



Te Māhere-ā-tākaro ō Waiheke 2025

Waiheke Play Plan 2025

Supplementary Information

April 2025

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Waiheke Play Plan 2025 Supplementary Information

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April 2025

Plan adopted by Waiheke Local Board on 23 April 2025.

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ISBN 978-1-991377-35-7 (PDF)

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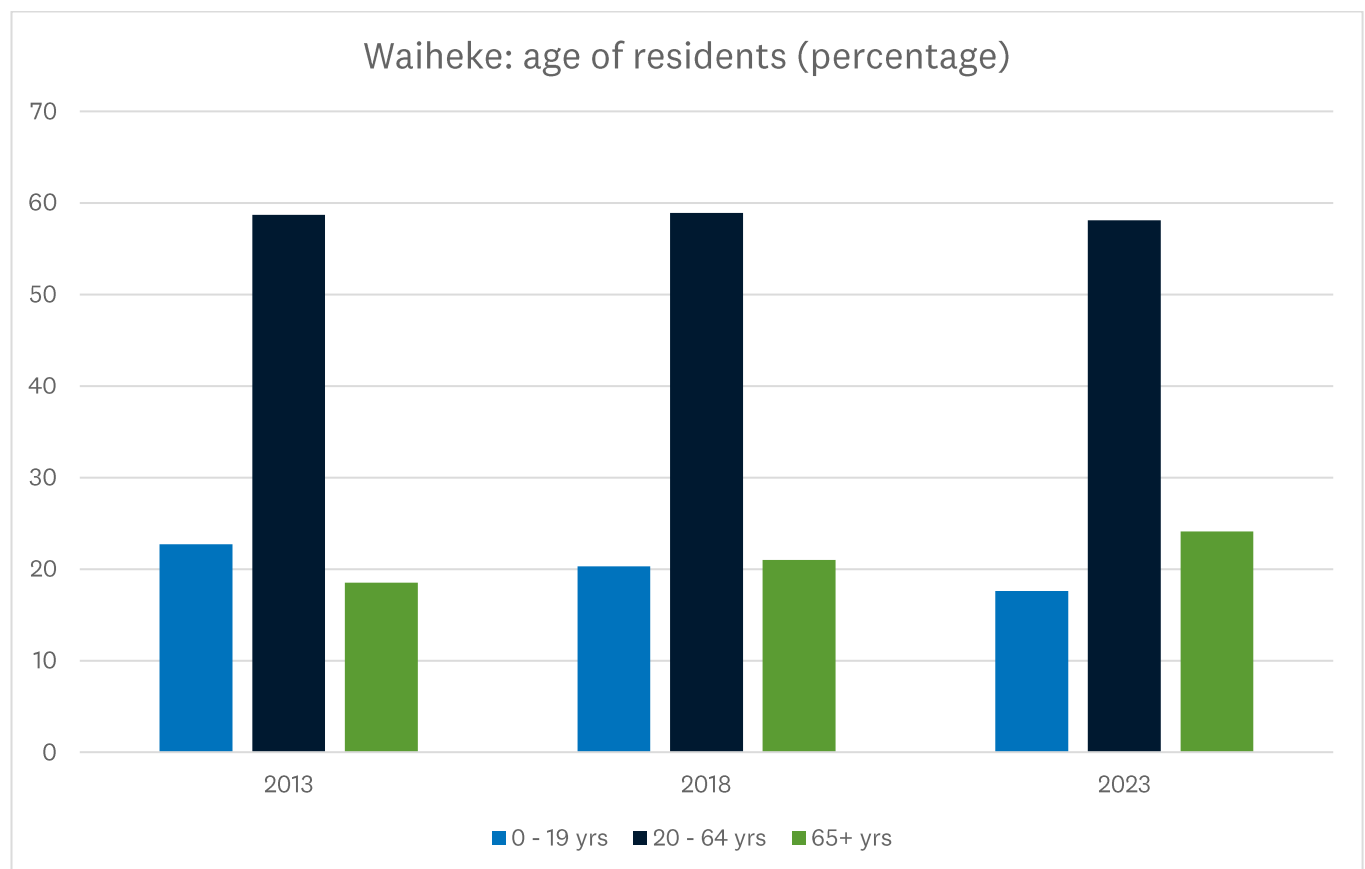
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Who lives in Waiheke?

