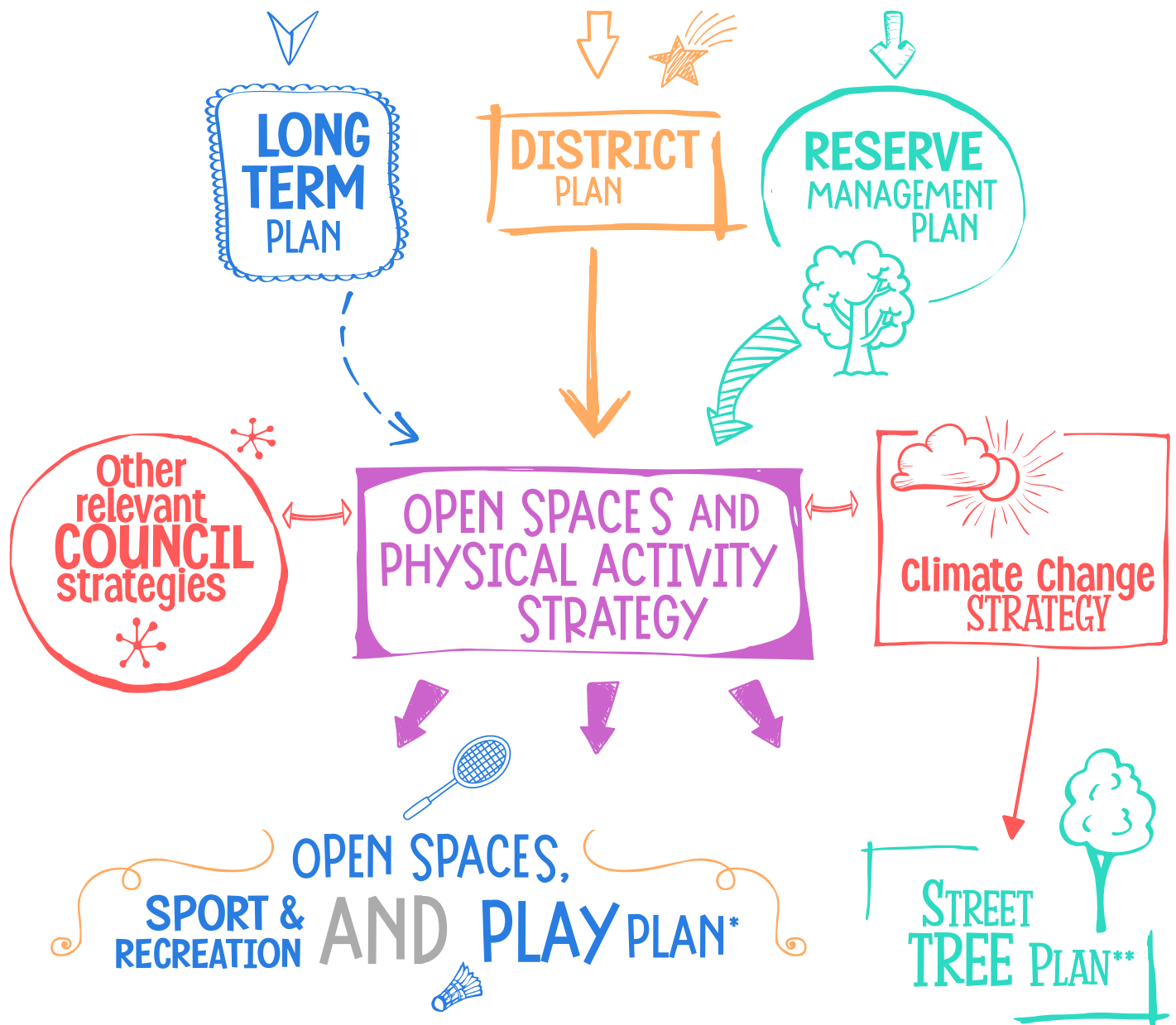


Fig. 1. Relationship of related strategies and plans

* The Sport and Recreation Facilities Strategy will be revised to an Action Plan. The Plan will include facilities funding and maintenance but will also deliver on the vision and goals set out in this Open Spaces and Physical Activity Strategy.