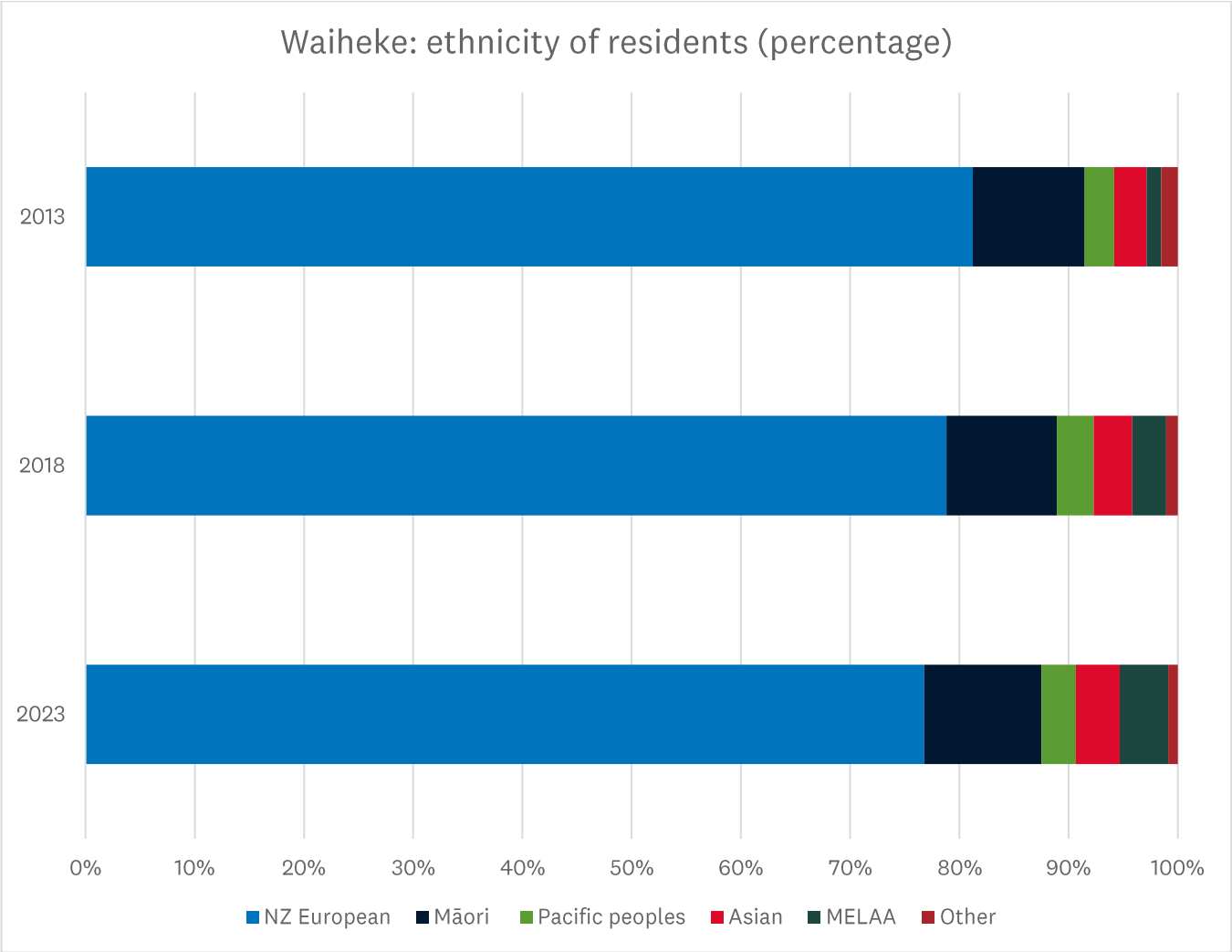
To support the local board to make decisions about play provision, it is useful to consider who lives in Waiheke and how the composition of the population may influence play options. All data is drawn from the 2013, 2018 and 2023 New Zealand censuses.

Waiheke has a population of 9162 and a median age of 49.1 years – the second-oldest median age in Tāmaki Makaurau. The census data revealed that 17.6 per cent of the population was aged under 20 years, compared with 24.1 per cent aged 65 years and over. Waiheke’s additional importance as a tourist destination, its geographical isolation and corresponding lack of access to play and recreation as in other parts of the region, present unique challenges in creating play opportunities that are of an appropriate scale, but still provide diversity of experience for residents and visitors alike.