** The Street Tree Strategy will be revised to a Street Tree Plan that delivers on the broad vision and goals set out in this Open Spaces and Physical Activity Strategy.



Westmere Lake

Reserve management plans

The Reserves Act 1977 requires local authorities to develop reserve management plans (RMP) for reserves under its control, management and administration that are held as reserves under the Act. The plans set out the way the council will manage, protect and, where necessary, develop reserves in accordance with the purpose under which they are classified. The plans guide the council's long-term planning and day-to-day decision-making in relation to the reserves, and provide clarity and certainty regarding the purpose/function and management of them for the community.

The council currently has 77 reserves under the Act. An omnibus Reserve Management Plan will be developed for all reserves owned and administered by the council and will replace the existing reserve management plans.





New Zealand Glassworks



UNESCO City of Design

In 2021, Whanganui was named as New Zealand's only UNESCO City of Design, recognising the city's historic and contemporary contributions to art and creativity. There are only 41 Cities of Design in the world and our creatives can take great pride in this recognition. This status reflects Whanganui's historical contribution to creativity, from Māori designers' artistry and innovation alongside the Awa for more than 800 years, to the visionary architects who created the city's breathtaking landmark buildings.



Bason Botanic Gardens

Just a 15-minute drive from the city centre, Bason Botanic Gardens (25 hectares) is listed as one of Whanganui's premier parks and as well as being rated as a Garden of Significance by the New Zealand Gardens Trust, it is part of the Coastal Arts Trail.

Numerous indoor and outdoor gardens, an authentic Japanese tea house, bush walks, and relaxation areas with free barbecues provide year-round enjoyment in a magnificent rural setting.

The gardens, donated by Stanley and Blanche Bason in 1969, are maintained by Whanganui District Council and are free to visit. As well as being used for community events, weddings and corporate outings, the gardens offer a range of activities including orienteering, disc golf or geocaching.



The Bearing sculpture on the Whanganui riverbank

5.0 Goals and actions

A detailed Action Plan will be developed to implement this Strategy. The Plan will also be informed by the *Whanganui Physical Activity Insights Report*, published by Sport Whanganui in June 2022.

The following actions are indicative only:

GOAL:

Our open spaces and physical activities support the health and wellbeing of all people in the community

Action: Support and enable a wide range of physical activities and recreation interests

- Strengthen and grow current sport, recreation and play activities to increase participation.
- Provide opportunities for physical activities and recreation for groups that currently do not regularly participate.

Action: Support healthy consumption in our open spaces

- Support the provision of healthy food and drink options in our open spaces.

Action: Partner with others for more sport, recreation and play opportunities

- Collaborate with other organisations to find new and innovative ways of activating communities and encouraging play-based activities.
- Encourage commercial ventures for play and recreation.



GOAL:

We value and protect our natural environment and biodiversity

Action: Partner with community groups to achieve climate change goals

- Work with community groups on mitigation efforts, including implementing planting programmes.
- Plan for sea level rise and its impact on the coastal environment.

Action: Support biodiversity in our open spaces

- Support initiatives to enhance the biodiversity value of our open spaces.
- Provide guidance on the provision, maintenance and protection of trees - right tree, right place, right purpose.

Action: Support sustainable energy in our open spaces

- Explore opportunities for solar power in parks and reserves and recreational facilities.

GOAL:

Our open spaces celebrate Whanganui's history, heritage and unique identity

Action: Affirm and retain heritage values in our open spaces

- Work in partnership with Tangata Whenua to identify significant sites and preferred ways of commemorating and telling their stories able to be shared in the public realm.
- Support Treaty land settlement processes.