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Waiheke’s cultural landscape has remained fairly stable over the past decade, with a predominantly NZ European population and a sizeable Māori population.



Strategic alignment

Te Māhere-ā-tākaro ō Waiheke 2025 gives effect to the Waiheke Local Board Plan 2023. Although Auckland Council does not have a regional play strategy at present to guide this kaupapa, many council plans and strategies support the goal of celebrating and enabling play in Tāmaki Makaurau.

The Auckland Plan

The Outcome ‘Belonging and Participation’ includes Direction 2: ‘Improve health and wellbeing for all Aucklanders by reducing harm and disparities in opportunities’. The Focus Areas of this Outcome speak to the importance of valuing the services, opportunities, and social and cultural infrastructure that support wellbeing in a variety of forms.

Long-term Plan 2024-2034

The play advocacy approach aligns closely with the underlying principles and values represented in the Long-term Plan:

- The play advocacy roles were created through partnerships with central government, to deliver better play outcomes for Auckland tamariki
- The primary focus of play advocacy is on the needs of tamariki, our future Aucklanders.

Play advocacy also aligns with the mayor’s vision of not wasting money by supporting cost-effective play opportunities at a local level. This reduces an automatic reliance on the building of traditional playgrounds as our primary way to deliver play outcomes.

The Long-term Plan sets out the council group areas of focus to recognise and respond to the particular challenges and opportunities currently faced by Auckland. Play advocacy reflects these areas of focus through:

- providing value for money by supporting local boards to achieve diverse play outcomes with relatively low project investments
- actively seeking opportunities to collaborate with the wider council group to develop and deliver play opportunities
- maintaining strong relationships with central government through ongoing collaboration with Sport New Zealand and its network of regional sports trusts
- emphasising the importance of iwi partnerships to create a unique voice for play in Tāmaki Makaurau
- constantly developing innovative ways to provide play across the region, in particular, by offering varied ways to achieve positive outcomes for tamariki that complement our existing play investments.

Ngā Hapori Momoho Thriving Communities Strategy 2022 – 2032

This strategy gives effect to The Auckland Plan’s Belonging and Participation Outcome. In it, tamariki and rangatahi are acknowledged as examples of priority populations that may not be thriving in our region at present. Objective 2 of the strategy seeks to improve health outcomes, advocating for the importance of recreation to support health and wellbeing, and using Te Whare Tapa Whā as a framework for understanding the many facets of wellbeing.

Open space, sport and recreation policy framework

The 2023-2024 refresh and consolidation of this policy framework will acknowledge the many settings in which play can and should occur. It acknowledges the important contribution play makes to Aucklanders' quality of life, and promoting a holistic and integrated approach to investment, planning, and management for future provision. The Play Portfolio Lead is contributing to the framework refresh to ensure that play is appropriately recognised as an important activity in its own right.

Tāmaki Makaurau, Tauawhi Kaumātua Age-friendly Auckland

The council's Age-friendly Auckland Action Plan recognises the value of play in the lives of older people. It advocates for the inclusion of specific guidance for the design of play spaces for older adults in the Auckland Design Manual.

Auckland Council can also draw on external plans and strategies that promote or enable play.

Auckland Sport and Recreation Strategic Action Plan

Auckland Sport and Recreation Strategic Action Plan (ASARSAP) is a piece of guidance developed by the sport and recreation sector in partnership with the council. The current version of ASARSAP clusters children's play activities under recreation, identifying the wide variety of locations where recreation can occur. The plan also identifies increased participation in all sport and recreation as a key priority area. When ASARSAP is refreshed, Auckland Council staff will advocate to ensure that play is appropriately acknowledged as an important activity, with unique opportunities that should be considered independently from wider conversations about recreation.

Te Whai Kori

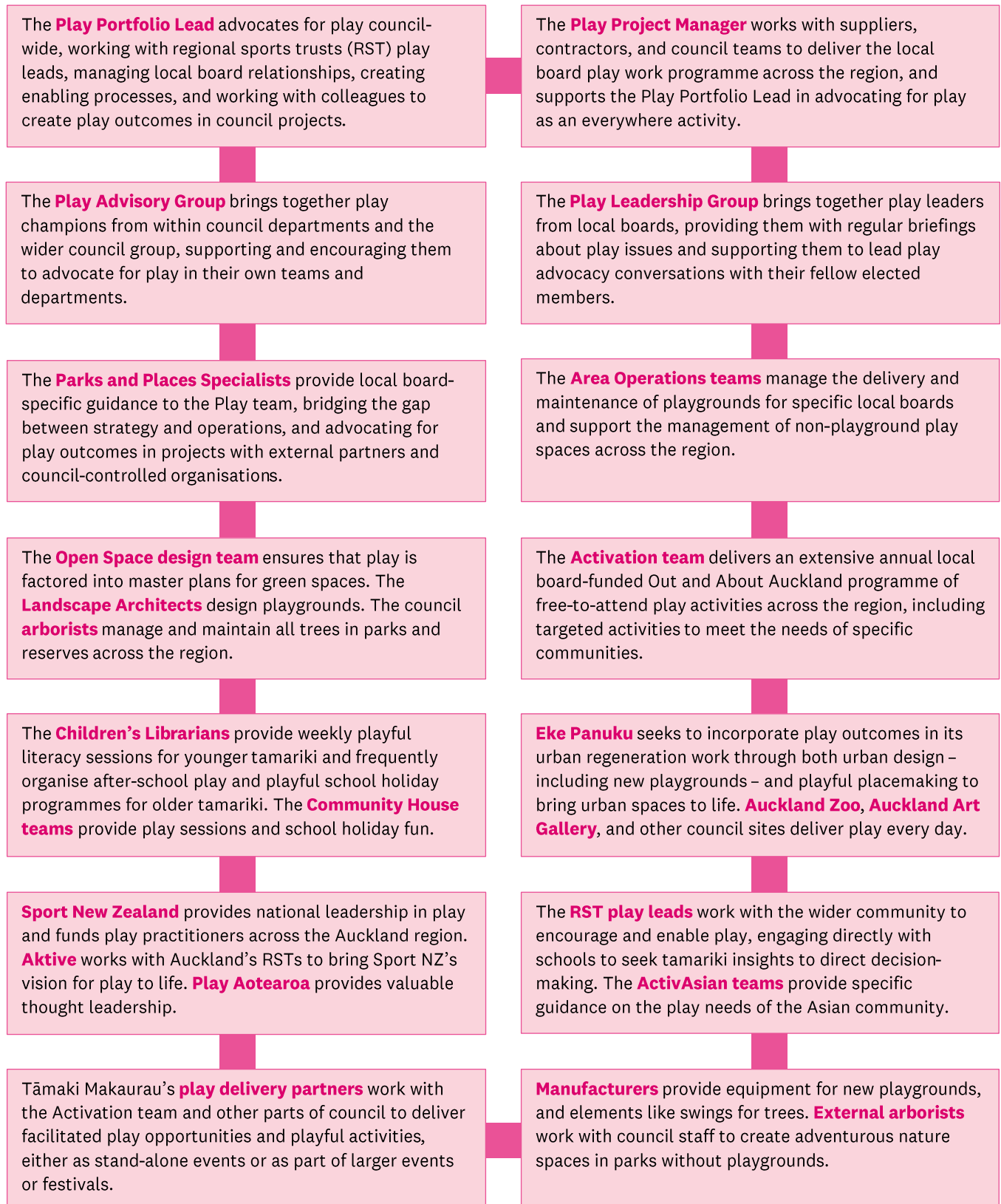
This cross-sector regional play framework was published in 2022. It was written by Aktive, in consultation with the council and with Tamaki Makaurau's regional sports trusts. It was organised around five key focus areas:

1. We Prioritise Play - developing a collective approach to enabling play through the creation and support of 'play systems' of relevant organisations
2. Tamariki Play Their Own Way - ensuring that tamariki have opportunities to shape their own play experiences and freely access a range of play environments
3. Everyday Play - bringing play into the everyday lives of the people within their communities
4. Culturally Connected Play - enabling and celebrating culturally responsive play
5. Lifelong Play - recognising the value and importance of encouraging playful behaviour to Aucklanders of all ages.

Te Whai Kori identified a range of commitments designed to enrich opportunities for tamariki and rangatahi to play. Although Auckland Council was not a formal signatory to this framework, a letter of support from the council was included in the final document.

Auckland play ecosystem

Several roles enable and support council-led play in Tāmaki Makaurau, as shown below. This diagram does not include educational organisations and community groups, although we recognise the huge role they play in providing time, space and permission for tamariki to play.