Action: Promote a sense of place and local identity

- Partner with local artists to capture and communicate the unique history of the district's open spaces in ways that bolster our UNESCO City of Design status.



GOAL:

Our whole community can experience and enjoy our open spaces, sport, recreation and play activities

Action: Ensure safety is a key priority in our open spaces

- Apply CPTED and Health and Safety principles to the design of public open spaces.
- Encourage/facilitate appropriate dog control in public open spaces.
- Increase solar protection for users in our parks, reserves and open spaces.
- Minimise drug and alcohol-related harm in our open spaces.

Action: Improve inclusivity and accessibility for all types of users of our open spaces

- Remove or minimise barriers where possible to improve access.
- Provide Universal Design guidance for amenities and facilities to ensure they are practical for all ages and abilities.
- Enhance online promotion and access to our facilities and open spaces.



GOAL:

Our open spaces meet the needs of local communities now and in the future

Action: Ensure all neighbourhoods have appropriate and fair access to open spaces

- Provide a (neighbourhood) reserve within 500m walking distance (or 10min walk) for all urban communities.
- Provide a (neighbourhood) reserve within 5km for all rural communities.
- Ensure access enables different types and levels of mobility.

Action: Plan for population growth and change

- Provide open space provision and development guidelines to inform improvements to open spaces to meet future population and needs.





Cooks Gardens

Cooks Gardens is Whanganui's premier sports ground facility and is capable of hosting a multitude of local, national and international sporting events. It is famous as the venue where, in 1962, Peter Snell achieved the first sub-four-minute mile to be run on New Zealand soil – also breaking the world mile record.

In addition to its event centre, Cooks Gardens has a 400m synthetic athletic track, a 250m cycling velodrome, and a grassed sports ground flanked by grandstands seating a total of 3,500 people. It is also the home of Whanganui's historical Bell Tower.

6.0 Monitoring and evaluation

The council's Community Property and Places Group will lead implementation of the strategy's Action Plan, working with other relevant teams and partners where necessary. Implementation of the Action Plan will be reviewed every year to assess progress on meeting the stated strategic goals. The strategy itself will be reviewed no later than 2032 to ensure it is still fit for purpose. Key indicators and methods that the council may use to monitor and evaluate progress are listed below.

GOAL	OUTCOME	INDICATOR	METHOD
Our open spaces and physical activities support the health and wellbeing of all people in the community.	Physical activity is a common part of people's lives.	Greater proportion of the community indicate they regularly use parks, open spaces and sport and recreational facilities in the district.	Community Views Survey.
We value and protect our natural environment and biodiversity.	We have a vibrant environment that is more resilient to climate change.	Greater number of trees planted.	Collaboration across council teams and community groups to plant trees/shrubs and record numbers of trees/shrubs planted.
Our open spaces celebrate Whanganui's history, heritage and unique identity.	The cultural and historical significance of open spaces is recognised, affirmed and protected.	The number of quality plaques and interpretation boards that are appropriate and effective in telling the history and stories of open spaces increases.	Register of plaques and interpretation boards in Parks Asset Management Plans.
Our whole community can experience and enjoy our open spaces, sport, recreation and play activities.	Personal safety increases in our open space network. Accessibility to open spaces, sport and recreational activities increases for different abilities.	The percentage of the community who feel safe in our open spaces increases. Wider range of accessible options available.	Biennial Park Check Survey. Record of accessible assets in Parks Asset Management Plans.
Provision of open spaces meet the needs of local communities now and in the future.	All neighbourhood communities have fair access to quality open spaces.	All residential properties have access to a neighbourhood reserve within 500m walking distance where realistically possible.	Provision analysis.



Open Spaces and Physical Activity Strategy **Te Rautaki mō Ngā Wāhi Honohono**

Vibrant places supporting healthy communities



WHANGANUI
DISTRICT COUNCIL
Te Kaunihera a Rohe o Whanganui