UNCROC Article 31

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child ('UNCROC') codifies the rights of children to play and recreation. New Zealand became party to UNCROC in 1993.

Article 31 is the section of the Convention that is most relevant to play. It reads:

1. *States Parties recognize the right of the child 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.*
2. *States Parties shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity.*

This recognises the right to play as a human right for all children.

Local Government Act 2002

The Local Government Act 2002 provides broad guidance for local authorities to determine what they do, how and why. This includes defining the purpose of local government and the role of local authorities.

Part 2, Section 10 Purpose of local government

(1) The purpose of local government is –

- a) to enable democratic local decision-making and action by, and on behalf of, communities, and*
- b) to promote the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of communities in the present and for the future.*

Part 2, Section 11 Role of local authority

The role of local authority is to –

- a) give effect, in relation to its district or region, to the purpose of local government stated in section 10; and*
- b) perform the duties, and exercise the rights, conferred on it by or under this Act and any other enactment.*

This affirms the importance of all local boards making decisions that improve the wellbeing of the communities. Coupled with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, is a useful reminder that New Zealand's local authorities are mandated to recognise the importance of play and recreation, to support the wellbeing of children and young people.

Sport NZ Principles of Play

Sport New Zealand's Principles of Play have been developed to guide its work in partnering and collaborating with others interested in play, and to advocate on the importance of play for young New Zealanders. The Principles of Play are as follows:

Play is important to the wellbeing of young New Zealanders

- *It is vital in ensuring young people have the best possible start in life and develop a lifelong love of community sport and being physically active.*

Play is a cornerstone of our Physical Literacy Approach

- *Play is a crucial part of physical, cognitive, social/emotional and spiritual development for young people.*

Play is the shared responsibility of everyone

- *It needs clear and strong leadership from those who can enable play. This includes the views and opinions of young people.*
- *It is equally important in the settings of home, school and community.*

Young people must have access to enriched and varied playful experiences within their local environments

- *A variety of play types*
- *As an individual and with others*
- *Space and place – man-made and natural*
- *Sensory rich*
- *A sense of escape from realism*
- *Physical movement*

Adults must understand what their role is in enabling play

- *Quality play experience involves limited adult input.*

Young people need the opportunity to experience risk and challenge through play

- *The provision of opportunities for all children to encounter or create uncertainty, unpredictability and potential risks (including physical, cognitive, social/emotional and spiritual) as part of their play.*
- *We do not mean putting children in danger of serious harm.*

Wherever possible, play should include the opportunity to be active

POpTED urban play principles

Multipurpose design

Items and areas are adaptable and responsive to changing needs by encouraging informal play through multi-functional design.

Status quo	Using POpTED
Wasted space	Resource efficiency
Limited community interaction	Community engagement
Inflexibility	Adaptability to change
Small scale example	Board game table tops
Medium scale example	Street furniture obstacle course
Large scale example	Interactive sculpture garden

Permission

Play is encouraged by providing implicit or explicit invitations to explore through intentional design choices and wayfinding.

Status quo	Using POpTED
Exclusivity	Acknowledge children's rights
Children's rights neglected	Encourage exploration
Underutilised spaces	Provide guidance
Small scale example	Handprint sign post
Medium scale example	Signalised crossing games
Large scale example	Dutch Woonerf ('Living Street')

Journey

Design choices increase the overall network of easily accessible and playable spaces and encourage playful active travel.

Status quo	Using POpTED
No play network	Filling network gaps
Missed health benefits	Active travel
Neglected opportunities	Independence
Small scale example	Alternate bike roller route
Medium scale example	Linear pocket park leading to a school
Large scale example	City-wide urban trail system

Context

Play opportunities are relevant to their environment and offer integration across settings.

Status quo	Using POpTED
Underutilisation	Relevance to local context
Loss of identity	Play proximity
Missed educational opportunities	Community ownership
Small scale example	3D Minecraft blocks outside video game store
Medium scale example	Mixed-use urban street
Large scale example	Family focused sustainable transit-oriented development

Inclusion

The play needs of as many users as appropriate are considered and social inclusivity between groups is promoted.

Status quo	Using POpTED
Exclusion and discrimination	People feel included
Segregated opportunities	Diverse perspectives
Fragmented communities	Community building
Small scale example	Musical bus shelter
Medium scale example	Intergenerational sensory garden
Large scale example	Culturally inclusive park and plaza

Insights from Advisory Panels

Auckland Council's network of Advisory Panels represent specific communities. Staff engaged with the Panels to learn about their views on play, and used their feedback to shape the advice in this play plan.

Disability Advisory Panel

- Consider general accessibility in spaces – parking, pathways, park furniture, etc.
- Share information online that acknowledges accessibility needs – such as text descriptions of images
- Remember both visible and invisible disabilities when designing play spaces
- Advocate for school grounds to be available for community use – they tend to be very well designed for accessibility

Ethnic Communities Advisory Panel

- Continue engaging with specific ethnic community groups to better understand their views on play
- Recognise the opportunities for play to support healing and integration for displaced communities
- Use different digital tools to engage with communities more effectively

Pacific Peoples Advisory Panel

- Support play as an all-ages activity woven into daily life (normal in Pacific communities)
- Seek out the views of Pacific communities and draw on their expertise
- Keep children's voices at the centre of play conversations

Rainbow Communities Advisory Panel

- Acknowledge that the joy of play underpins the broader rainbow community's message of inclusivity and acceptance of diversity
- Continue to advocate for children's rights through play, recognising the importance of providing recreation for all members of the rainbow community

Seniors Advisory Panel

- Provide play equipment that is sturdy enough for active adults to use and enjoy
- Install elements like outdoor gym equipment by playgrounds, so adults can use them while children are playing
- Provide low / no cost community spaces, so hobby groups have places to socialise
- Create intergenerational and all-ages play, so older people can join in and have fun

Youth Advisory Panel

- Develop projects and spaces so tamariki and rangatahi can play together
- Consider rangatahi as users of community and play spaces – include lighting at outdoor spaces so they can be used later in the day, and extend opening hours for council pools
- Provide easy public transport access to popular recreation sites, like regional parks – for example, a direct bus from the city centre to Piha during summer weekends
- Make urban spaces playful and include play equipment, so rangatahi and adults can play too

Advisory Panels' feedback

Auckland Council's Advisory Panels exist to advise elected members on issues that affect the communities they represent. Staff engaged with the Advisory Panels in late 2023 and early 2024 to seek guidance about these communities' play aspirations, and to better understand any existing barriers to play that local boards may want to consider.

Disability Advisory Panel

The Disability Advisory Panel acknowledged the great value of the playground design standards that have been developed to support local boards in creating inclusive play spaces. They recognise that every item in a built play space does not necessarily need to be fully accessible. However, the Panel suggested that a focus on general access to parks and play spaces is equally important and valuable. This helps to ensure that disability community members can actually reach these spaces. Specific suggestions included plain text descriptions of facilities on the council website, to ensure that blind and low-vision users can better understand what to expect from different sites.

The Panel also spoke of the importance of considering both visible and invisible disabilities when planning inclusive play. Elements such as sensory play options provide enhanced play opportunities for its community. Finally, the Panel hoped that local boards will continue to advocate for public schools to make their grounds available for community play and recreation. The Panel recognises that this promotes social inclusion and participation among disabled people and provides a wider variety of recreation options.

Ethnic Communities Advisory Panel

The Ethnic Communities Advisory Panel advised that better play outcomes could be achieved for its communities through increased direct engagement with local boards. This can strengthen council's understanding of different communities' play aspirations. It recognised the value of play as a means of connection and communication. This is particularly relevant in the context of sensitive topics such as refugee backgrounds and trauma, and highlights the potential for healing and integration through play. The Panel members were eager to see continued efforts to include play in cultural festivals and activations, and suggested that judicious use of digital initiatives could help to overcome some existing barriers to participation.

Pacific Peoples Advisory Panel

The Pacific Peoples Advisory Panel spoke of play as something that is not age- or location-specific in Pacific communities, but is woven into daily life in all settings. The Panel members called for the inclusion of diverse views when considering what play means to families in Tāmaki Makaurau. This includes the value of drawing on the expertise of Pacific educationalists and community organisations to ensure that play has cultural relevance. The Panel identified the dual challenges of time-poor adults and reduced availability of physical play spaces through gentrification and higher-density living, as being of particular concern to its community. It advocated for a changed approach to play that puts children's voices and aspirations at the centre of the conversation.

Rainbow Communities Advisory Panel

The Rainbow Communities Advisory Panel admitted that play had not been something that it had considered in depth before. However, the Panel members were eager to acknowledge that the rainbow community does include tamariki and rangatahi, both as members in their own right and as the children of parents in the community. The Panel recognised that play can bring joy and celebration that can underpin the broader rainbow community's message of inclusivity and acceptance of diversity. It also understood that advocating for play from the perspective of children's rights, underscores the commitment to ensuring equitable access to recreational activities for all members of the community.

In particular, the Panel responded well to a staff suggestion that Big Gay Out could incorporate a dedicated play-themed tamariki space that would welcome and celebrate the involvement of children in this important annual event. A Panel member involved with the Burnett Foundation, which organises Big Gay Out, was eager to take forward the idea of developing a 'Kids Play Out' space at future Big Gay Out events. The Panel felt that this would complement other initiatives, including 'Little Gay Out' and the Rainbow Games for rangatahi.

Seniors Advisory Panel

The Seniors Advisory Panel was also enthusiastic about the value of play to all Auckland residents. The Panel made it clear that they did not want 'play for seniors' to be regarded as a siloed-off provision. Instead, they asked for inclusive, intergenerational play spaces that provide ample play opportunities for children, but also offer play equipment that is sufficiently robust for adults of all ages to use and enjoy, either while visiting the space with children or at other times. The value of supporting amenities, including shade, toilet facilities and ample seating options, were also highlighted by the Panel members. The Panel also celebrated the value of outdoor gym equipment. They suggested that it was best located near other facilities, such as playgrounds, to both support intergenerational park use, and to increase passive surveillance, resulting in feelings of safety when using the equipment.

When speaking about how older Aucklanders have fun, the Panel members spoke of the importance of being able to access facilities that can provide a site for community-led hobbies and activities, including parks and community venues. The Panel hoped that local boards will continue to prioritise the retention of community facilities that enable this kind of use.

The Seniors Advisory Panel also acknowledged that, for many older people, social isolation is a concern. The Panel advocated for initiatives that encourage intergenerational participation and highlighted volunteering as a way that older people can remain engaged with the wider community.

Youth Advisory Panel

The Youth Advisory Panel was very enthusiastic about play and welcomed the opportunity to consider how important play and having fun is to young people in Tāmaki Makaurau. Panel members spoke of the value of encouraging young people to revisit the play they enjoyed as tamariki. They suggested that intergenerational projects that encourage rangatahi and tamariki to play together, could both provide children with opportunities to learn about forgotten play pastimes, and remind rangatahi that they still have a right to do things 'mostly just for fun'.

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The main barrier to play identified by the Young Advisory Panel was a lack of consideration for the possibility that young adults also want to play: for example, the unavailability of facilities such as council pools at times of the day when rangatahi might be more inclined to use them. Practical suggestions to address this included installing lighting at destination playgrounds to extend their usable time into the evening, and extending council pool opening hours into the evening to welcome rangatahi to visit these sites when families with children have gone home.

The Youth Advisory Panel also spoke of the considerable scope for play and recreation at the region's beaches and regional parks, but the lack of access available for those who do not have private vehicles (either for practical or ideological reasons). A regional response to this could be the provision of express buses from key city sites to regional destinations, such as Piha beach.

Finally, the Youth Advisory Panel was eager to consider ways that urban spaces could encourage playful behaviour. The Panel urged local boards to incorporate playful and playable elements into town centre upgrades, to make our urban landscape more engaging for all users.

Community engagement and play

Waiheke Local Board engages with its community about play by:

Sharing social media content to publicise new playgrounds

Using 'Have Your Say' consultations to collect community feedback

Promoting play activations or other local events with play elements

The Auckland Council Parks Facebook page also promotes play, focusing on playgrounds. The local board could take its play engagement further by:

Creating dynamic social media posts to promote non-playground play – like videos of elected members and their whānau enjoying playful moments. This can help with role-modelling a range of play opportunities, and help to normalise the idea that the community is welcome to play in a lot of different places.

Working with the Local Board Communications Specialist to schedule regular play-related social media content, both celebrating existing play spaces and play opportunities, and promoting new ways to play. This could include more promotion of community-led play that is supported by the local board.

Seeking opportunities for positive play news stories in local media, and in Our Auckland. This can be a way to draw greater attention to different ways to play, particularly if a story involves a new play project (such as a new adventurous nature space, a new play project with a community group, or an intergenerational play project).

Investing in tamariki and rangatahi engagement in Waiheke, to seek feedback on play opportunities and other focus areas that are of interest to young people. The resulting insights can both contribute to specific play projects and provide the local board with information about the views of local young people on issues that affect them.

Auckland Council has piloted an in-school children's panel to try new methods for engaging with tamariki. The pilot will be evaluated in early 2025, and staff will work with community brokers to explore how to roll out a similar approach in different local board areas across Tāmaki Makaurau.

Working with Sport Auckland

Sport Auckland is a regional sports trust and an important strategic partner of Waiheke Local Board. It operates at a local level with strategic guidance from Active on behalf of Sport New Zealand.

Communities of Activity

Sport Auckland will focus its work on five identified Communities of Activity (CoA) for 2024 – 2026.:

- Glen Innes / Mt Wellington
- Panmure / Pakuranga
- Flat Bush
- Oranga / Onehunga
- Wesley / Roskill South

Opportunities also exist for pan-local projects that extend beyond these CoAs.

Engaging with local schools

Sport Auckland has a mandate to engage directly with schools to support participation in play, physical education, active recreation and sport.

Much of this work is focused on its network of Healthy Active Learning ('HAL') schools. The HAL project is a joint initiative between Sport New Zealand and the Ministries of Education and Health. Sport Auckland's team of Community Connectors work with school staff to promote access to play, sport and physical activity, as part of a wider programme to support healthy life choices.

Sport Auckland's play lead collaborates with the HAL team to keep play at the centre of work with tamariki.

Targeted focus areas

Regional sports trusts work closely with the wider community, with dedicated staff or teams to engage directly with Pacific communities, Māori communities, Asian communities, and women and girls.

Tū Manawa grant-making

Sport Auckland administers Sport New Zealand's Tū Manawa Active Aotearoa Fund in Auckland Central. This programme has set criteria and provides financial support for a range of organisations (including local government) for projects that increase play, active recreation, and sport participation for tamariki and rangatahi.

Neighbourhood Play System

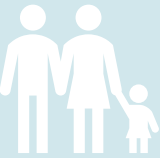
Sport Auckland's play lead works with schools on Neighbourhood Play System (NPS) projects. This involves analysing a neighbourhood from the context of the school (or community site) as its centre. NPS projects produce rich insights from tamariki, whānau and school staff, about local play opportunities and challenges. The resulting NPS report makes recommendations for the school and the local board. NPS projects build relationships with schools, providing local boards with opportunities to partner with Sport Auckland for further engagement going forward.

Regular engagement

Sport Auckland and council staff meet regularly to collaborate and share insights that support greater access to play.

Learning from school engagement

Tāmaki Makaurau’s regional sports trusts have delivered NPS projects in several schools. The table below highlights the recurring themes that emerge from tamariki feedback about play.

	Tamariki and whānau want to use school playgrounds after hours and in the weekend and during the school holidays. Waiheke primary school playgrounds are open for community use outside of school hours.
	Tamariki want to walk, scoot or cycle to school along safe roads, and to be able to reach local parks, play spaces, and beaches without using cars. This demonstrates the importance of local boards advocating for slower traffic speeds and safe crossings.
	Tamariki want to feel welcome to play everywhere, not just in playgrounds. They want journeys to be playful, to encourage them to move around in their neighbourhood. Creating play on the way elements can help to encourage more enjoyable local travel.
	Tamariki want their voices heard when local boards make decisions that affect them – especially decisions relating to play. Working with regional sports trusts can help to provide this, and children’s panels are also a way to engage regularly with tamariki.
	Whānau want play to offer opportunities for community connection, with people of all ages welcome to join in. Local boards can support this by including play at community events, and by funding Out and About Auckland’s play activations.

Information like this helps to guide Sport Auckland’s work regarding play, but Waiheke Local Board can also use these insights to:

- explore ways to support schools to keep their grounds open in the weekends and holidays
- advocate to Auckland Transport for traffic calming and pedestrian infrastructure in suburban areas
- support play as an everywhere activity, through installations, projects and activations
- investigate ways to seek tamariki and rangatahi feedback on issues that matter to them
- continue to provide all-ages community events and activities, and make sure they include play.

